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## DOWN THAT PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY

*"The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

To me, "the stranger within the gates,"  
you, Guanito, have proven more sympathetic,  
more patient and more helpful than ever  
I expected or had merited!

And of even greater worth, you and  
Melta did much to lessen the unpleasantness  
of being 1,000 miles from home.

For all of which I am extremely  
grateful.

"*Muchas gracias*" in extremis!

As ever.

Robt

1/15/49



out of print

(1950)  
Sale

down that  
*Pan American*  
*Highway*

By Roger Stephens

with introduction by EDWIN WARLEY JAMES  
Chief, Inter-American Regional Office,  
U.S. Public Roads Administration



3,231 Miles

32 Days


\$140.14 Fare



down that  
Pan American  
Highway  
By Roger Stephens

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with introduction by EDWIN WARLEY JAMES  
Chief, Air Section, Federal Office  
U. S. Public Health Administration



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# Primera Dama que Llega por Tierra Desde Laredo, Texas

## Y Continuará por Igual Ruta Y

To Alice, the best of fellow-travelers  
Down That Pan American Highway  
. . . and on the longer yet even more  
pleasant journey of life itself.

El día 6 de los  
la tarde, llegó a  
señora Roger  
Westfield New Jersey, U.S.  
do la primera dama que nace  
el recorrido por la carretera pa  
americana desde el Rio Gran  
de (Rio Bravo) a esta ciudad  
con un recorrido aproximado  
de 1,450 millas. De Texas a To  
lo lo hi-  
de y  
agradeci.  
que le dispensaron.  
guiente, nuestra visitante,  
compañía de su esposo que es  
un publicista de New York que  
está escribiendo un libro acer  
la carretera Panamericana  
a esta Ciudad, en  
des de la  
en

CHIAPAS NUEVO

Tuxtla Gutierrez

### FIRST LADY TO TRAVEL OVERLAND FROM LAREDO, TEXAS

In the evening of the 6th of this month Mrs. Roger Stephens arrived in this city. She is from Westfield, New Jersey, U.S.A., and she is the first woman to have traveled along the Pan American Highway from the Rio Grande (Rio Bravo) to this city, a run of about 1,450 miles. From Texas to Totolapa, Oaxaca, she traveled in passenger buses. The following 205 miles down to Humoa on the Oaxaca-Chiapas border our visitor had to travel by 3-ton trucks along a road still under construction. Three miles beyond Humoa Mrs. Stephens ran into heavy road-building equipment and therefore had to travel on horseback, a dangerous performance on a road under construction up in the mountains. Then came 15 miles to the Road Construction Camp of Los Amates which were negotiated in a truck of the construction company taking home road-workers who had finished their shift.

At sunset Mrs. Stephens arrived at the Los Amates camp where she spent a most pleasant night as guest of the staff of the Road Administration to whom she is very grateful for everything they did for her. The next day our visitor with her husband, a New York publisher who is writing a book on the Pan American Highway, arrived in this city where they were guests of the Road Administration. They came in a truck which the Section Chief Ing. Zurita Vazquez had kindly put at their disposal.

On the 7th our visitors started out for Panama traveling along the Pan American Highway through San Cristobal, L. C. and they asked us to thank the Mexican people they met on their way and the staff of the Road Administration here for all their kind attention in our beautiful Chiapas.



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# Introduction

By

MR. EDWIN WARLEY JAMES, *Chief*

Inter-American Regional Office

U. S. Public Roads Administration

It is probable that Roger Stephens is the first one to venture over the entire present line of the Pan American Highway from the United States to the Panama Canal Zone. Many have covered the route in part, a few have traveled the entire distance overland using alternate routes available to circumvent the sections still passable only with great effort and weariness. Apparently no impending exhaustion, no hazard of fortune, no bad luck-of-the-road deterred him from accomplishing the distinctly difficult task of sticking to the line.

Above all else, he has a keen appreciation of the national character of the Latin American. Understanding their pleasant courtesies, he enjoys their way of life and makes himself a most satisfactory example of the American abroad as he should be and too seldom is.

Mr. Stephens has produced something new and different in a book of travel. It is for everyone who goes places—that is, who goes to places along the Pan American Highway. He supplies detailed information that might serve as a guide book for the tourist; as notes for the traveler who undertakes to go beyond the present beaten path; and as a good introductory description of a few areas where topographic surveyors have never yet penetrated, local geography is hazy and all existing maps dubious if not actually misleading. In these parts nothing beyond the original reconnaissance survey has been made, and, as might be expected, these are the only portions of the remaining construction that present any unusual difficulty. The customary classifications of paved road, all weather road, dry weather road and trail, which are used in reports, tell enough to those who know to make clear the constant changes in the Highway as season after season produces more finished work. But it takes the intimate unerring descriptions that Mr. Stephens furnishes to picture to the uninformed just what a trail means.

The author covered the difficult paths along the Mexican border and in the foothills of the Cuchumatanes Massif in northwestern Guatemala. He hiked down the valley of El General River in Costa Rica and over the ten thousand foot passes of the Valley of the Dead to the Chiriquí Plateau in Panama. Acquainted with the geographic literature of the area, I know of only two earlier accounts of the latter region. One was written about 1563 by Juan Vasquez, and the other about 1891 by Henri F. Pittier, the famous geographer of Costa Rica. Mr. Pittier's brochure on the Turiba covers the valley and the fringes of the Santa Clara range. To the very meager knowledge of the region, Mr. Stephens adds his mite.

He almost crosses that indefinable line between the traveler who is inquisitive enough to go over the hill and the explorer who seeks the unknown. He penetrated where few outlanders except surveying parties have gone, and he worked hard and walked far to follow the actual line on which the Pan American Highway is being built and to anticipate the unconstructed parts along a selection of trails that required the assistance of guides sometimes themselves none too expert in the local geography.

Certainly no other type of story could so exactly and completely describe the Highway as it is in its present incomplete state. It is a long road and construction has been going on for many years. There are sections long since paved, over which regular commercial bus and truck operations have already settled down to an established routine with time tables and published tariffs. There are sections already undergoing their first series of betterments—flattening or superelevating curves, widening shoulders. Other sections are still jungle trails impenetrable except behind a machete man, and others are in intermediate stages of construction.

The road, or more properly, the route—for the road is not yet wholly constructed—which Mr. Stephens traveled has had a varied and interesting history. The Great North Road of India, the caravan routes to Samarkand and to Inner Mongolia, the Appian Way, Watling Street in Roman England, our own Santa Fe Trail, and the National Pike all teem with the history of their period. So, too, the Inter-American Highway is associated with the very modern development of transport in the economic life of the Western Hemisphere. Around its inception, now a quarter of a century ago, have gathered conjecture and tale as well as much documented fact. We know that the delegation of the United States to the Fifth International Conference of American States, held in



Santiago, Chile, in 1923, was instructed to introduce and support a resolution in favor of motor roads. The delegation followed its instructions.

For years, at several earlier similar conferences, resolutions had been passed in favor of the Intercontinental Railroad. In the late eighties of the last century an elaborate report of the railroad reconnaissance surveys by William F. Shunk had been published, and there was a continuous and vigorous insistence that the rail project be advanced in all the interested countries. At Santiago there was added to the customary railroad resolution the following:

"6. To recommend to the same (Pan American) States that they forward to the Pan American Union at Washington, within a period of six months after the adjournment of this Conference, a report regarding automobile roads at present in service, as well as those under construction, and those projected;

"7. To recommend the negotiation of conventions relative to automobile transportation, in order to define the international juridical status of automobiles, and to regulate the circulation of same between the various countries;

"8. That an Automobile Road Conference be held at the time and place which the Governing Board of the Pan American Union may determine, which shall study the most adequate means for carrying out an efficient program for the construction of this class of roads in the various countries of America, and between such countries."

This resolution was the first official recognition of a Pan American Highway System, but it was not the beginning of such a grandiose concept. What prompted our State Department to instruct the United States Delegation as it did? The action indicated affected the highways of a continent. Realistically viewed, probably no such action had ever previously been taken in the history of the world. The nearest approach to it was the Act of 1921 providing for a system of Federal-aid Roads throughout the United States. This was just one more of the tremendously big things that only the United States can and does do. Did our State Department on its own initiative project the idea to include a whole continent? I think not. There is a much more interesting and plausible background for the action. The data cannot be dated or documented, but the picture can be drawn and the jig-saw pieces fit so exactly into place that the lines have all the character of verisimilitude.

In 1917, the registration of motor vehicles in the United States was 4,980,000. In 1920, it had risen to 9,232,000. By 1923 it had reached 15,092,000 which was practically double the registration of 1919, and

the motor industry, highly equipped as the result of World War I, was becoming concerned over the possible disposal of its capacity production. We heard talk of the "saturation point" for passenger cars. We heard of the "two car" families. We were urged to turn in our used cars annually or every second year and get allowances on a new one. This would reduce the normal life of a car, then estimated at about seven years, to much less and greatly increase the annual replacement demand. It was rumored that Mr. Henry Ford was negotiating with Yugoslavia for remission of duties on his cars over a long period of years in compensation for which he was to furnish the capital for a big road building program in that country.

In brief, the automotive industry was looking for a new and greatly expanded export outlet for cars and trucks. In Europe it faced the competition of cheaper labor and the Morris, Fiat, Austin, Citroen and other low and medium priced cars. The outlook was not of the best. Africa promised almost nothing, Asia little more. Within striking distance to the south, however, with good hard land connecting all the way was another continent—Latin America. It was huge, it was almost virgin territory for motor vehicles, free from home competition; but it had few roads and almost none of motor vehicle capacity, and its public was not road-minded. In fact, when they thought at all of transportation, they were essentially railroad-minded. And already the railroad and the highway authorities in the United States were coming into conflict over common interests.

Just then a conversation was held in the Department of Commerce of the United States. J. Walter Drake, formerly President of the Hupp Motor Car Corporation, was Assistant Secretary of Commerce. He had also been Chairman of the Export Committee of the Automobile Chamber of Commerce. His very good friend, Roy D. Chapin, was President of the Hudson Motor Car Company and Chairman of the Highway Transport Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce. Another close associate was John N. Willys, dynamic and affable Chairman of the Board of Directors of Willys-Overland. Leo S. Rowe, Director of the Pan American Union, was the fourth party to the conversation, and, according to custom, the agenda for the Chilean Conference was to be made up and proposed by the Governing Board of the Union. All the protagonists are gone. We cannot consult them. The last to go assured me personally that he could not say just where the first suggestion originated. But there was a talk at the Commerce Depart-

ment. He recalled that. And I can see J. Walter Drake hurrying across the park to the old State, War and Navy Building for a chat with Wilbur J. Carr, then the hold-over, long-time-policy man of the State Department; and when the instructions to the United States Delegation to Santiago were issued they included a directive to support a resolution which would extend a highway system over another quarter of the globe.

It is an interesting picture and an intriguing conjecture, but a resolution often accomplishes little. If South America was not road-minded, it was probably under-equipped with road engineers, administrators and incentives. So the next year, the automotive industry, with some assistance from the equipment and supply manufacturers, financed a project to bring engineers and administrators from the Latin American countries to the United States and show them what could be done in road construction. The project cost upward of a hundred thousand dollars and provided all the expenses of thirty-seven representatives from nineteen Latin American countries. Here they toured the country, studied our road system, our administration and our financial measures; and so the seed was planted.

In 1925 as recommended, a Pan American Road Congress was held in Buenos Aires, and another was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1929. In that same year the First Inter-American Road Congress was held in Panama, and in 1930 a reconnaissance was authorized and \$50,000. appropriated for the survey of a possible road or roads between the Americas.

In 1930 a draft convention on the subject of international automotive traffic was signed at the Pan American Union. It got no further for it was ahead of its time. In a form much revised and carefully considered in the light of wider experience, a new convention was signed by fifteen countries in 1943, and this multilateral convention has so far been ratified by nine governments. And so, if the tale is true, the conversation of 1923 produced the Santiago Resolution which has borne much fruit. Among the imposing mileage of road subsequently built in Latin America, is the Inter-American Highway, that section of the Pan American Highway System extending from the United States to the Panama Canal Zone.

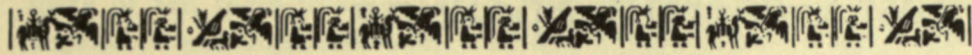
Mexico began to build a system of modern highways in 1926, the Inter-American being the first connected road to be projected from Nuevo Laredo on the Rio Grande (they call it the Rio Bravo) to Mexico City. In 1932, the Argentine adopted the Moret Road Law and has made much progress. In 1929 and 1930 Colombia organized a Consejo

Nacional de Vias and subsequently embarked on a comprehensive program of construction. In Peru, Chile and Venezuela, the story is repeated until today the development of popular opinion shows a road-mindedness in Latin America second only to that in the United States. In the matter of *vialidad*—that so handy Spanish word—the Western Hemisphere has found itself, and the present outlook indicates promise that before many years she will have arrived.

Mr. Stephens, with the enthusiasm of the tourist, the vision of the traveler and almost with the adventuresome spirit of the explorer, has pictured the actual conditions along the crucial section of the whole Pan American System. The road he traveled is half paved; more than three-quarters of the distance can be traveled in all seasons. Moreover, he convinces us of the friendly spirit and community of interest to be found in traveling the line across seven of the American Republics . . . Down That Pan American Highway.

JAMES, Edwin Warley, Public Roads Administration, Federal Works Agency, Washington, D. C., Civil Engineer; Harvard University, honorable mention bis, A. B., 1901, cum laude; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1905-07; Delta Upsilon (life membership); District Engineer, Bureau of Public Works, Manila, Philippine Islands; Appointed Highway Engineer, Bureau Public Roads, May 20, 1910; Senior Highway Engineer, June 1, 1912; Chief Inspector, January 1, 1913; Chief, Division of Maintenance, February 16, 1914; General Inspector, December 1, 1916; Assistant Chief Engineer July 1, 1919; Chief, Division of Design, July 1, 1921; Chief, Division of Highway Transport, March 1, 1930; now Public Roads Administration, Federal Works Agency. Frequent contributions to technical periodicals, about 200 titles to date. Author: Drainage Systems for Country Roads, 1922; Highway Construction, Administration and Finance, 1929; Consulting Engineer to Republic of Colombia, South America, 1929-30; Member Consejo Nacional de Vias Comunicacion, Chairman, Technical Commission, Inter-American Highway Conference, 1930-31. Awarded Belgian Prize at Sixth International Road Congress, 1930. In charge Inter-American Highway operations for United States Government 1930-48. Transportation expert on the United States-Brazilian Technical Commission, 1948.

PART ONE



*Just Generally Speaking*

Condition of the Inter-American Highway as  
of October 1948

The Longest Street in the World

Is It Dangerous?

Does the Trip Cost Very Much?

Good Neighbors South of the Border

Cortesias Latinas

Various Books . . . Various Travelers



## Just Generally Speaking

ALLERGIC TO blonde or brunette? Is it the traditional red-head that provokes insomnia? Does corned beef and cabbage or *pâté de foie gras* excite your taste "buds"? What particular school of political economy claims your allegiance?

Ask these and a thousand and one other equally controversial questions of the next twenty men you pass. Their responses? As divergent as the very poles themselves.

But wait! Ask now if they would relish a bit of even mild adventure on some foreign shore. Here we have a *caballo* (horse to you, dear novice in the land of the Latin) of a different tinge. Be they rich men, poor men, beggarmen or thieves, chances are each mother's son of 'em will react emphatically, unanimously and affirmatively!

Why then in the face of this yen universal to "go places and do things" are so many resigned to lives of complete geographical stagnation?

The obstacles are twofold: the fear of expense and the fear of the unknown; the fear that it will cost them too much and the fear that "sumthin' orful's going to happen," should one stray beyond the immediate reaches of Main Street.

To whittle away at these twin bugaboos is the prime object of this book. It is hoped, as sort of an extra dividend, that further light may be focused upon one of the most dramatic yet most unselfish visions of man within the hemisphere.

Unlike so many other unselfish dreams of gigantic proportions, this one is practicable and real. With due regard to wet and dry seasons (in tropical America there are no winters or summers as we know them), one can now travel by automobile eighty-five percent of the distance from Fairbanks, Alaska, to Rio de Janeiro! The Highway leads down the western coast of South America to Santiago, Chile, thence over the snow-clad passes of the majestic Andes to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and still beyond for 1,900 miles up the Atlantic to Rio.

Now, let's be sensible about this whole thing! It's not one grand and

glorious unbroken Motorist's Paradise. There are serious cavities in this touring bicuspid. One's a 117 mile break in southern Mexico from a little south of Comitán to 30 miles above Tapachula, and another, 108 miles in southern Costa Rica and northern Panama from nine miles south of San Isidro to a little above Volcan. Then there's that all but impassable and impossible stretch of the Darien section, roughly 200 miles of rivers, marshes and jungles lying between the Canal and northern Colombia. Finally, there's a bad but short gap as one travels from Ecuador into northern Peru, yet this is only forty-odd miles and easily ferried. Actually, all these breaks can presently be by-passed on flatcar or coastal steamer.

Even at that, some fourteen thousand miles of "navigable water" remain available for reasonably sturdy cars and definitely sturdier drivers. For those who have no private automobiles (or are too intelligent to bother with them), it is intriguing to learn that all seventeen countries through which the Highway goes, abound in *camiones*. These cheap local buses charging a cent or so a mile are infinitely more colorful, if not always physically more comfortable, than trains and planes.

In a single year, more than 100,000 pleasure cars rolled comfortably over the 763 mile all-weather, well-paved stretch from our Texas frontier to Mexico City. Furthermore, some twenty public buses service this self-same route on regular schedules every day of the year at absurdly low costs, even as little as \$6.12 for the whole run.



## CONDITION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN HIGHWAY AS OF SEPTEMBER, 1948

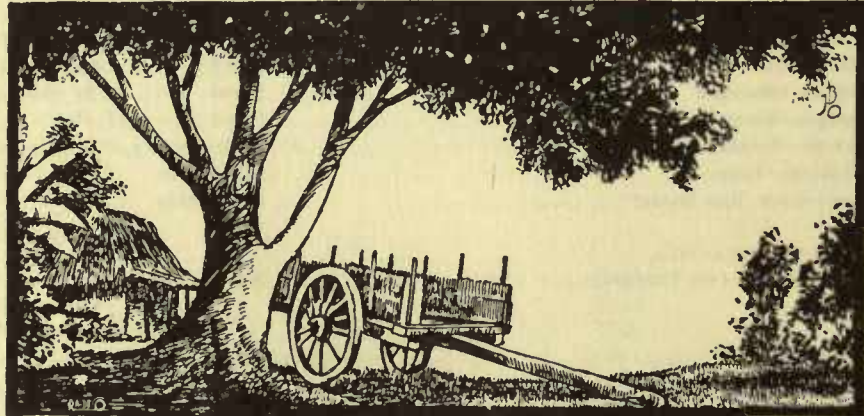
| <i>Location</i>  | <i>Condition</i> | <i>Length</i> |              |
|--|------------------|---------------|--------------|
|  |                  | <i>Kms.</i>   | <i>Miles</i> |
| <b>MEXICO</b>  |                  |               |              |
| Laredo, Texas—Mexico City .....                            | Paved            | 1228          | 763          |
| Mexico City—Puebla .....                                   | Paved            | 135           | 84           |
| Puebla—Matamoros .....                                     | Paved            | 65            | 40           |
| Matamoros—Siete Cabrillas .....                            | Paved            | 275           | 171          |
| Siete Cabrillas—Km. 492 .....                              | All weather      | 17            | 11           |
| Km. 492—Oaxaca .....                                       | Paved            | 55            | 34           |
| Oaxaca—Tlacolula .....                                     | Paved            | 30            | 19           |
| Tlacolula—Totolapa .....                                   | All weather      | 44            | 27           |
| Totolapa—Nejapa .....                                      | Dry weather      | 73            | 45           |
| Nejapa—Rio Hondo .....                                     | All weather      | 25            | 15           |
| Rio Hondo—Tequisistlan .....                               | Dry weather      | 35            | 22           |
| Tequisistlan—Tehuantepec .....                             | All weather      | 51            | 32           |
| Tehuantepec—Juchitan .....                                 | All weather      | 27            | 17           |
| Juchitan—Ingenio de Sto. Domingo .....                     | All weather      | 40            | 25           |
| Ingenio de Sto. Domingo—Los Amates .....                   | Dry weather      | 98            | 61           |
| Los Amates—Las Cruces .....                                | All weather      | 33            | 20           |
| Las Cruces—Tuxtla Gutierrez .....                          | Paved            | 104           | 64           |
| Tuxtla Gutierrez—Escopetazo .....                          | Paved            | 30            | 19           |
| Escopetazo—San Cristobal Las Casas .....                   | All weather      | 51            | 32           |
| San Cristobal Las Casas—Comitan .....                      | Dry weather      | 98            | 61           |
| Comitan—Guatemala Border .....                             | Trail            | 94            | 58           |
| <b>TOTAL MEXICO</b> .....                                  |                  | 2608          | 1620         |
| <b>Old route</b>   |                  |               |              |
| Via Tapachula and Talisman bridge                          |                  |               |              |
| Comitan—Km. 1520 .....                                     | Trail            | 234           | 145          |
| Km. 1520—Tapachula .....                                   | All weather      | 45            | 28           |
| Tapachula—Guatemala border (km. 1583 Talisman Bridge) ...  | Paved            | 18            | 11           |
| <b>GUATEMALA</b>   |                  |               |              |
| Mexican border—Colotenango .....                           | Trail            | 53            | 33           |
| Colotenango—Malacatancito .....                            | Trail            | 46            | 28           |
| Malacatancito—San Cristobal .....                          | Trail            | 60            | 37           |
| Branch road Quezaltenango—Totonicapan .....                | All weather      | 25            | 16           |
| San Cristobal—Tecpan .....                                 | All weather      | 105           | 65           |
| Tecpan—Guatemala City .....                                | All weather      | 80            | 50           |
| Guatemala City—El Salvador border .....                    | All weather      | 162           | 101          |
| <b>TOTAL GUATEMALA</b> .....                               |                  | 531           | 330          |
| <b>Old route</b>   |                  |               |              |
| Guatemala border—Guatemala City (via Talisman bridge) .... | All weather      | 316           | 196          |



|                    | Location                                     | Condition   | Length     |            |
|--------------------|--|-------------|------------|------------|
|                    |  |             | Kms.       | Miles      |
| <b>EL SALVADOR</b> |  |             |            |            |
|                    | Guatemala Border—Santa Ana                   | Paved       | 31         | 19         |
|                    | Santa Ana—Santa Tecla                        | Paved       | 54         | 34         |
|                    | Santa Tecla—San Salvador                     | Paved       | 12         | 8          |
|                    | San Salvador—Cojutepeque                     | Paved       | 35         | 21         |
|                    | Cojutepeque—Rio Lempa                        | Paved       | 56         | 35         |
|                    | Rio Lempa—San Miguel                         | Paved       | 43         | 27         |
|                    | *San Miguel—La Union                         | Paved       | 23         | 14         |
|                    |  | All weather | 24         | 15         |
|                    | *Sirama Y—Honduras Border                    | All weather | 34         | 21         |
|                    | <b>TOTAL EL SALVADOR</b>                     |             | <b>312</b> | <b>194</b> |
|                    | *San Miguel—Honduras Border (via Santa Rosa) | All weather | 60         | 37         |
| <b>HONDURAS</b>    |  |             |            |            |
|                    | El Salvador Border—Jícara Galan              | All weather | 40         | 25         |
|                    | Jícara Galan—San Lorenzo                     | All weather | 13         | 8          |
|                    | San Lorenzo—Choluteca                        | All weather | 31         | 19         |
|                    | Choluteca—San Francisco                      | All weather | 42         | 26         |
|                    | San Francisco—Nicaragua Border               | Dry weather | 25         | 16         |
|                    | <b>TOTAL HONDURAS</b>                        |             | <b>151</b> | <b>94</b>  |
| <b>NICARAGUA</b>   |  |             |            |            |
|                    | Honduras Border—Km. 202                      | Dry weather | 35         | 22         |
|                    | Km. 202—Condega                              | All weather | 22         | 14         |
|                    | Condega—Estelí                               | All weather | 32         | 20         |
|                    | *Estelí—Jinotega                             | Trail       | 53         | 33         |
|                    | *Jinotega—Matagalpa                          | Dry weather | 35         | 22         |
|                    | *Matagalpa—Sébaco                            | All weather | 28         | 17         |
|                    | Sébaco—Maderas                               | Paved       | 51         | 31         |
|                    | Maderas—Managua                              | Paved       | 51         | 31         |
|                    | Managua—Jinotepe                             | Paved       | 45         | 28         |
|                    | Jinotepe—Nandaime                            | All weather | 22         | 14         |
|                    | Nandaime—Rivas                               | All weather | 45         | 28         |
|                    | Rivas—Costa Rica border                      | All weather | 35         | 22         |
|                    | <b>TOTAL NICARAGUA</b>                       |             | <b>454</b> | <b>282</b> |
|                    | *Estelí—Sébaco (via Trinidad)                | All weather | 48         | 30         |
| <b>COSTA RICA</b>  |  |             |            |            |
|                    | Nicaragua Border—La Cruz                     | Dry weather | 21         | 13         |
|                    | La Cruz—Liberia                              | Dry weather | 58         | 36         |
|                    | Liberia—Bagaces                              | Dry weather | 26         | 16         |
|                    | Bagaces—Las Cañas                            | All weather | 22         | 14         |
|                    | Las Cañas—Rio Lagarto                        | Dry weather | 39         | 24         |
|                    | Rio Lagarto—Rio Barranca                     | All weather | 35         | 22         |
|                    | Rio Barranca—San Ramon                       | All weather | 39         | 24         |

| <i>Location</i>                                       | <i>Condition</i> | <i>Length</i> |              |
|---|------------------|---------------|--------------|
|   |                  | <i>Kms.</i>   | <i>Miles</i> |
| San Ramon—San José .....                              | Paved            | 76            | 47           |
| San José—Cartago .....                                | Paved            | 22            | 14           |
| Cartago—Nivel .....                                   | All weather      | 77            | 48           |
| Nivel—San Isidro .....                                | Dry weather      | 37            | 23           |
| San Isidro—Buenos Aires .....                         | Trail            | 60            | 37           |
| Buenos Aires—Panama Border (near Cañas Gordas) .....  | Trail            | 87            | 54           |
| <b>TOTAL COSTA RICA</b> .....                         |                  | <b>599</b>    | <b>372</b>   |
| <b>PANAMA</b>   |                  |               |              |
| Costa Rica Border—Volcan .....                        | Trail            | 45            | 28           |
|   | All weather      | 5             | 3            |
| Volcan—Concepcion .....                               | All weather      | 33            | 21           |
| Concepcion—David .....                                | All weather      | 24            | 15           |
| David—Remedios .....                                  | All weather      | 95            | 59           |
| Remedios—Santiago .....                               | All weather      | 139           | 86           |
| Santiago—Rio Hato .....                               | Paved            | 132           | 82           |
| Rio Hato—Chorrera .....                               | Paved            | 88            | 55           |
| Chorrera—Panama City .....                            | Paved            | 32            | 20           |
| <b>TOTAL PANAMA</b> .....                             |                  | <b>593</b>    | <b>369</b>   |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL—Laredo, Texas to Panama City</b> ..... |                  | <b>5248</b>   | <b>3261*</b> |

\*The difference between my 3,231 miles and the government ..... (see note page 47)



## The Longest Street in the World

THERE'S just one thing more amazing than the Highway itself. It's the abysmal ignorance of it on the part of most American taxpayers who have to date contributed thirty million dollars towards its construction! This is but three percent of its crudely guesstimated total cost of a billion dollars.

In concept the Pan American Highway presents a continuous all-weather, hard-surfaced roadway from Alaska fifteen thousand miles to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with "detours" hundreds of miles in length branching off to La Paz, Bolivia, and to Asuncion, Paraguay. The Highway touches seventeen republics of Mexico, Central and South America, the line passing through the capitals of sixteen of these sister-nations. The exception is Tegucigalpa, Honduras, situated a few hours off the main stem from San Lorenzo. It is truly the longest street in the world.

The Second Pan American Highway Congress conceived the "Pan American Highway System" as one adequate "to meet the needs of intercommunication of its political subdivisions and to provide the most convenient junctions with the highway system of the neighbor countries." It is a highway system linking the capitals and principal cities of South and Central America with the highway systems of the United States, Canada and Alaska.

Regardless of the precise nomenclature, there lies today at your very own doorstep the beginning of a highway 1,450 miles long from the Texas border to Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of Chiapas, Mexico's most southern state, thence on to San Cristobal de las Casas and Comitán de las Flores, just a few miles from the Guatemalan border. It's a physical impossibility for any wheeled vehicle to get through from Comitán either to Huehuetenango, Guatemala, or Tapachula, Mexico. But one can easily back-track through Tuxtla to Arriaga where your automobile can be transported by flatcar over the National Railways of Mexico to Tapachula. From there you can at all seasons drive on down through Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, an additional eight hundred seventy-eight miles with no hitch. A few hardy souls have even

covered the stretch from Juchitan to Tapachula by auto; but it's terrible!

If you crave auto pioneering with nothing but century-old oxcart trails falsely posing as roads, a few bridgeless rivers to ford, and other intriguing divertissements, throw into low gear and plough 196 miles farther down through the lonely province of Guanacaste to cool, modern San José, diminutive capital of Costa Rica. Then comes the final plunge to Cartago and the ten thousand foot climb over rugged "Mountain of the Dead Ones," to land with a bump and a bang eighty-five miles later at the very end of the line, the hot, dusty village of San Isidro del General.

Stretches of this road (?) leave much to be desired. Fifth Avenue, New York, and Michigan Avenue out in Chicago are smoother. But one certainly can, with the exception of the Tehuantepec-Tapachula break in Southern Mexico, negotiate the Highway as far as the Nicaraguan-Costa Rican border with some little inconvenience, amply repaid by one of Nature's greatest shows.

I covered a distance of 3,231 miles in thirty-two days (actual time on the road—329 hours) at a transportation expense of only \$140.14. Much of the journey was comfortable. Considerable parts would perhaps have been condemned by some as rough and hard, and I freely confess that about five hundred miles were downright ornery! With equal emphasis, I add that not one solitary mile (and believe me, some were solitary) of the entire 3,231 proved other than superlatively interesting.

For sheer scenic variety, it beggars description, trailing as it does over Mexican deserts and mountain passes, across Guatemala with its kaleidoscopic native life, by El Salvador's volcanoes, with incomparable sunsets over the Gulf of Fonseca off the Pacific coast of Honduras chucked in for good measure. Eventually, one ends up along the expansive lakes of Nicaragua.

Being a blasé old advertising man, my wits have long been dulled by senseless superlatives. Think of grown men categorically grading tiny olives as "giants, mammoths and colossals" when the grand-daddy of them all probably is no larger than one's thumb nail. Therefore in refreshing contrast, it was not hard to wax one hundred percent patriotic and to become genuinely inspired by this largely unselfish giant, mammoth and colossal Avenue of the America(n)s.

Think of it! Years ago when a rice famine struck Costa Rica and the natives were hard pressed for food, it was found far less expensive to

transport rice in shipbottoms some twelve thousand miles from Indo-China via Hamburg than by mule-back a hundred miles over the then practically inaccessible Central American trails.

With long-range planning rather than the old military motivation of "gettin' there fustest with the mostes' (expense)," the engineers of the Pan American Highway are gradually tapping reservoirs of untold economic wealth, to the common advantage of both domestic and overseas trade. These include minerals, rare woods, tropical fruits, drugs, foodstuffs, and hundreds of other natural resources. I nearly overlooked two of the most vital exportable Latin American products, universal courtesy and a deeply rooted love of nature and music. In a more material sense, I see heading south from our own industrial centers, processions of automobiles, refrigerators, electric lights and irons, as well as the infiltration of sanitary improvements and medicines.

Interchange of cultural experiences, trade between heretofore remote sections of a single country as well as between the several nations themselves, and military accessibility in the event of extra-hemispheric invasion are but some of the "extra dividends" of the Pan American Highway. Topping all will be a knock-out blow to the solar plexus of the too frequent provincial misunderstandings. An utter lack of adequate roads had made it all but impossible to know even one's neighbor across the next mountain range, let alone folks beyond international frontiers. Bear in mind it isn't half so hard to love your neighbor once you've become better acquainted with yourself.

The concrete is more convincing than the abstract. Four years back it required seven days tough horseback travel (then the sole means of transportation) from San José, Costa Rica's capital, to San Isidro del General, but eighty-five miles due south. Today it's a simple trick to cover that distance in five hours. Might make quite a difference, if your child were critically ill and San José were the nearest place for an emergency operation.

And it all came of a meeting of Latin American engineers held in 1924 in Washington. So you see, That Pan American Highway had but reached its majority in 1945. Yet today, though not a completely continuous roadway (which probably will require ten or twelve years more) each of the nineteen nations through which the road leads is sharing in increased cultural and material advantages. Furthermore, all are gradually evolving a new mutual confidence through inter- and innernational contacts.

In passing, just an observation bearing upon official highway nomenclature. To all but a few governmental executives, the route is known as "The Pan American Highway." The "Inter-American Highway" is usually spoken of as that section of the "Pan American Highway" in Mexico and Central America from Laredo, Texas, to the Panama Canal. Today, though Mexico presently defrays the entire cost of all roads within her own borders, the United States Government cooperates with the other six countries north of the Canal to the extent of a \$20,000,000. program.

Local segments of the Highway carry local designations. From Mexico City to Ocotal at the Guatemalan frontier the road is known as the "Christopher Columbus Highway," while the entire Guatemalan section is called the "Franklin Roosevelt Highway." From Caracas, Venezuela, to Colombia they call it the "Simón Bolívar," and so it goes!

Progress has been made toward uniform road markers, reciprocal licensing of cars and trucks, load controls and technical engineering terms.

Further data concerning the Pan American Highway is obtainable from the Public Roads Administration in Washington, or better still, from the embassies, legations and consulates of the particular nations with which one happens to be most concerned.

Don't for one split second think of the road as some ephemeral, amorphous abstraction, for it has already reached big-time proportions. Mexico appropriated \$150,000 in 1947 for tourist publicity. Why not? She reckons 1948 travel trade at some \$75,000,000! Other countries are active along the same line. The Pan American Highway is paved with tourists' gold. My advice? Let's heed the music and attend the dance! With all due respect to good old Horace Greeley:

"Go south, young man, go south. . . . Down That Pan American Highway!"



259,263 tourists visited this Good Neighbor south of the Rio Grande during 1947 and folks say that when once the dust of Mexico settles on your heart you can never be happy in any other country.

## Is It Dangerous?

IS IT REALLY safe to venture even as far south as Mexico, much less to those little known wild, prickly and dehydrated Central American countries beyond the beyond?

Let me give you a few personal experiences:

At eight one bright Sunday morning, a young "snow-snifter" (pardon the vernacular, "drug addict" to you) shadowed me along the main thoroughfare of one of the biggest cities, took a wild swing at my chin with a right hook, completely misgauged my jaw, slipped but regained his balance and chased me for two blocks!

Once upon a time, and this one rings the bell for it is gospel truth, I escorted a twenty-five year old blonde back to her apartment from a rather late penthouse party at which we'd both been guests. Going uptown in the taxi, we'd spoken a bit of Spanish and a little German, and so far as I knew, I'd made but one faux pas. Replying to my question of where she worked, she said, "I don't work, I travel." It was four in the morning as I bid her good night in the corridor. She'd invited me in to chat but obliged to be on the job by 8:30, I politely demurred.

My friend squeezed my hand and just before closing the door in my face, floored me with "Yes, it has been most interesting to meet you, Mr. Stephens, but only because you are so damned mid-Victorian!" Later she shot her sweetheart but I hasten to add, with complete justification (if murder can ever be condoned) and with at least complete legal absolution!

Aboard a public bus one otherwise pleasant spring morning, the drunken chauffeur careened, then crashed us into a steel pillar, killing the elderly gentleman who had been sitting to my immediate right!

A chap befriended by me in a financial extremity graciously reciprocated by passing me a phony. His \$100.00 check bounced back in three days. He had just twelve cents against it in an out-of-town bank!

Before my very eyes, the father of two young children took cyanide of potassium and died before first aid could be administered!

Hold on here, mates, my memory's slipping. I forgot to preface these

incidents by observing that they'd all transpired right here in Little Old Manhattan!

So getting back to the quite understandable query . . . "Is it really safe to venture to Latin America?" I respectfully respond: "Yes, son, but just don't pass through New York or Chicago on the way down!"

Such a sketchy observation is not only grotesque, it's downright unfair. There is no certainty that by sundown tomorrow (or perhaps even today) I shall not be knocked cold by some natives in lonely Chiapas merely for such gold as they might subsequently gouge out of my teeth. My Mexican friends themselves had cautioned me in this matter, and they weren't fooling either.

All manner of crimes, petty and great, are committed daily all over the world. Yet in traveling about the Caribbean these thirty-odd years, I've met with no harm. That goes for large metropolitan centers, villages of but two or three thatched huts, and many a lonely mile in the wide open places. No untoward incident occurred involving the slightest physical pain or trouble of any kind other than one or two scrapes for which my tactlessness alone could be blamed.





## Does the Trip Cost Very Much?

WHY, madam, that depends entirely upon yourself!"

So replied the realistic family doctor to the sweet young thing who asked whether a vaccination on her leg would show.

And so it goes, madam (or sir, as the case may be) with respect to the expense of visiting the Caribbean, or of attending even the neighborhood movies where you may sit in the gallery or in the pit. Just take New York, for example. Breakfast can be had for a thin dime, or one can consume an overstuffed "six-courser" for a king's ransom in any of the de luxe pirates' dens of the silk stocking district of Upper Park Avenue. The uptown tip would be three times the entire cost of the downtown meal.

Expense is governed by pocketbook, inclination and (the first shall be last) by will power! Aside from the fees for tourist cards, passports and visas, negligible in dollars and cents but irritating as the very devil, the Four Horsemen of the Financial Apocalypse are:

*Cost of Transportation*, i.e., the price of getting there and getting back home. One can run the whole financial gamut from hitch-hiking to de luxe planes. Thousands of miles of both bus routes and railroad lines string together hundreds of delightful and interesting places between the Rio Grande and the Panama Canal, in all seven countries. The rates? Probably they're not much over a cent a mile. The answer is simple. Get out the sliderule and the old sixth grade "Murray's Geography" and do your own calculating. I bet you won't be far wrong if you figure at a cent and a quarter.

*Cost of Eating*, feeding one's face, an item which in my humble opinion should at once be tossed over the left shoulder of serious consideration as it may be assumed one must eat, whether or not one elects to travel. Oh, how easy it is to rationalize when someone wants to do something naughty! Recall the hard-bitten New England definition of a conscience as that part of you which feels rotten when everything else feels perfectly swell.

I had a thoroughly enjoyable meal for four cents (and no tip) in a

funny, dirty, old market-place in Oaxaca, Mexico. Back in the capital, not so very far, either, as the proverbial crow flies if he were silly enough to forsake the lovely open countryside and go to any big, bustling metropolis, I had but recently endured the agonies of a seven-dollar supper at a swanky hot-spot, just for sociability's sake, if you know what I mean. Yes, that was in Mexico City.

*Cost of Shelter*, i.e., getting in out of the sun, the wind and the rain. This is by no means a must though on at least rare occasions highly desirable! One can pay \$10.00 or \$15.00 per diem for a gilded cage in the "city's finest" Gran Hotel or Hotel Internacional. As with radio, "any similarity between these names and those of people in real life is purely coincidental." You know the type of hotel I mean. You just can't miss 'em here or abroad. Hot and cold folding doors, running roaches and invisible doorknobs wrapped up with innumerable other items of expensive but totally nonessential flotsam and jetsam.

But don't get too discouraged. All along the line in the capitals and principal cities at least, it's not over-difficult, with a bit of intelligent before-hand correspondence and subsequent prying around, to discover charming little *pensiones* (boarding houses) with clean bed-linen and excellent food at about two dollars to four dollars per day. This includes everything. True, there may not be too much English spoken but that should prove a help rather than a hindrance.

If you haven't the sixty cents for a pocket dictionary, run up to the Public Library before you start and make a list of the twenty or thirty principal food items you're accustomed to at home. Then, if you haven't the courage to make a stab at the pronunciation and the resourcefulness to point to your midriff, why you're just too much of a cowardly moron to break away from your dear old mammy's apronstrings in the first place. Against minor linguistic hurdles with which you may be confronted, there'll be enough local color and amusing little native side-lights to compensate a hundredfold. Nine cases out of ten, the *pension* will have an exquisite patio overflowing with ferns, orchids, cacti, birds and blossoms with invariably a tiled fountain and tiny pool at the side or center. Probably, there'll be a beautiful native girl or two wandering about and constituting no objection, at that!

If you want to sink lower than three dollars or four dollars for such lodgings of luxury, do as I've done on many an occasion. Sleep free for nothing in a police station (voluntarily, if you please), in a barracks with the soldiers (if you happen to be a man, of course, for in all that country

I saw neither Wacs nor Waves) or even in an empty straw shack out in the wide open places if you're a regular guy! This last particularly appeals to animal lovers, as I recall one recent experience in rural Costa Rica where, hearing a succession of suspicious but by no means unfriendly noises, I grabbed my trusty flashlight to count no less than eleven pigs beneath my bed.

With respect to the sorely maligned insect population of Latin America, don't hastily draw unwarranted conclusions by adding four and four and arriving at nine. Maybe I'm prejudiced, coming as I do from New Jersey where one invariably uses chicken wire as mosquito netting, but I'll take a chance any day in the year down in the tropics. With all their traditional creepy and crawling critters, yes, and even with the four-inch cockroaches of the West Indies (euphemistically and I think rather poetically referred to as "mahogany birds"), I still prefer their variety to the gnats, green-eyed flies and voracious mosquitoes of our own northern watering places!

Now the *bête noire* of the whole party, the mad bull in the budget shop, if you will, is the . . .

*Cost of Sundries*, i.e., the utterly nonessential dingbats one is forever tempted to buy, which only mire one down with extra luggage and proportionately diminish the weight of any man's purse!

The first three factors of transportation, food and lodging can be readily computed with slight difficulty before starting out, yes, even before making up one's mind to leave the Old Homestead. But expensive side-trips, movies and theatres, and most of all a miscellany of native oddments and fine handicrafts constitute the actual dollars and cents Waterloo of most travel. Individually, each item costs little, yet the total outlay can, and generally does, become staggering.

Perhaps the best approach is to inquire if ever you've wrestled with a family budget? I don't mean the naive, optimistic stage of jotting down the hypothetical low cost of living, but rather do I refer to the grim autopsies where actual outlays won't come within a mile of the theoretical. The staple items, the old reliables that were truly necessary (light, heat and laundry) come out fairly well, but where the applecart is always upset (and how!) is by presents to your mother-in-law, an evening at a nightclub with friends (?), or what have you? It's the same old story with respect to the cost of travel. The far from essential "incidentals" are the real gremlins to fear. Beware the extras!

Mexico and Guatemala are so rich in hammered silver pieces set off

with turquoise, jade and opal, hand-woven textiles of irresistible design, and attractive basketry and pottery in endless quantities that none but the stoutest heart and purse pass through this craftsman's paradise unscathed! This is praise, not condemnation. However, it has a most powerful bearing upon the discussion of the moment, "How much will it cost me?," and leads back to the text of today's sermon which for emphasis is now repeated in bold-faced gas-pipe Gothic . . . "Why, that depends entirely upon yourself, madam."

If you take time to learn the ropes of comfortable and still very economical travel before you shove off (any consulate or embassy will prove of assistance from this angle), you ought to be able to have your fill of touring at reasonable cost. Your expenses should prove no more and probably less than those for going about the States under comparable conditions, of course. Just don't expect Waldorf Astoria food and service at Minnie Woolworth prices.

Farther along the way, we'll be getting down to brass tacks, particularly with regard to actual transportation and hotel prices. Till then, hold your hat and don't get scared!

Among some old papers from the 1945 trip to Mexico City, I've just stumbled upon this highly enlightening information:

|                         |     |                                  |     |
|-------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|-----|
| Trolley fares . . . . . | 2¢  | Shoe shines . . . . .            | 4¢  |
| Coca-Cola . . . . .     | 6¢  | Ice cream . . . . .              | 6¢  |
| Taxi fares . . . . .    | 30¢ | Laundry (sixteen pieces) . . . . | 42¢ |
| Haircut . . . . .       | 20¢ | Newspaper . . . . .              | 1¢  |
| Shave . . . . .         | 16¢ |                                  |     |



## Good Neighbors South of the Border

LIVING in such a far-flung, diversified country, we Americans are prone to provincialism. We decidedly are not a nation of travelers, if the limited, wealthy classes of the two seaboard be excepted. Americans are amazingly ignorant of Latin American geography, far more so of Latin American psychology. Xochimilco, Ixtepec, Netzahualcoyotl, Tzintzuntzán, Quezaltenango, Huehuetenango, Popocatepetl, Ixtaccihuatl are by air less than two days from our doorways, yet scarcely an American knows them. Even names of sister republics thirty-six hours away like Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua are less familiar than Norway, Egypt and Korea.

For half a thin dime's toll (oddly enough only three cents when you walk from Mexico in the opposite direction) one can, in less time than it takes to tell, cross the International Bridge to experience incredible contrasts. The famous Rio Grande over which one passes, is far less "grande" than the complete changes in the emotional and physical lives of the two peoples living on its opposite banks. Psychologically, our hectic American civilization (?) where one must run like the very devil to keep from going backward, gives way to a mode of life where one deliberately and sensibly takes one's time about almost everything. The sharp staccato of cash register and typewriter gives way to the strumming of a guitar or, at worst, the moaning of a phonograph.

Dress becomes less ostentatious and more artistic. Sandals or bare feet become the rule rather than the exception. All seem less concerned with what others may think. Rather than play at our national pastime of living up to the Joneses, our Latin friends seem fully content to practice the sane philosophy of "They say! What do they say? Let them say!"

Color appeal, sound appeal and heart appeal are always close at hand in Middle America. Even the traditional hard-bitten banker will find in these countries a refreshing contrast. Here the heart and soul of one's fellow man are the true measure of character rather than the net assets of his latest business statement. For the most part there are but two

classes that really count, namely, the numerically small, extremely wealthy upper crust and the overwhelming majority of pathetically poor peons or peasants. The middle class other than in the large cities is negligible.

We have, oh, so much to learn about and from our Good Neighbors South of the Border! Every Mexican is not pajama-clad, sleeping his life away, pulque-drunk, beneath a prickly cactus plant. As a matter of fact, most Latins, at least out in the country, are up and slaving hours before gringo alarm clocks start raising the devil in our neck of the woods. The legendary siesta was legally proscribed a few years ago in Mexico's larger cities.

We're too quick in sarcastically looking down our American noses at these people who are more musical than we, whose children are infinitely more courteous and quiet than our own, and some of whose universities antedate Harvard, Yale and Princeton by a century or more.

Indian children are sweet, softly spoken and invariably courteous. Never have I come up against one single "brat" in all my journeys throughout the land of sunshine, saddles and señoritas. The theory has been advanced that all children of the world should be born in Mexico to remain there until they reach the age of twelve years . . . an excellent suggestion because of their uniform politeness.

Music, folk-dancing, handicrafts and, most vital of all, the art of enjoying the present by getting a real kick out of everyday associations with family and friends, command greater respect than just "making money." Speaking of money, U. S. currency is, of course, no longer legal tender once you've crossed the frontier. Don't fool yourself about the language either. Even in Nuevo Laredo opposite Texas you'll find it sufficiently difficult to locate anyone that speaks English.

The physical aspects present an even more glaring contrast, for across the Rio Grande, though the natural terrain is quite the same, everything "man-made" is vastly different. Our bastard architecture (here a Mansard, next a Georgian, then a California bungalow type) is in absentia, and happily so. Throughout all Latin America there is a restful architectural homogeneity. It's all Spanish colonial or native adobe or palm thatch. Haciendas, houses and huts harmonize without a jarring note from palace to privy!

Invariably the city roofs are flat, without a chimney to a town. Construction lines are straight and rectangular with nine-tenths of the buildings of but a single story. Exteriors, though severe and in instances

even uninviting, often open upon charming, cool, intimate patios with fountains, plants and birds. Though rather rigid in form, the fronts of Spanish-American houses more than compensate in color. A row of houses becomes a paint salesman's veritable dream of Paradise. Never two alike, the walls run the whole gamut of the spectrum, a residential rainbow of greens, reds, yellows, blues and lavenders. There are few windows, and where they do occur most have no glass, but merely wooden or iron grilles, at once less expensive, less troublesome to care for and definitely cooler and more artistic.

Stores are open-faced to the sidewalk, only shut off at night by solid ceiling-high shutters. Macadam streets give way to dirt roads other than along the main stem. Though dusty and for the most part without benefit of sewers, they are better adapted to the oft-unshod saddle horses and burros that take the place of automobiles here in the States.

Life's tempo is less harried yet more colorful. Generally a store, or *cantina*, regardless of its size, boasts some highfalutin' title such as "Paradise," "Pearl of the Tropics" or perhaps "Good Hope." Even buses carry similar grandiose names like "The Pheasant." There's one antediluvian laboring through the hills from Puebla to Oaxaca under the titular weight of "The United Lines of the Red Star and Circles of Gold."

Not infrequently wandering acrobats perform in the streets, assured always of an appreciative audience. Latins always find leisure to "stop and watch," even more so just to chat and pass the time of day.

Before venturing "south of the border," read Luis Quintanilla's admirable book, *A Latin American Speaks*. It's the fairest treatment I have yet seen of this ticklish subject of racial differences and intolerances. Bear constantly in mind that once across the Rio Grande, YOU and not those whose different ways may irritate, are the foreigner. Then if you just can't stand "furriners" be fair to them, to yourself and to your own people. Be a good scout and play only in your own backyard for in no field are comparisons more odious.

By way of illustration, I recall the yarn about a certain patriotic society convention in Northern New Jersey. One member, more mercenary than kindly, hoping to cash in on the at least temporary bull market in patriotism, placed a sign in his store window reading:

I'm a 100% American. I hate *all* foreigners!

An Italian competitor across the street, not sharing his friend's ad-

vantage of citizenship, but reluctant to see business go by his door, resourcefully came up with this even larger and more startling claim.

I'm a 200% American. I hate *everybody*!!

The *sine qua non*, without which there is nothing, of foreign travel, is complete racial tolerance. If you don't bear this in mind, the entire trip may well turn out an anticlimax of irritations. The folks in Mexico and Central America simply do *not* do things the way we do. They don't even think the way we do! After all, that is their prerogative, isn't it? It's *their* country, and in this instance again *you* are the outlander. Paste that in your old sombrero, and you're not likely to experience a bit of trouble at any time, anywhere or with anybody.

The maximum joy will only be derived if you mingle with the people. Here's a little instance which paid me real dividends.

It was after a forty mile, extremely rough native bus ride in which the dust was so heavy that we passengers and the driver wore handkerchiefs bandit-like over our noses and mouths. It was so hot that in every stream we forded our man stopped to dip water out of the river to fill the radiator. We arrived at dusk in a community where no one spoke English, where there were no electric lights and only one tiny *pension* called the Hotel de la Familia Martinez. Sure enough, it was drab and dim, but it had the usual large airy patio. As I entered, there were no adults, just three or four kids playing parchesi. Recognizing an American they stopped their game and implored me to read a letter but recently arrived from a little girl in Ohio. Seems their teacher had made arrangements for them to exchange correspondence with American children of their age. Unable to make head or tail of the Ohio epistle, they begged me to read it. Though more interested at that very minute in tying on the old feedbag, I complied. Was my face red? The letter, written in midwinter, dealt with Santa Claus, coasting, ice skating, and snow-balling, a nomenclature for which I had no Spanish equivalents. Rather than disappoint them and with the selfish end of getting the discussion to the point of food, I improvised as I went along. Yes, I lied beautifully but interestingly. Out of whole cloth, I spun a yarn that charmed the birds out of the bushes.

After supper, I asked the mother if there were not one or two of her girls (the oldest was eleven) who could play the guitar, observing I'd never yet found any Mexican ladies who could not play the guitar or at least sing "Cielito Lindo." By golly, nary a one could thump the



guitar but the oldest sister boasted she could "*tocar la pianola*" (play the pianola). I suggested a fiesta and we repaired to the living room which apparently was reserved only for the most important occasions, such as, family funerals. To relieve the lugubriousness of the setting, I suggested we send her young Indian yardboy, whom I dubbed Pancho Villa to the children's delight, to the store for ice cream. Of course, there was no ice cream to be had in this isolated town, but instead Pancho turned up with crackers and enough Coca Cola to float a ship.

Then the prima donna sat down at probably the wheeziest pianola in all Latin America and pumped out one roll after another of Mexican folk songs while the other kids and I stood around in a semicircle and bellowed. The candle I held above the roll was the sole illumination, and leaning over, I read the Spanish words. As a matter of fact, I was so enthused and completely absorbed by my success as a troubadour that I thoughtlessly flicked out the parlor window an inch or so of ashes from the cigar I was smoking, innocently enough, but with embarrassing results. Unbeknownst to me, a group of natives, attracted by the caterwauling of possibly the only gringo barrel-tone within fifty kilometers, had surreptitiously gathered in the dark beneath the open window.



## Cortesias Latinas

POSTSCRIPTALLY, just a few typical kindnesses extended to me along the way by utter strangers.

I was boarding a trolley in Mexico City one day and casually inquired directions of two schoolboys that preceded me. They insisted on paying my fare!

Climbing up the hot, dusty hill to the Ruins of Monte Alban, I met a ten year old boy. Halfway up his sharp eyes detected a little stone relic which I offered to buy. He politely but flatly refused. I was amazed because obviously he was of the poorest class. Imagine my surprise, returning alone a half hour later, to discover the boy awaiting me at the same spot with a much better stone carving which he insisted I accept as a gift.

This next incident necessitates a confession. Strolling down an avenue in the better residential section of Mexico City one Sunday morning, I noticed a pretty young señorita standing behind one of the eight foot iron window grilles so common in the residences of the wealthy. Luck was with me. A street urchin was leaning up against the wall waiting for shoeshine victims. To enjoy the landscape even though I didn't own the property, I submitted to his brush and polish ministrations, realizing how proverbially slow these kids are. Again fortune smiled though the señorita didn't. The girl's brother came out the door, and I immediately engaged him in conversation. The result? No, not a Reno divorce but a lasting friendship with one of the most charming families one could ever hope to meet. Three days later I was invited to a dinner at their home, a ten-courser which lasted a couple of hours. Following dessert, a saucer of bicarbonate of soda was passed about the table. Who dares say Latins are not realists!

An incident in Costa Rica. Deep in the jungles at Buenos Aires, the District Police Chief, without being asked, spent much of a Sunday morning sketching in conscientious detail a fine map of the entire largely unknown section I was to pass through the next week to the Panama frontier. It was so valuable I sent it down to Washington for their files.

Farther down the line in the twenty straw-hut village of Potrero

Grande another complete stranger, the proprietor of a tiny jungle store, insisted upon my accepting without pay a night's rest, two big meals, cigarettes, a bottle of "pop," a half dozen oranges which he himself ingeniously peeled, and, finally, a brand new pair of socks from his precious and meager supply.

In another village I asked the only native within sight for directions to a certain ranch. It was high noon, hellishly hot and no shade. "How are you going, please?" I told him afoot, of course, as that was the only means of transportation at my disposal. "Don't be silly," he said. "Just wait a minute or two!" Back he came leading the finest little old pony with the Morris Chair saddle and single braided bridle so typical of that section. "Here's your horse," he said simply. I got aboard and rode with high pomp and ceremony, to say nothing of much greater comfort, to the distant ranch. Returning hours later, this chap, too, flatly refused to be paid. He was offended at so much as a hint of compensation. This from one whom I'd never seen before or since.

You're right, brother! These experiences are definitely "out of this world," or at least out of our materialistic world up north here.

Not one of these generous folk had the slightest idea that he should ever lay eyes on me again. Chances of even a delayed return of bread cast upon the waters were nil. Appreciation of this attitude increases with the realization that it "was not always thus." No, not by a jugful! Not long ago when dollar diplomacy was the Washington vogue, our capitalists exploited southern neighbors to a fare-thee-well. With good cause the Latins heartily disliked and feared the Colossus of the North, a natural reaction well epitomized at a state banquet some years ago when a Costa Rican official, having imbibed to the extent of being more realistic than tactful, responded to a toast by coming out with this priceless one: "We Ticos (Costa Ricans) *like* you Machos (Americans) . . . but we don't *love* you!"



## Various Books . . . Various Travelers

EXCITING tales of adventure are fascinating to read, but somewhat impracticable to emulate. My hair obligingly stands on end from cover to cover as these devil-may-cares leap paragraph by paragraph from one death-defying episode to another. But they make it hard to turn out the light, and I must have my eight hours sleep!

Then there are those fat, statistically fulsome little volumes oozing with where to eat and where to sleep, where to go and what to see. They are guidebooks with a vengeance, jammed to the gunwales with treasure-trove, factual and mathematical. They are, however, slightly time-consuming for other than serious research.

Books of adventure and reference serve admirable purposes. I only cite them as fair warning to those seeking such travel-aids, because within these covers lurks no exciting incident nor is there more than a smattering of what to do and what to see. This book is merely an informal story of vagabonding Down That Pan American Highway, the experiences of a simple-minded, common or garden variety of New York businessman who set out to prove and did prove, at least to his own satisfaction, that it is possible to travel along the road clear down from Texas to Panama.

As with books, so with travelers. First, there are the intrepid explorers. From cobra's fangs to tiger's maw along the cool sequestered vale of life, they keep the even tenor of their way, oblivious to the quiet charm of the lovely countryside through which they pass and the yet more charming natives with whom they might have made mutually advantageous contacts had time and tide but waited.

This is no criticism, merely envy. I'd simply love to be set upon by some wild boar or be commanded by some be-pistoled bandito to reach for the sky, even if only in first year Spanish! But *qué lástima!* (What a pity!) Nothing ever happens to me. No, never even a mild adventure south of the border in more than thirty years of now and then vagabonding through the traditionally piratical countries of the Caribbean.

Second are the *Viatori Americani* who constitute our vilest export to Latin America. Small in number, yet disproportionately articulate,

they do much to break down respect for their fellow Americans. I'm not indicting the wealthy, whose deportment for the most part is impeccable, though personally neither their modes of transportation nor their sight-seeing inclinations appeal. It's the *nouveaux riches* with their vulgar, noisy striving to emulate those of the silken purse that get my goat. And there isn't a land beyond the seas that hasn't been blighted with this low form of animal life.

Confining their trips to super-duper planes or drawing rooms on equally super-duper Pullmans, they are completely hamstrung by mountains of baggage which set them apart, poor dears, from the rest of the universe. They scurry only to flash Americanized hotels to ferret out the swankiest Americanized bars, night clubs and half-breed honky-tonks. Fraternizing only with those who speak American, they bring to mind one of our consuls who, resident for years in Spain, patriotically bragged that "none of that slime" (knowledge of Spanish) had stuck to him! With ill-concealed contempt for much that is native, these misrepresentatives of our United States criticize local conditions. They speak disparagingly of the very folks whose hospitality they so avidly accept.

Prefer a specific indictment, would you? On my last trip south, an American lady (?) of the press sweetly referred to the inhabitants of the country through which she was then passing and whose gracious attentions she lapped up at every turn as "those shriveled-up bastards." I am no arbiter either of skin conditions or of illegitimacy south of the border, but I resent such gauche ingratitude. Incidentally, the old gal was cursed with a face not even a mother could love.

Sweet mystery of life! Why do such as these voluntarily subject themselves to sea, air and train-sickness and to such expense in time and money? Equally strong liquor and equally weak women (the foregoing from observation though, not experience) are on tap but a stone's throw from Times Square or the Loop. Maybe it's just sloughing off inhibitions away from Main Street, down where personal identities are unknown and where tales are less likely to be told. *Quién sabe?*

And now, having spewed that venom, let's toss open the windows and take a good deep breath of fresh air. May I expand upon the virtues of those travelers who, in my opinion, comprise Nature's noblemen?

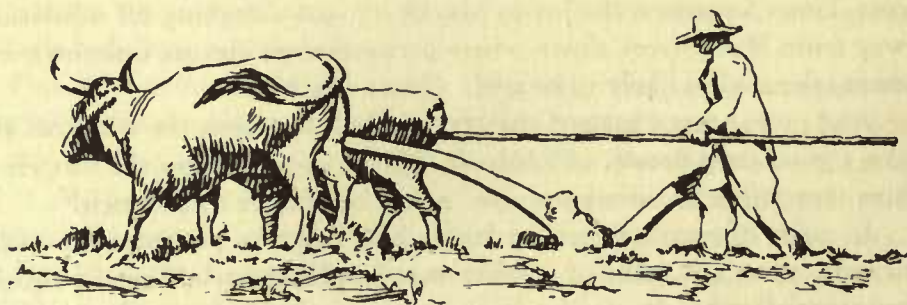
In point of numbers not yet legion but, Allah be praised, ever on the increase, these are folks of modest means, plus a sprinkling of equally fine travelers who, despite fat bank accounts, act always with consideration and in excellent taste. Their common denominator is the joy de-

rived from all that is lovely in the great out-of-doors. Sympathetically interested in their fellow man, be he brown, black or white, prince or peon, gringo or latino, they display a kindly curiosity toward those who do things somewhat differently from us back home.

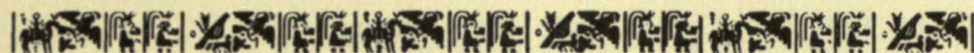
These travelers revel in sunsets over lakes framed by towering volcanic peaks. They are exhilarated by brisk hikes through the wind-swept, pine-scented Highlands. Just lazing along the lush banks of palm-bordered streams gives them a tingle! Waterfalls, huge tree ferns, orchids, weird cacti, big blue, black and yellow butterflies, herons, parrots and comical monkeys entrance them. These and a thousand other commonplaces of the tropics cost nothing but the ability and disposition to relax and drink them in.

Teachers, ministers, artists, musicians, writers, secretaries or what have you (any and all who are sympathetically imaginative) fall into this group. Yet many who might travel to their own advantage as well as to the credit of our country, never stir from home and mother, because of those two old stumbling blocks . . . fear of cost and fear of the unknown.

To these good people I am happy to report my own experiences in Middle America. To generalize that everything is beautiful and clean and completely as one wishes, would be wrong. There is much to be desired in tropical travel, even if only as far as Mexico. However, the one thing I promise those courageous enough to make the plunge is a rare combination of much that is beautiful in nature with that which makes the whole paradise setting just so much more enjoyable—a universal generosity and a cordial welcome from our Good Neighbors in all seven countries through which their paths may lead.



## PART TWO



# *My Actual Trip*

Itinerary of the Complete Route

Photographically Speaking

Familiar Mexico

1st day Laredo, Texas, to Mexico City

Less Familiar Mexico

2nd day Mexico City to Puebla

3rd day Puebla to Oaxaca

4th day Oaxaca to Tehuantepec

Decidedly Unfamiliar Mexico

5th day Tehuantepec to Los Amates

6th day Los Amates to Tuxtla Gutierrez

7th day Tuxtla Gutierrez to Comitán de las Flores

8th day Comitán de las Flores to Gracias a Dios

## Guatemala . . . Crumpled Parchment

- 9th day Gracias a Dios to Nenton
- 10th day Nenton to Jacaltenango
- 11th day Jacaltenango to Concepcion
- 12th day Concepcion to Huehuetenango
- 13th day Huehuetenango to Guatemala City

## El Salvador . . . Little Beans and Big Volcanoes

- 14th day Guatemala City to San Salvador

## Honduras and Tegucigalpa, Charming "Stepchild" of the Pan American Highway

- 15th day San Salvador to Comalí, Honduras

## Nicaragua and the "End of the Line"

- 16th day Comalí to Managua
- 17th day Managua to Rivas

## Costa Rica . . . Lonely Guanacaste Province

- 18th day Rivas to Rancho San Damita, Costa Rica
- 19th day Rancho San Damita to La Cruz
- 20th day La Cruz to Liberia
- 21st day Liberia to Las Cañas
- 22nd day Las Cañas to Macacona
- 23rd day Macacona to San José

## San José and the "Mountain of Death"

- 24th day San José to San Isidro del General



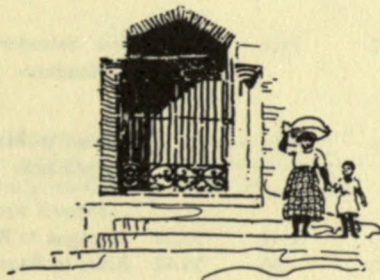
Just Between Us Girls  
Prelude to the Junglè Trek

## Shank's Mare and Otherwise

- 25th day San Isidro del General to Río La Union  
26th day Río La Union to Volcan, Costa Rica  
Volcan to Buenos Aires  
Rest Day at Buenos Aires  
Second Rest Day at Buenos Aires  
27th day Buenos Aires to Potrero Grande  
28th day Potrero Grande to Javilla  
29th day Javilla to Rancho Santa Clara  
30th day Rancho Santa Clara to Agua Buena  
31st day Agua Buena to Cañas Gordas  
Cañas Gordas to El Volcan  
El Volcan to David, Panama

## Ditch in Extremus and the "Zone"

- 32nd day David to Panama City, Panama Canal



## ITINERARY OF COMPLETE ROUTE

Laredo, Texas, to Panama Canal

| Day                | Road Hours | Mileage     |              | Transportation Cost |              | Route   | Via   |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|---|---|
|                    |            | For the Day | For the Trip | For the Day         | For the Trip |   |   |
| <b>MEXICO</b>      |            |             |              |                     |              |   |   |
|                    |            |             |              | \$ .05              |              | Laredo, Texas, across Rio Grande to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico    | Afoot   |
| 1st                | 31         | 757         | 757          | \$6.12              | \$6.17       | Nuevo Laredo to Mexico City                                 | Public bus                                    |
| 2nd                | 3          | 84          | 841          | 1.02                | 7.19         | Mexico City to Puebla                                       | Public bus                                    |
| 3rd                | 11         | 255         | 1096         | 3.14                | 10.33        | Puebla to Oaxaca  | Public bus                                    |
| 4th                | 23         | 160         | 1256         | 4.00                | 14.33        | Oaxaca to Tehuantepec                                       | Public bus, truck                             |
| 5th                | 23         | 103         | 1359         | Free                | 14.33        | Tehuantepec to Los Amates                                   | Gov't truck, horse                            |
| 6th                | 3          | 85          | 1444         | Free                | 14.33        | Los Amates to Tuxtla Gutierrez                              | Station wagon                                 |
| 7th                | 10         | 111         | 1555         | 4.00                | 18.33        | Tuxtla Gutierrez to Comitán de las Flores                   | Public bus                                    |
| 8th                | 3          | 30          | 1585         | 10.20               | 28.53        | Comitán de las Flores to Gracias a Dios, Guatemala Frontier | Taxi; horse                                   |
| <b>GUATEMALA</b>   |            |             |              |                     |              |   |   |
| 9th                | 8          | 21          | 1606         | 1.00<br>(Guide)     | 29.53        | Gracias a Dios to Nentón                                    | Afoot   |
| 10th               | 8          | 20          | 1626         | .75                 | 30.28        | Nentón to Jacaltenango                                      | Afoot   |
| 11th               | 3          | 8           | 1634         | .85                 | 31.13        | Jacaltenango to Concepción                                  | Mule, afoot                                   |
| 12th               | 14½        | 55          | 1689         | 9.45                | 40.58        | Concepción to Huehuetenango                                 | Mule, afoot<br>Horse, taxi                    |
| 13th               | 16         | 175         | 1864         | 3.50                | 44.08        | Huehuetenango to Guatemala City                             | Public bus                                    |
| 14th               | 15½        | 165         | 2029         | 8.00                | 52.08        | Guatemala City to San Salvador, E.S.                        | Public bus                                    |
| <b>EL SALVADOR</b> |            |             |              |                     |              |   |   |
| 15th               | 11         | 203         | 2232         | Free                | 52.08        | San Salvador to Comalí, Honduras                            | U.S. Gov't car                                |
| <b>HONDURAS</b>    |            |             |              |                     |              |   |   |
| 16th               | 9          | 157         | 2389         | Free                | 52.08        | Comalí to Managua, Nicaragua                                | U.S. Gov't car                                |
| <b>NICARAGUA</b>   |            |             |              |                     |              |   |   |
| 17th               | 5          | 68          | 2457         | 1.44                | 53.52        | Managua to Rivas  | Public bus                                    |
| 18th               | 5          | 28          | 2485         | .90                 | 54.42        | Rivas to Rancho San Damita, Costa Rica                      | Public bus,<br>private truck,<br>afoot, horse |

# DOWN THAT PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY

| Day               | Road Hours | Mileage     |              | Transportation Cost |              | Route   | Via  |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|---|--|
|                   |            | For the Day | For the Trip | For the Day         | For the Trip |   |  |
| <b>COSTA RICA</b> |            |             |              |                     |              |   |  |
| 19th              | 5          | 9           | 2494         | Free                | 54.42        | Rancho San Damita to La Cruz                                  | Mule, walk                                       |
| 20th              | 21         | 36          | 2530         | 6.38                | 60.80        | La Cruz to Liberia  | Horse, walk, oxcart                              |
| 21st              | 3½         | 30          | 2560         | 1.80                | 62.60        | Liberia to Las Cañas  | Public bus                                       |
| 22nd              | 12½        | 51          | 2611         | .20                 | 62.80        | Las Cañas to Macacona   | Public bus, walk, private car, U. S. Gov't truck |
| 23rd              | 6          | 66          | 2677         | 1.60                | 64.40        | Macacona to San José  | U.S. Gov't truck, public bus                     |
| 24th              | 7          | 85          | 2762         | Free                | 64.40        | San José to San Isidro del General                            | U.S. Gov't car and jeep                          |
| 25th              | 9          | 13          | 2775         | Free                | 64.40        | San Isidro to Río Union                                       | Afoot  |
| 26th              | 9          | 23          | 2798         | 9.47                | 73.87        | Río Union to Buenos Aires                                     | Afoot, horse                                     |
| 27th              | 9          | 19          | 2817         | 5.27                | 79.14        | Buenos Aires to Potrero Grande                                | Afoot  |
| 28th              | 5½         | 12          | 2829         | Free                | 79.14        | Potrero Grande to Javilla                                     | Afoot  |
| 29th              | 8          | 15          | 2844         | Free                | 79.14        | Javilla to Rancho Santa Clara                                 | Afoot, mule                                      |
| 30th              | 3½         | 5           | 2849         | 10.00               | 89.14        | Rancho Santa Clara to Agua Buena, Costa Rica Frontier Station | Afoot, mule, horse                               |
| 31st              | 13         | 75          | 2924         | 32.00               | 121.14       | Costa Rica Frontier Station to David, Panama                  | Private truck, mule, taxi, afoot                 |
| <b>PANAMA</b>     |            |             |              |                     |              |   |  |
| 32nd              | 15         | 307         | 3231         | 19.00               | 140.14       | David to Panama City  | Public bus, taxi                                 |

*Transportation Totals:*

|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Public bus .....      | 1993 miles |
| Cars and trucks ..... | 942        |
| Afoot .....           | 183        |
| Muleback .....        | 37         |
| Horseback .....       | 36         |
| Jeep .....            | 23         |
| Oxcart .....          | 17         |

—————  
3231 miles\*

\* The difference between this figure and the government figure of 3,261 miles can be attributed to the fact that even today, the precise line of the Pan American Highway has not been finally determined by the surveyors. This is notably true in the Mayan Highlands of Guatemala and in the vicinity of the Costa Rica/Panama frontier.





Photographically speaking —



De luxe buses make the 763 mile run from Laredo, Texas, to Mexico City in 29 hours for \$12.94



Puebla's "Sugar Cake House," an example of Spanish Colonial architecture

Puebla (altitude — 7,216) is a "high spot" for Mexican handicrafts





Ruins of Monte Alban, built by the Zapotecs three or four miles outside of Oaxaca

Ruins of the author, dragging a dead bus up a hot hill en route to Tehuantepec







Hall of the Monoliths at Mitla, just an hour's run south of Oaxaca



A "Tehuana" or Isthmus lady of Tehuantepec



Chamula Indian from Chiapas



All villages have open markets. San Cristóbal las Casas is no exception



Chichicastenango, Guatemala



Lovely Lake Atitlan. No other place, from the Rio Grande to the Canal, excels in charm

Launches make inexpensive trips to the dozen or so villages that dot its shore





Antigua, Guatemala's colonial capital, destroyed by earthquake in 1773





This gentleman resides in Guatemala City. Incidentally, he's the largest piece of carved jade yet found in Central America



Along the railroad, these "gals" take the place of dining cars



Salvadorean sanitary precautions at Cojutepeque. "The bathing of persons and animals is forbidden"





"Down That Pan American Highway" near San Miguel, El Salvador



Izalco, "Lighthouse of the Pacific," most famous of El Salvador's numerous volcanoes



Inter-urban bus, Santa Ana, El Salvador



Ceremonial masks of exotic Honduras



Live pigeons visiting a very dead turtle at Tegucigalpa



Bridges come high in Middle America! Twenty to thirty feet of water may rush over these parched river beds during the rainy season (above) Rio Guascoran at the El Salvador /Honduras frontier. (below) Guacirope Bridge near Nacaome, Honduras.





Some of Managua's distinctive little red-wheeled "coches"





Trees really do grow in Nicaragua!

"Is it in our lives as plainly shown, which way the wind hath blown?"





Slow, patient oxen do "mucho" lumbering along the Highway in southern Nicaragua



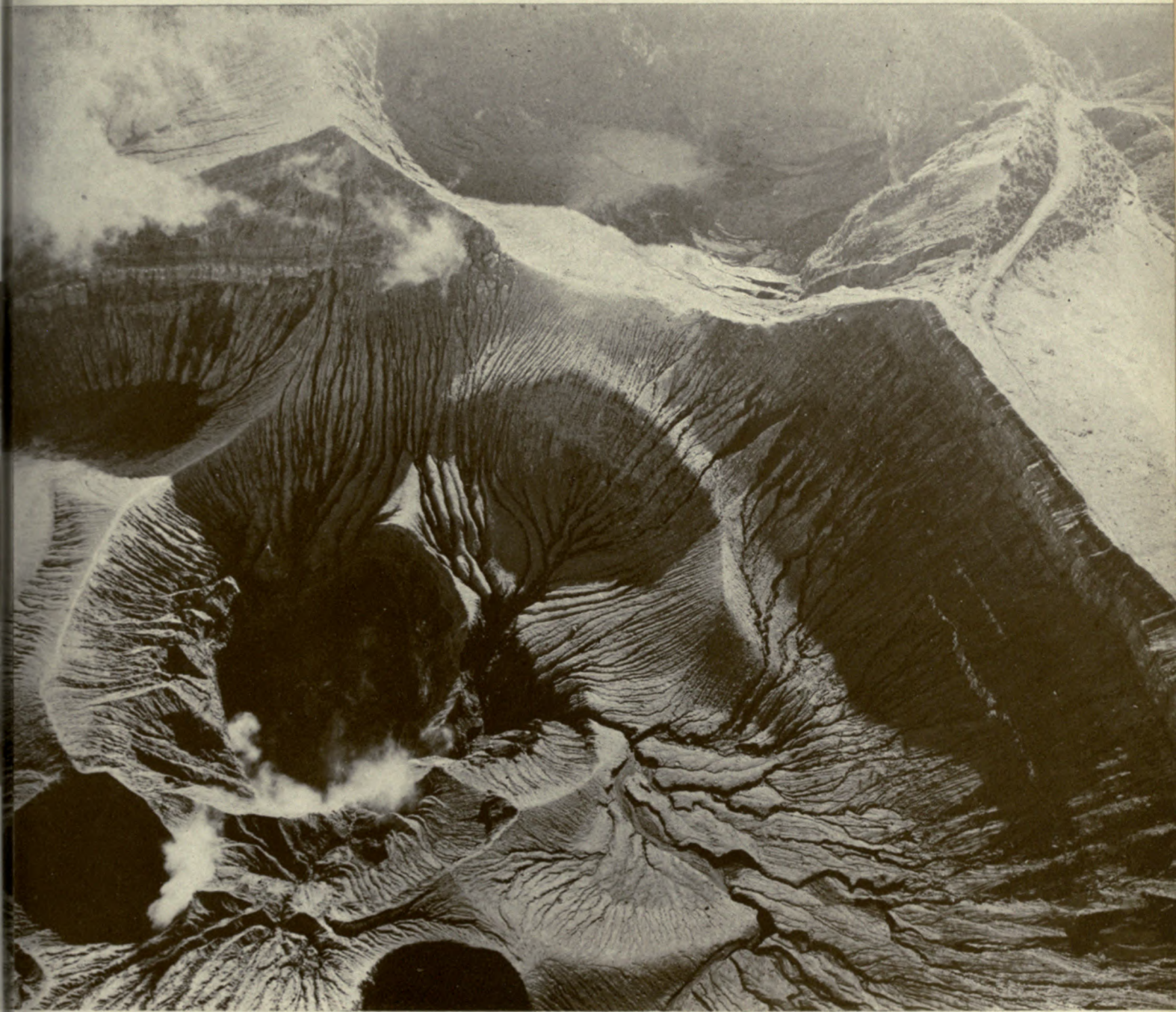
Dusting along the road beyond La Cruz, Costa Rica



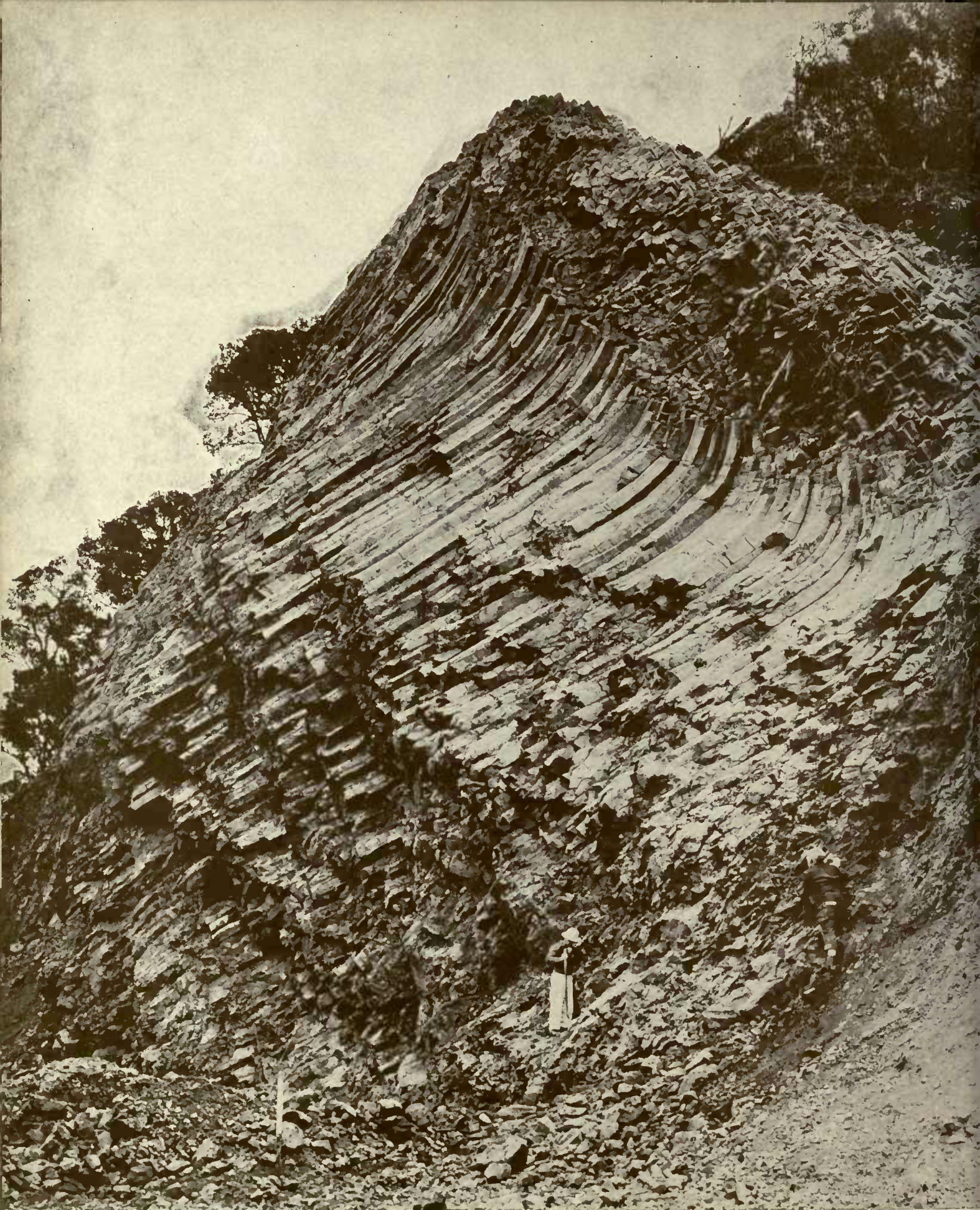
The combined joys of motoring,  
boating and ox-ing on the way  
to Liberia, Costa Rica



"Yachting" a bit south of Peña Blanca, Nicaragua



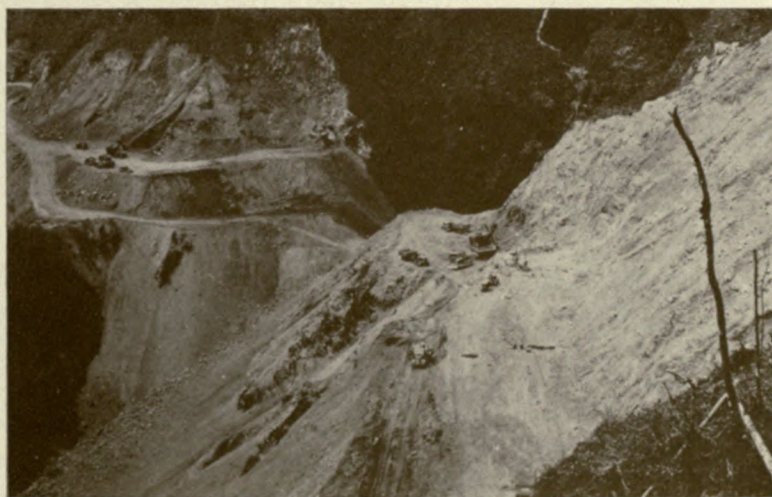
Costa Rica also boasts a volcano or two! Looking into the crater of Irazú, near Cartago



Farther along, the terrain becomes somewhat, shall we say, more rugged!



The road over the "Mountain of Death" proved one of the most difficult construction jobs of the Western Hemisphere





Artistically hand-painted oxcarts, "navigate" to just a few miles south of San Isidro del General. After that, it's horseback or afoot for more than a hundred miles







Along the Buenos Aires/Portrero Grande section, life becomes somewhat less citified







The Chiriquí country of northern Panama, though lonely, is extremely beautiful.



Southern Panama isn't exactly ugly, either!

Courtesy, generosity and all-out kindness are universal  
"Down That Pan American Highway"

Señor Nicolas Soto of Alajuela, Costa Rica, one of the few having personal knowledge of the ornery jungle wilderness lying between San Isidro del General, Costa Rica, and El Volcan, Panama. He wrote best accident insurance policy ever! (see page 137)



Señor Ingeniero Filemón Zurita Vázquez of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chief of the Chiapas Division of the National Highways of Mexico. He proved an unfailing "friend in need," — cooperative to an embarrassing degree



Señor Angel Garita, Jefe de Policia de Buenos Aires, personally mapped the most difficult leg of the entire journey, Buenos Aires to El Volcan



## Familiar Mexico

|             | <i>For the Day</i>            | <i>For the Trip</i>          |
|-------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Laredo, Texas, to Mexico City |                              |
| VIA:        | Public bus                    |                              |
| MILES:      | 757                           |                              |
| ROAD HOURS: | 31                            |                              |
| FARE:       | International Bridge          | <i>The<br/>First<br/>Day</i> |
|             | Toll, \$ .05                  |                              |
|             | Public bus, 6.12              |                              |
|             | <hr/> \$6.17                  |                              |

MY AIM IS to shove off from Laredo, Texas, the open door for most tourists to the Pan American Highway, since it is but a hop, skip and jump across the International Bridge into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

Yesterday, I came down by train through flat, cold Texas, where hogs are decidedly "haws" and where fields are dotted with cattle. Even before San Antonio, one hundred and fifty-five miles north of the border, I heard more than a few Spanish phrases as we picked up local passenger traffic. However, we hadn't yet sloughed off Yankee civilization. One chap entered our car at San Antonio somewhat chagrined and with good reason. Alighting from the preceding express for a bottle of gin, he'd been delayed sufficiently (whether intentionally or not I shall never know) to have missed his wife completely. She went to the border without him.

Laredo, with good reason, boasts of excellent hotel accommodations. However, because it is the bottleneck for traffic north and south, it is definitely desirable to obtain reservations several days ahead. I discover upon my arrival at three in the morning that there will be no room available at the Hotel Hamilton until seven-thirty a. m., so I hang around the lobby and breakfast down the street to pass the time.

I am pleasantly surprised to discover bilingual "hello" gals. Big hats, big eyes and a big capacity for hard liquor are just some of the idiosyn-

crasies common to both sides of the river. Even some of the Texan stores in Laredo carry pretty highfalutin' names, such as, "Pearl of the South" and "Serpent with the Purple Eye."

The International Bridge joins Laredo, Texas, with Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, separated by the Rio Grande (frankly more "rio" than "grande"). For some reason or other, the toll across the International Bridge is but three cents coming back and five cents going down. If I weren't scared stiff of being jugged for lack of patriotism, I'd venture the explanation that to me as a tourist going to Mexico is well worth the extra cost.

About the last vestige of northern civilization that I'll be seeing for some time to come is a huge electric sign advertising liquor, another proof that the border towns of most any frontier are the least appealing. Usually, there is a messy infiltration of the highly undesirable from both countries. Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and Laredo, Texas, are no glaring exceptions to the rule.

After exercising the last prerogative of an American taxpayer (filling my fountain pen at the Post Office), I make the trip afoot across the Mexican frontier. That two-cent differential in toll going south and going north reminds me of a similar inexplicable differential farther down the Highway where they tell me that the plane tariff between two cities is nine dollars one way and ten the other. With my simple mind, I offer as a solution the prevailing trade winds.

The Rio Bravo (Mexican for Rio Grande) shocks students of sixth grade geography because of its smallness during the greater part of the year. Typically Latin in temperament this river has during the rainy season more than once gone on such rampages as to have required the erection of special railings removable in time of floods. But with all our Yankee materialism and the legendary romanticism of Latin America, I must, as a one hundred percent American, boast of having seen gobs of mistletoe on our side and not one sprig below the border.

As I approach Nuevo Laredo from the American side, I am impressed by the lack of national hypocrisy, for in Mexico they openly countenance gambling instead of giving it the universal wink. The south end of the International Bridge is arched by gigantic electric signs exploiting the merits of the weekly National Lottery. "Buy Your Tickets Now—Join the Winners" is the slogan. I prefer this candor to our own hypocritically veiled stock-exchange speculations. The former

concedes at least one chance in a thousand of winning, a prerogative which I would not concede the latter.

By tradition, Nuevo Laredo is infested with beggars. In reality I am not annoyed once on this score, though there are even more obnoxious fellow-American tourists who have not yet learned the fundamental law of traveling, that they are the foreigners and by that token should soft-pedal criticism of the way in which their temporary hosts, the Mexicans, elect to live their own private lives.

I stroll for an hour through Nuevo Laredo which is as different from Laredo, Texas, as black is from white. Gosh, but I love it. There are pastel-tinted houses of all shades from light apple green to henna, sky blue and pale yellow. Most of the houses have no windows and in the poorer adobe sections not even doors. Music, though at times of the raucous juke box variety, greets my ear at every corner and more often than not, between corners. The streets are cobbled and winding with narrow sidewalks faced with open front stores. Vendors of sweet, gelatine desserts of vilely poisonous colors loiter outside of the stores. Exotic, pungent aromas float out from here, there and everywhere. In some of the side streets, these are more correctly designated as "smells." There are men with revolvers, big sombreros and high-heeled boots, and good-lookin' gals with high-colored cheeks and the kind of long eyelashes that one reads about. No wonder the Mexicans say, "If it rains may your eyelashes serve as my umbrella." Too bad they so soon grow fat and dumpy—the gals, not the lashes or the umbrellas.

Away from the main drive through the center of town, automobiles soon give way to countless burros, horses, oxcarts and goats. Apropos of burros here's a vicious old Mexican joke, so hoary my grandpappy must have kicked the slats out of his crib upon hearing it the first time. It seems a fat, old peon astride a burro smoking a cigar (the man not the beast was smoking) ambled down the dusty road. Behind him struggled afoot his flat-chested, undernourished, yet overworked wife, lugging a huge sack of corn. "Why doesn't your wife ride, my good fellow?" asked an over-sympathetic Yankee tourist. "*Qué lástima, Señor,*" bemoaned the congenial spouse. "*Mi esposa no tiene burro.*" ("How sad, sir, my wife ain't got no burro!") \*

The market off the principal thoroughfare is interesting, but even

\* They say that in the Near East the Arab husbands evidenced similar consideration for their wives until the soldiers of the last war put in their appearance. Instantly the *sityashun* reversed itself; so did the wives. After things began to get really hot, they walked in front of their lords and masters. Why? The prevalence of ground mines, of course.

this does not hold a candle in picturesqueness to the hundred and one I'll be seeing farther down the Highway. Though Nuevo Laredo, a river town, is hot as the hinges of Hades, I dare not take any chance in drinking ordinary water unless it has been actively boiled for twenty minutes. Otherwise, I'm inviting a rather acute attack of dysentery. I am cautioned to drink only bottled water even a quarter of a mile south of the American Frontier. Incidentally, Coca Cola, a real godsend in the tropics, has been available of late in all the larger towns and cities from Texas to the Canal Zone.

There's always something doing musically in a Mexican town. The last time I crossed the Rio Grande I saw a little man dragging along a huge bass viol half again his size. This time it is two Mexicans with two guitars clambering into the back of a truck. Street musicians are everywhere, from the northern frontier of Mexico to the southern or for that matter, from the Rio Grande to the Panama Canal.

Mexican villages impress the stranger with architectural common denominators of drab adobe or brightly painted cement exterior walls, iron grilles in place of glass windows, and flat chimney-less roofs while inside the homes are almost always restful patios cool with flowers, trees, birds and fountains.

One need not search far for buses to Mexico City. They are to be had about every hour of the day and night within spitting distance of the International Bridge. Even the small ones carry pretty big signs to compensate for their small size, like undersized men who, for the same reason, on occasion are pretty darned pugnacious. One *camion* off a side street in Nuevo Laredo struggles along under this polysyllabic title: "*Union de Conductores de Camiones de Pasajeros de Nuevo Leon.*" Who dares to say the Mexicans lack vitality?

A de luxe bus line wants \$12.94 to travel down to Mexico City. But by walking across the bridge and paying a nickel toll I flush up a Mexican second-class Red Arrow bus for \$6.12. Imagine that—for seven hundred fifty-seven miles, and through the most glorious mountain country imaginable. Thirty-one hours of honest-to-gosh scenic railway thrills. This mode of travel is very popular with the natives as is proven by the well-filled bus. I get scared and almost jump out of the window as someone unexpectedly slaps the side of the old battlewagon and yells, "*Vámonos.*" This is merely the Mexican equivalent of "All aboard—let's go."

Just at sunset we make our first stop for coffee at Sabinas Hidalgo



and then on to Monterrey, Linares and Victoria by four a. m. At each place "we Mexicans" have coffee which is never like ours at home but always half milk and half coffee. Here the Latins are ambidextrous, for they adroitly pour from two pitchers at one time. To me it's not an over-appetizing blend, but I refrain from criticism. (Someday I may be old and weak myself.) I have a seat by a window. It is perfect just to sit back and see the ridges of deep blue mountains over which hang a veritable heaven-load of stars. I blush astronomically. I know only the Big Dipper, the North Star and Orion.

Luckily for me there are no other Americans aboard. My Mexican friends are a bit informal at times but generous to a fault and most good-natured. The humblest country peon is extremely courteous. We could learn much from them in this direction and in other ways as well.

After breakfast at Ciudad Victoria, we cross the Tropic of Cancer but with no ill effects. It is poorly marked, and there's scarcely a noticeable bump as we pass over this world-famous line of latitude. Then on through El Mante and almost to Tamazunchale, we pass through low, warmish tropical country with bananas, sugar cane and palms everywhere. Oxcarts and burros are as thick as flies though built on somewhat larger and less active proportions. A four mile detour at Mante takes us back country. This is still more colorful. The road break proves a blessing rather than a curse. Dear old Tamazunchale (irreverently dubbed "Thomas and Charlie" by tourists) is a mess, thanks to American travel. I am shocked to read over one hotel:

WELCOME TOURISTS  
AIRCONDITIONED  
MAXWELL HOUSE COFFEE  
AMERICAN FOOD  
CURB SERVICE

Another offered: "*Habitaciones con Equipo Simmons*" (Rooms with Simmons Beds). And still another: "*Baños Privados con Agua Caliente a Todas Horas*" (Private baths with hot water at all hours). I hate to admit it, but a street band blares out with the "Beer Barrel Polka."

At Jacala just beyond Tamazunchale, there is a charming, new, hotel. It is a temptation to stay overnight but I decide to push on to Mexico City.

The bus service is advertised as: "*Servicio de Primera Clase—Precio de Segunda Clase*" (First Class Service—Second Class Fare). They are

fifty percent right. The price is low but the service rotten though not without excitement. From nine until midnight in the most isolated part of the mountains, the very vitals of the bus inconsiderately spew themselves out on the highway. Luck is with me. Rather than a drawback this is a real thrill. Not another person can speak a word of English. A three hour Spanish lesson in New York would have set me back at least six bucks. Under the stars, up in the mountains, I seem momentarily less tongue-tied with romantic Castilian. The heart learns more quickly than the brain.

The bus is four hours late and lands in Mexico City at two or three in the morning. Without reservations, I succumb to a ragged old Mexican porter bundled up in a scraggly *zarape*. He leads me to pretty much of a less than second class hotel, where I am given a room for eighty cents. As fully expected, the hot water in the basin and the hot and cold water in the over-publicized shower don't run. I knew they wouldn't anyway, so that's all right. The bed is comfortable. And fortunately the light is too poor to see if it be clean. I'm so tired I could sleep soundly under any conditions.



## Less Familiar Mexico

|             | <i>For the Day</i>    | <i>For the Trip</i> |                               |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Mexico City to Puebla | Laredo to Puebla    | <i>The<br/>Second<br/>Day</i> |
| VIA:        | Public bus            | Public bus          |                               |
| MILES:      | 84                    | 841                 |                               |
| ROAD HOURS: | 3                     | 34                  |                               |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$1.02    | \$7.19              |                               |

**I**RISE EARLY and am thrilled to find the "night clerk" downstairs submerged to the eyes in a gorgeous pink and black blanket. It is cool. Snow-capped Popocatepetl ("Popo") and Ixtaccihuatl ("The Sleeping Lady") are partly responsible for this, with the fact that Mexico City is almost a mile and a half high. (Elevation 7,349 ft.)

Mexico City is everything nice the skeptical, provincial Yankee expects it not to be. It's cool, clean, quiet, healthful, and colorful. Parks, floating gardens, palaces, churches, museums, markets, modern hospitals, theaters and all manner of cultural and educational facilities are everywhere. I walk up the hill to the Palace of Maximilian and Porfirio Diaz at sunrise and the vista is magnificent.

Mexico City is not all modern. Down in the poorer sections are the native markets, the tiny shops of the Indian craftsmen and the famous Thieves' Market.

I carry no sidearms other than a pocket dictionary. Several years ago, the few cops in Mexico City proficient in languages other than Spanish drew extra pay and proudly bore on their sleeves colored flags of the nations the languages of which they were masters. As a neat, back-handed compliment to the Colossus of the North, not once did they display the Stars and Stripes, but in its place the Union Jack of England.

I hurry downtown to the business section to find the office of Samuel Fernandez (the friend of a previous visit), but it is not yet open, and I

leave a note stuck in the door. In a short time, he joins me in the restaurant downstairs. His brother, Miguel, who can't even blow his nose in English also joins us. They make me feel like the prodigal son. They buy me two breakfasts and later send me a bag of grapes, bananas and other fruits. They supply a typewriter, stamps, stationery, everything. Finally they urge me to visit them at their homes, but I simply cannot accept any more favors. It is difficult indeed to break away.

All Latin Americans are overly generous, even to utter strangers. In the evening, I ask an eighteen year old chap the way to La Calle Netzahualcoyotl (Netzahualcoyotl Street) where I shall secure the bus for Puebla later this evening. He not only finds it for me but also pronounces it. After accompanying me eight blocks to make sure I don't get lost, he arranges to get me a taxi back to my hotel.

There are no more Mexican siestas, at least in the cities, since the war. All stores used to close from twelve to three, but now they open at nine, close from twelve to twelve-thirty and then remain open until five-fifteen. Quite a difference. Definitely a retrogression, if you ask me.

At eight-thirty in the evening, I catch a luxurious Pullman Bus to Puebla, a run of about eighty-four miles. It is most comfortable, more like our Greyhounds at home and even has a radio playing Mozart's "In an Eighteenth Century Drawing Room." I enjoy a refreshing three hour ride through the gorgeous mountains, very brown and dry, but beautiful. It is not just cool, but definitely cold over these mile high mountain passes.

Next to me on the bus sits a funny little fat Cuban boy who waited on me several years ago at the Rio Frio lunchroom. It seems like old times to be remembered. Sam cautions me about crime in Mexico. He says only recently near Córdoba thugs attacked a man with rocks and knocked his teeth out to get the gold fillings. Visions of my friend Pablo's gold bicuspid and incisors. I'm darned glad mine are amalgam.

Nowhere else for \$1.02 can anyone approximate such a travel thrill. Much of the way is through windswept, cool, dense pine woods. An hour or so out of Mexico City we scale the highest spot along the banks of the Rio Frio. Here the bus halts fifteen minutes in front of two big lunchrooms ready to disperse gallons of coffee as hot as the weather is cold. It surely hits the spot. Unlike Maxwell House, even the last drop seems good. For those who hanker for them there is also no end of Mexican side dishes from enchiladas to tamales, and for dessert, gelatines and candies of the most violent aniline colors.

Other than Rio Frio (Cold River), there are but two villages of interest. The first is San Martin, known for its fine Indian market, and Cholula, twelve miles north of Puebla. Here in Cholula are no less than three hundred and sixty-five churches, one for every day of the year.

With tears in my eyes, I quote as a concluding text to the otherwise exquisite Laredo/Puebla section down that Pan American Highway, Ogden Nash's inimitable poem, "Song of the Open Road":\*

"I think that I shall never see  
A billboard lovely as a tree.  
Indeed unless the billboards fall  
I'll never see a tree at all!"

To the discredit of us commercialized Americans much of the pristine glory of these first eight or nine hundred miles has been selfishly marred by an unsightly succession of blatant road signs. Why must we always befoul our neighbor's scenic nests as well as our own?

I arrive at Puebla just before midnight and put up at the Gran Hotel, grand in name only. It is pretty awful.

|             | <i>For the Day</i> | <i>For the Trip</i> |                              |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Puebla to Oaxaca   | Laredo to Oaxaca    | <i>The<br/>Third<br/>Day</i> |
| VIA:        | Public bus         | Public bus, truck   |                              |
| MILES:      | 255                | 1096                |                              |
| ROAD HOURS: | 11                 | 45                  |                              |
| FARE:       | \$3.14             | \$10.33             |                              |

The hotel is dreary as a prison, and I am glad to leave it very early today. This is the exception, for by and large Puebla is a tourist's Paradise. Though one of Mexico's largest cities, it is still unspoiled. Public signs always prove interesting. "These parks and gardens not only beautify but they also purify the air"; "Show your culture by restraining your children from destroying the shrubbery." The Mexicans all go in for signs in a big way. Trolleys carry big placards reading: "Don't spit! Don't carry gasoline! Don't distract the motorman, and anticipate your stop." After all, one shouldn't mind a bit of bossing around with the fare only two cents. These are just infallible indices of Puebla's charming provincialism.

I catch an early bus for the ten or eleven hour ride to Oaxaca,

\* From *Many Long Years Ago*, published by Little, Brown & Company, Boston.

through country that proves very beautiful, all mountains and rolling hills alternating with pleasant valleys. Farming methods are primitive but picturesque, consisting of crude plows drawn by patient, plodding oxen facetiously known as Mexican tractors.

Organ cacti, some as big as a small house, are abundant along the way. The farmers have an ingenious way of cutting out the center stalks of a huge organ cactus and using the space as a great outdoor bin for storing cornstalks, straw and hay.

Maguey, the most useful of Mexican desert plants, is profuse in the drier sections. While it supplies fibre for clothing, part of the plant is edible, and its life juice is the death juice for a considerable number of peons. It is from the heart of the maguey that the juice is extracted and later fermented into pulque, the national drink or curse, as your choice may be. Big, fat, juicy caterpillars lurk among the leaves. When French fried, they are considered a dietetic tidbit extraordinary.

Some of the cacti have flowers on ten-foot stalks. Pine, laurel, air-plants and gorgeous bougainvillea abound everywhere.

The road is pretty rough, and I spend most of the trip bumping over the rear wheel with about two inches clearance for my head. The young Mexican next to me cheers me up with assurances that when I finally reach Oaxaca I'll be comforted and amply repaid by ice cream of various classes and tortillas as big as wagonwheels.

The bus arrives at Oaxaca at 8:30 and I am glad to turn in immediately for a fine night's sleep in one of the most delightful hotels I know in all Mexico, the Monte Alban. Two hundred years old, the building is artistic and clean. The rooms are good and the meals delicious.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>              | <i>For the Trip</i>   |               |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| ROUTE:      | Oaxaca to Tehuantepec           | Laredo to Tehuantepec |               |
| VIA:        | Public bus and truck            | Public bus, truck     | <i>The</i>    |
| MILES:      | 160                             | 1,256                 | <i>Fourth</i> |
| ROAD HOURS: | 23                              | 68                    | <i>Day</i>    |
| FARE:       | Public bus and truck,<br>\$4.00 | \$14.33               |               |

Oaxaca is one of the most charming of Mexican cities, big enough to have all conveniences, but small enough and remote enough to be restful. It has two sweet, little plazas, full of fountains and ferns and flowers.

I check out of the Monte Alban and present myself for the nine

o'clock sailing. The bus is slightly indisposed though the driver thinks it might recover. Day of miracles! It finally gets under way at ten-thirty. I don't believe I have ever ridden in a bus with harder wooden seats. I've a sneaking suspicion they are built of *lignum vitae*.

All goes well for two hours when the whole, gosh-blamed contraption falls apart about fifty odd miles south of Oaxaca. And butter side down too, for it chooses as its deathbed the hottest, most treeless section of the entire countryside. Luckily, I have brought along some hard-boiled eggs, some bananas and a bottle of boiled water which I consume during the forced three hour siesta beneath a tiny bush.

Two situations somewhat relieve the monotony. First, a charming slip of a girl not over five scrambles up the steep hill where I am resting. She has been picking flowers. As she approaches, I extend my hand and offer to help her. She accepts with the sweetest little *con mucho gusto* (with much pleasure) and then in the most courteous manner lisps in Spanish, "I beg your pardon, sir, but from what land do you come?"

Then the resourcefulness of the chauffeur intrigues me. After spreading the innards of the car neatly in the middle of the Hades-hot roadway, cylinders and all, he begins to make repairs. It seems he needs a gasket. Being without an extra one, he cuts a six-inch piece from his belt. This he whittles or shaves down, but it's no soap. It isn't enough. Again he takes off his belt, in imminent danger of losing his pants, and hacks off another six inches. Still to no avail, in desperation he unlaces one shoe and cuts out the more pliable tongue. Again no soap, but his native initiative (euphemism for unadulterated gall) is by no means exhausted.

He calls for a twenty foot rope stowed in the car. Next as captain of the ship, he orders the women, kids and babies to walk, while perhaps two dozen of us men passengers emulate the Volga Boatmen. I'll be darned if we don't lug and shove that thirty passenger bus nearly a mile up a steep grade under the broiling mid-afternoon sun. It reminds me of my father's yarn about the old English stagecoachman who, confronted with similar difficulties, ordered all first class passengers to remain seated, all second class to get out and walk and all third-class to get out and push.

Anyway, this guy knows his topographical onions all right. Reaching the top of the hill, we all re-enter the definitely dead bus. He then throws her into neutral, and we coast exactly fourteen kilometers (more than eight miles) without a stop until we flounder into the dusty center of the tiny, dirty Indian village of Totolapa. We've made forty-six miles

in about seven long, hot, dusty hours. Totolapa is one for the book all right. It contains not a bed, not a restaurant, not even a light. Where my fellow passengers (all natives) disappear to, heaven alone knows, but I sit this dance out for six hours in the deceased bus.

Near midnight, a truck comes along. I get up beside the driver in the cab, and the Indians, men, women and small fry, stow away aft. Off we start at the witching hour of midnight over rough, mountainous roads with at least one curve so acute (and the bank so steep) that the first mate has to jump overboard and chuck a log beneath the rear wheel to keep us from catapulting over the edge as the truck hems and haws and backs and fills to negotiate the sharp turn.

At four a. m. it becomes too much even for the driver. With no particular apology but with much common sense, he comes to a dead stop, turns off the lights, explains he is too tired to proceed, and we two snore chummily in the cab until sunup.

Early the next morning we stop briefly at the market place of Tequisistlan for some very hot coffee boiled with brown sugar in a huge *olla* and served by a picturesque old Indian. Then we lumber on to Tehuantepec.

We reach our destination at about ten, just thirteen hours late on what is a theoretical twelve hour run. The Oaxaca to Tehuantepec bus actually goes to Juchitan, seventeen miles beyond; however, Tehuantepec is a less uncomfortable place to remain overnight. Ixtepec has a far better hotel than either.

That jaunt was back in 1946. Today there is a hard surface highway down the entire way from the Rio Grande to within thirty miles or so of the Guatemalan border. And incidentally, if you seriously consider passing on down through this most colorful neck of the woods, by all means, first read Covarrubias' excellent book, "Mexico South".





## Decidedly Unfamiliar Mexico

|             | <i>For the Day</i>              | <i>For the Trip</i>      |                      |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Tehuantepec to Los Amates       | Laredo to Los Amates     |                      |
| VIA:        | Mexican Government truck, horse | Public bus, truck, horse | <i>The Fifth Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 103                             | 1,359                    |                      |
| ROAD HOURS: | 23                              | 91                       |                      |
| FARE:       | Free                            | \$14.33                  |                      |

TEHUANTEPEC proves the most unspoiled of all the towns I've visited so far. The women wear full gypsy skirts dragging on the ground and gorgeously decorated, square cut blouses or waists of orange, green, black and red. They all weave brightly colored ribbons in their hair.

Through the courtesy of the Mexican Highway Department, I ride a gasoline truck, leaving Tehuantepec at nine in the morning. I ride for seven hours sitting beneath the hot sun on the razor-sharp edge of a gasoline drum. My peon companion asks if I have a match. Here we are both sitting cozily on drums with gasoline slopping around and soaking our trouser seats, and he wants to light a cigarette. Definitely, I ain't got no match.

We reach Humoa at four. At this very small road camp I am obliged to switch to a saddle horse, for the three mile stretch ahead is almost too dangerous even for riding because of heavy road construction machinery and innumerable boulders, the result of recent blasting.

At dusk I dismount. In one of two old trucks returning road workers from their jobs, I negotiate the last twelve miles to the larger and better equipped road camp of Los Amates. The highway is so narrow and the cliffs so precipitous that in at least one instance men leap off the truck and support it from the side to keep us from tumbling overboard.

Los Amates, though deep in the hinterland, proves an oasis of comfort. A large, well-kept road camp, it is more than welcome this night. Though I come unannounced, I am received like royalty. There is fine food and lots of it, with safe water and comfortable, immaculate beds in screened-in cabins. I meet a personnel of engineers as charming and hospitable as one could ever hope to find this side of heaven (or even in it), a refreshing contrast to the inconveniences of the long trying grind down from Oaxaca.

During supper, as evidence that there is rarely a dull moment, the staff doctor regales me with this one that occurred two weeks prior to my coming. For lack of more constructive divertissement, one of the road gang became uproariously drunk (a common payday occurrence) and let go point-blank with his shotgun into a crowded bus. The score: one dead, six or seven wounded. Boys will be boys, I guess, not only in Chicago and New York, but in Mexican road camps as well.

This incident is the exception to prove the rule. By and large, activity in these road camps is predominantly on an extremely happy key. Los Amates is an outstanding example, reflecting the wholesome, active life these fine, bronzed and truly handsome chaps lead in the great open spaces.

Perhaps it's my meager command of Spanish, but I've yet to observe any pettiness or backbiting among the personnel. There's a genuine esprit de corps among the fellows, a warm camaraderie suggesting more than anything else a group of college boys back in the States. Table talk is chockablock with good-natured, lively kidding but never with any smallness or squabbling.

To me, a nose-y gringo parvenu utterly unknown and even more unexpected, they all are hospitable beyond description. And what's ever a perfectly swell index of character, every mother's son of them is devoted to animals. Other than in point of numbers (for it invariably far exceeds two apiece) the variety of pets at Los Amates closely resembles Noah's Ark. The prima donna of this camp menagerie to whom I am quickly presented, is one Señorita Chita, a diminutive monkey whose mother passed into her primate paradise a short while before. Only recently rescued by one of the gang, this tragic little orphan already reciprocates the engineers' affection to an alarming degree. It takes a Stillson wrench to break Chita's embrace once she wraps her tiny arms about you and snuggles up for the night.

Daily rides on the camp's young colt have developed this half pint

into an accomplished equestrienne, though I confess with sorrow that all this attention makes Chita the one spoiled kid I am to meet from border to border.

The first morning of my visit I watch her evict a perfectly respectable, law-abiding canine family of seven from their comfortable house. Adding insult to injury, as the mother runs out of the kennel trailed by six fat puppies, Chita gives her tail a husky farewell yank which nearly severs it from its natural mooring. She at once appropriates the little house for her own selfish self.

La Señorita is inquisitive after the manner of her kind. With not so much as the customary *con permiso*, she opens my screen door and intrudes upon the privacy of my boudoir, scrambling on the bed and bureau to examine everything with minute carelessness. And I mean just that. Nothing is sacred to this little gal.

In her systematic search, she hops, jumps and scampers over every square foot of the room until she's finally "collected" by one of the staff. Desperately hungry for human affection and above all, companionship in the absence of her mother, Chita makes her involuntary exit clinging to her evictor.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                  | <i>For the Trip</i>                        |                              |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Los Amates to Tuxtla<br>Gutierrez   | Laredo to Tuxtla<br>Gutierrez              |                              |
| VIA:        | Mexican Government<br>station wagon | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon | <i>The<br/>Sixth<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 85                                  | 1,444                                      |                              |
| ROAD HOURS: | 3                                   | 94   |                              |
| FARE:       | Free                                | \$14.33                                    |                              |

At noon the next day I am honored by a visit from one of the most gracious gentlemen I am to meet on the entire trip. This is saying a lot, for along every section of the Mexican Highway, I am received like home folks. Señor Filemón Zurita Vázquez, Ingeniero Civil, Dirección Nacional de Caminos, Chief of the Tuxtla Division, outdoes himself. First, I am lavishly dined at a near-by camp. Don Filemon insists upon driving me the last seventy-eight miles over his splendid all-weather highway to Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital of the State of Chiapas. He and his associates do a world of favors for me, in return for which I am powerless to do much of anything.

At Tuxtla Gutierrez, I put up at the Hotel Jardín, a new place right on the plaza. It is pleasant enough but incredibly noisy. During the day it is hot as the devil, but tonight it is not uncomfortable. It is, however, a veritable pandemonium. I am cursed with a front room and across from the hotel blare three juke boxes. On the corner to the left a loud speaker emits raucous, if not persuasive political propaganda, and to the right up the avenue a block is a dance orchestra. I'll be durned if all three common nuisances don't whip it up until after four in the morning.

These are impersonal group pests. Here's a blow by blow account by a fellow guest at my hotel of an individual disturber of the peace. For most "varmin," there's generally a counterirritant, if you happen to know the answer.

"Almost any tourist will tell you that beans, chile and tortillas don't settle in the gringo stomach, but when Eduardo, my Mexican friend, became ill, I thought I had better take care of him; so we moved into a large double room facing the main plaza at Tuxtla Gutierrez. Next to the hotel was a rather popular bar, where for moderate prices, one could obtain the best of Tequila, Cometeco or other native stimulants.

"The first night at about three in the morning a local truck driver, having sufficiently partaken, sat in his truck in front of the hotel and amused himself by blowing the horn at regular two or three minute intervals. Being rudely awakened and unable to control myself further, I rushed to the darkened window facing the plaza and prepared to hurl my most effective Spanish insults. Before I could utter a single word, a hand touched my shoulder as Eduardo moved beside me. "Don't say a word," he admonished. "These are my people, and I know exactly how to handle them." In the presence of an expert I retired to watch the operation.

"Eduardo reached for my drinking glass and hurled it with remarkable accuracy against the radiator of the parked and honking truck. The horn ceased at the crash, and the driver leaped from the machine, looking under and over it and into the hood. He could find nothing wrong so returned to the cab and resumed the honking.

"Eduardo was patient but determined, and this time reached for one of his medicine bottles. In the midst of the next blast, he threw the small bottle directly into the headlight. The driver jumped from the seat and re-examined the car. Upon finding the damage, he looked about,

but not a soul was visible. Completely bewildered and a little hurt, he jumped back into the car and drove away.

"The cure seemed a little brutal to me, but Eduardo insisted it was the only effective method and I couldn't argue with success. It seems it pays to 'know your people.'"

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                              | <i>For the Trip</i>                        |                                |
|-------------|---|--|--------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Tuxtla Gutierrez to<br>Comitan de las<br>Flores | Laredo to Comitan de<br>las Flores         |                                |
| VIA:        | Public bus                                      | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon | <i>The<br/>Seventh<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 111   | 1,555                                      |                                |
| ROAD HOURS: | 10  | 104  |                                |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$4.00                              | \$18.33                                    |                                |

Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital of Mexico's most southern state, Chiapas, is hot as Hades but I find here the first ice cream since leaving Oaxaca. This compensates and I put away no less than six plates.

Next I am ten hours on the road. The first stop the bus makes is San Cristobal de las Casas. A very old town, San Cristobal offers many contrasts to the more modern cities of Oaxaca and Veracruz. It has arcaded palaces, many churches, low tile-roofed houses with grilled windows and patios and tortuous cobbled streets. Thousands of Indians come daily to the market place. Prominent are the Zinacantecs with their little low-brimmed straw hats with two black circles on the rims. Some of the men have pink ribbons and tassels hanging from the brims.

From San Cristobal the bus takes us five hours later to Comitan de las Flores. Upon my arrival this evening, I learn that there are only two foreigners here, one a Spaniard and the other an American soldier of fortune. I meet the latter in the plaza, a great, rough six-footer from Michigan who came to Mexico years ago and has never wanted to return. My friend spends all his time here in the tropical forests of unspoiled Chiapas, hunting butterflies and orchids for northern collectors. I bawl him out on the grounds of cruelty to the butterflies, but doubt if I make much of a lasting impression.

This gatherer of orchids and netter of butterflies seems glad to see a fellow American. We spend several very pleasant hours together, and I throw a dinner party at my Hotel Modelo for him and two Mexican

friends, Cesar Cristiani Utrilla (a liquor salesman) and Javier Mandujano Solorzano (schoolteacher, painter and violinist). The latter suggests I look up his fellow artist, Rodrigo Penalba, when I get to Managua, Nicaragua. I promise my soldier of fortune I'll look up his brother when I return to the States. Seems he's a marine engineer of some sort.

It is very cold in Comitan. I wear two regular shirts, a thick flannel shirt and my heavy corduroy jacket, yet I'm almost shivering. And here in my room, the windows and doors are closed tightly. The temperature in the tropics is decidedly a matter of altitude, not latitude. We are about five thousand feet up, twenty-three hundred feet lower than Mexico City, yet only half as high as I shall be in Guatemala.

Just before dropping off to sleep, I recall the huge clusters of jacaranda blossoms growing along the wayside. These lavender, wistaria-like flowers show up in riotous contrast with the yellow, dusty road.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                                       | <i>For the Trip</i>                              |                               |
|-------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Comitan de las Flores<br>to Gracias a Dios,<br>Guatemala | Laredo to Gracias a<br>Dios                      |                               |
| VIA:        | Taxi, 25 miles<br>Horseback, 5 miles                     | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi | <i>The<br/>Eighth<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 30   | 1,585  |                               |
| ROAD HOURS: | 3  | 107  |                               |
| FARE:       | Taxi, \$9.00<br>Horse, \$1.20                            | \$28.53  |                               |

I arise at about six o'clock and try to catch up with some neglected writing only to have the electric current go off entirely at seven, according to Mexican country practice. It is almost time for breakfast, so there's no harm done. For thirty-five cents, I consume coffee, five sugar rolls, three soft tortillas, three toasted tortillas, orange juice, potato chips, two eggs scrambled with tomatoes and onions, stewed black beans and fried bananas. I pay my hotel bill (only sixty cents per night for a room slightly smaller than Madison Square Garden) and show my appreciation of two solid days' idolatry by twelve year old Amando by tossing him a fish in the form of a fifty *centavo* tip. Then to the telegraph office, the post office, the bank and the immigration office.

In changing money from American to Guatemalan, it is interesting to find the exchange unfavorable. Mexican exchange is five *pesos* for a

dollar, but an American dollar is worth no more nor less than the Guatemalan *quetzal*. The *quetzal* is the national bird of Guatemala, chosen because it is the only bird which cannot live in captivity.

There are only nine dollars in Guatemalan available at the miniature Mexican Bank at Comitán, but I succeed in getting ten dollars more (forty pieces of silver, no paper bills) down the street in a tiny dry goods store. When the storekeeper hears I have hired a car for twelve dollars, he offers me three dollars to let his twenty-five year old niece and her five year old son, Roberto, go along. I am glad of the extra company for the twenty-five mile ride, and the three dollar rebate is also quite acceptable.

We leave the hotel in a private car for the Guatemalan border at eleven a. m. For nearly two and a half hours, we jog along through pastures, up hills and down valleys, across rivers with no bridges and along cowpaths averaging ten miles per hour, which is a good yardstick for gauging this particular terrain. There are no real roads for the full twenty-five miles, just soft black dirt or ledges of gray rock.

In some places, the trail is a succession of oxcart tracks about fifty or sixty feet wide, and the driver of the car zigzags around wherever it looks least bumpy. I understand the same practice obtains in rural Russia, at least, so my brother tells me.

There are great mountains to either side, and along the way tall pines, cypress and other evergreens, of which I haven't the slightest knowledge. Most of the trees bear myriads of beautiful airplants, many with red leaves. One gorgeous plant sports yellow flowers. The driver says it is an orchid. I ha'e me doots.

Horses, cows, sheep, goats, burros, pigs and Indians pass us all along the way, but there is not one village en route, just unspoiled open country. We pass through the following ranches between Comitán and Gracias a Dios (Thanks be to God): Portes Gil, Santa Maria, Gardenas, Sacchanar, Santa Cecelia, La Aurora and Xan. As a rule these *fincas* or ranches consist of a dozen windowless one story houses with the roofs made of palm thatch and the side walls of solid cornstalks. Inside, the floors are of dirt.

We pass men on horseback and, of course, many oxcarts roll ponderously along our road. The latter are terribly cumbersome with solid wooden wheels, as primitive as a Biblical picture of the Holy Land. The wheels are six inches thick and four feet in diameter, and the lumbering cart is always drawn by two colorful, patient oxen. The man invariably

walks at the side of or directly in front of the team, guiding the oxen with a long pole, while the ladies of the entourage sit in the back of the cart protected from the sun by a shawl strung up, tent-like, on sticks.

At the base of the enormous, willow-like trees and tall, straight pines grow brilliant red shrubs with many yellow and white wayside flowers. The deep, black earth of this fertile country is generously watered by numerous little streams. There are even some waterfalls.

At the twenty-five mile limit, my girl friend and her little boy arrive at the parental ranch, Santa Cecelia. The automobile cannot navigate another foot, because the trail has become utterly impassable for anything on wheels; so it chugs back to Comitán. What a pirate, twelve dollars for twenty-five miles.

The girl, who serves as a clerk in the office of my Tehuantepec engineer friend, Ramon Grijalva, and who also knows my architect acquaintance, Señor Anducin of Oaxaca, becomes most cordial. She is on a five day vacation, having come all the way out to her family's ranch for a reunion. The mother's tears of joy and the tremendous amount of hugging and kissing that goes on out here in the sticks is something to see.

In half an hour, the gal's fifteen year old brother, one Guillermo Figueroa of Rancho Cecelia, Comitán, saddles two fine little Mexican horses, and we two are off for the last five mile stretch to the frontier. He rides a sturdy dun horse and carries my small suitcase; I ride the gray. Hung over the pommel is a bag with my corduroy coat and five bottles of soda water purchased in Comitán, the next four days' thirst insurance policy in the mountains where the drinking water is dangerous. The hour's ride is indescribably beautiful. It is only a narrow trail, but we wander through rivers and up and down the hills. We meander all over creation, or so it seems. Guillermo proves a charming companion and, bless his little Mexican soul, doesn't speak a word of English; neither did the gal, the driver of the car, nor Roberto, the infant phenomenon.

The single-foot ponies and the oversized Mexican saddles make travel even pleasanter than dozing off in my featherbed chair home in front of the open fire. Heretofore, that has been my yardstick of maximum comfort.

Never have I come across more gracious people than these Mexicans back country, but once in a while they give me a shock. In the auto this morning, all three (the driver, the girl and her boy) used their teeth to pry the caps from the soda water bottles. It made my blood curdle.

The weather is downright cold, not just coolish. All day I ride com-



fortably in the bright sunshine with two shirts, one of heavy flannel, and much of the time with a corduroy jacket added.

At the base of a huge hill on the Comitán side, we are greeted by a Mexican border official, and a quarter mile beyond by a Guatemalan immigration authority. The latter turns out to be a charming bachelor about thirty years old at whose one room cabin I'm to stay tonight. To my delight, he too speaks no English. This is the only house of boards in the village of Gracias a Dios and the only one with a floor. Other than this house, Gracias a Dios consists of perhaps twelve thatched huts.

This home of but a single room is about fifteen by twenty feet, almost entirely bare, and the only window boasts no glass. The surroundings are picturesque, completely circled by a great frame of hills, and refreshingly remote from every suggestion of civilization. The host makes me feel as though I were one of his family.

I write letters at his rough wooden table. The balance of the furniture consists of a tiny crude white home-made wooden bedstead, three rustic chairs, two very simple tables and a clothes closet. Against one wall are plastered a dozen brilliantly colored patriotic war posters.

Tomorrow, my guide will come at six a. m., and I plan to walk the twenty-four miles from Gracias a Dios to Nenton. Maybe I'll find I've bitten off more than I can chew, but walking is the ideal way to enjoy mountains and valleys. What's more important, I don't like to ride undersized ponies over rough hilly trails. It's downright cruel.

My host's name is Octavio Galicia E, of Gracias a Dios, Huehuetenango, Guatemala. The good soul is right now making up my bed on four wide planks supported on two chairs and two little wooden boxes. On the planks he has placed no less than four new *petates* or native hand-woven palm leaf mats. Over these, as a mattress, he's about to place some rough sheets and a pillow. Gosh, he's a regular mother to me.

I sit beside the one open window; it has no glass, but the view is as glorious as I've ever seen anywhere. Thatched huts, Indian children, burros and hilly pastures are in the foreground; great, tall trees in the middle distance, and way back, a range of high crags and mountains. Over all is the cold blue sky massed with soft, gray and pinkish clouds.

At sunset, my host and I stroll leisurely up the one tiny lane to a native Mayan Indian hut for a primitive supper of beans, eggs, hard bread, tortillas, raw onions and coffee. I wish I could adequately describe it, but it is simply impossible. No windows, one door, a single room about ten feet square and twelve feet high of palm thatched roof and

cornstalk walls. The rough dirt floor is so uneven, it is like climbing a hill to pass from one side to the other. There is no light other than that which flickers from two open hearth fires of fragrant pine wood. An Indian prepares tortillas over one fire; another older woman with deep mahogany skin, wearing a silver coin at her neck, weaves palm *petates* or blankets before the other. In one corner stands a pretty sixteen year old daughter grinding meal on a *metate* or stone hand mill. Three other younger kids and oodles of dogs complete our group. We eat on a tiny table, using no spoons or forks but merely fingers and tortillas. All our faces are illuminated by the pine fires. Outside in the bright, fairly dazzling moonlight, the Indians in the other huts are playing marimbas.

We are also entertained by Caralimbo, a tiny, six year old boy who has an uncanny ear for music. In imitation of a marimba player, this amazing half-pint pseudomusician hums one plaintive Mayan melody after another.

I have been accused of having a Spaniard's power of imagination and exaggeration. Nevertheless, it is no exaggeration to say that today has been the most vivid travel experience in thirty-odd years.

Gracias a Dios with its altitude of forty-five hundred feet proves the coldest place yet.



## Guatemala . . . Crumpled Parchment

|             | <i>For the Day</i>       | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                      |
|-------------|--------------------------|---|----------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Gracias a Dios to Nenton | Laredo to Nenton  |                      |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare             | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare | <i>The Ninth Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 21                       | 1,606   |                      |
| ROAD HOURS: | 8                        | 115   |                      |
| FARE:       | Guide, \$1.00            | \$29.53   |                      |

WE ARISE LATE, Octavio and I, at six-thirty. I was supposed to have been on my way by six. Little wonder, for the room in which we slept was shut tight all night, and not a crack of light could trickle in. An old Spanish custom, and I don't particularly like it.

Octavio has arranged for a young fellow, one Arturo Morales, to accompany me. As he is late showing up, Octavio good-naturedly takes his place for the first hour to make sure I don't get lost. Upon leaving me, he discovers a horseshoe which he says will bring me good luck.

Set upon a direct path, I navigate the next hour alone to the Seven Pines Ranch where I am told there is an American. He proves to be a Yugoslav from Ragusa. I refuse coffee with as much grace as I can muster as it is extremely hot along the way. I push on.

Arturo joins me soon after leaving the ranch and carries my bag with his typical Indian headband.

Our noonday meal consists of tortillas and water from a gourd for Arturo and three of five bottles of orange soda purchased in Comitán for me. About to succumb of thirst, I cannot force the caps off the soda pop bottles, no matter how hard I try. Then I remember Octavio's bon voyage gift. By golly, it has just a single twisted rusty nail, but this does the trick. Octavio was right, good luck, indeed.

In fifteen miles, Arturo and I pass neither village nor ranch and only

a handful of Indians. The women invariably wear the red tribal skirts common to this locality.

There are mountains everywhere. For the entire distance we trudge along a narrow cowpath, up one hill and down another. Much of the road is extremely rocky, and my shoes are definitely "shot." So am I.

We arrive at Nenton at three-thirty—the end of an eight hour hike. Arturo has carried my bag twenty-one miles for seventy-five cents. I give him an extra quarter, and he is thrilled.

I admit to being terribly tired upon hitting this twenty hut village of Nenton. The local chief and the town secretary set up a funny crude bed made of a simple colt skin stretched over a plain wooden frame. I am to sleep tonight without pillows or cover in the local adobe jug.

I take a thirty minute snooze just to get my breath. Later, the local policeman, a boy of about eighteen years with bare feet, faded blue overalls and an eight inch club, escorts me to the coolest and loveliest of secluded rivers where sans all clothes I am officially chaperoned for a half hour.

I've had twenty oranges since arrival—two cents for the lot. My guide for tomorrow squeezes them all in a glass, and I gulp down the juice. Next he fills two empty pop bottles with more pure orange juice for tomorrow's long, perspiry hike to Jacaltenango. Because of the heat, he is to call me at four a. m. We shall walk the first three hours by moonlight.

Like all Spanish-American villages, large and small, Nenton has its *plaza*. On one side of this pocket handkerchief park stands a tiny barracks quartering twenty boy soldiers. At one corner is an even smaller church, at another a school, and right next to me a crude cell for obstreperous prisoners.

This little police office in which I write is fifteen by twenty-five feet, with bare whitewashed walls. I write by the light of baby-size candles bought at a penny each. Some seven or ten Indians watch me through the window.

My Guatemala charges have been absurdly low. At Gracias a Dios:

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Supper                                      | \$ .25 |
| Breakfast                                   | .25    |
| Arturo (for 42 mile walk—21 miles each way) | 1.00   |
| Bed and lodging                             | .50    |
| Tip for music                               | .25    |
|   | <hr/>  |
|   | \$2.25 |

Sunday in Nenton:

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Bed and lodging  | \$ .50 |
| Twenty oranges   | .02    |
| Special orange juice   | .25    |
| One policeman guide to river   | .25    |
| One policeman for sharpening pencils   | .08    |
| Tip to horse owner (I refuse the horse as too small to ride after he brings it down from his farm for my inspection) | .25    |
| Tomorrow's guide who must walk a total of 40 miles, 20 there lugging my suitcase and back                            | .50    |
|  | <hr/>  |
|  | \$1.85 |

On my return, I must write thank you notes to the Mayor and his secretary.

The scenery today has been magnificent. There were hardly as much as two hundred yards without a hairpin curve or steep hill. Columbus was right. When asked by Queen Isabella to describe Guatemala, tradition has it that he simply crumpled a piece of parchment, chucked it on the table and said, "There's Guatemala!"

|             | <i>For the Day</i>        | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                      |
|-------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Nenton to<br>Jacaltenango | Laredo to Jacaltenango                                      |                      |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare              | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare | <i>The Tenth Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 20                        | 1,626   |                      |
| ROAD HOURS: | 8                         | 123   |                      |
| FARE:       | Guide, \$.75              | \$30.28   |                      |

I nearly freeze to death on that horsehide cot in the Nenton police station, shivering without benefit of a single cover or pillow. At two a. m. I stroll across the plaza to the barracks and warm myself at an open pinewood fire the soldiers have made for their coffee.

Back to my cot at three a. m. and I'm just about asleep when Francisco, my guide, awakens me. At four a. m. in the bright light of a full moon, we start on our trek to Jacaltenango. Francisco is small and dressed in white. He suggests a butterfly in the moonlight as he flits ahead of me up hills, down valleys and across rivers.

We are eight hours on the road, and I suffer considerably (almost a

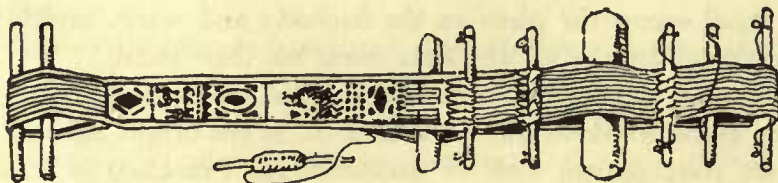
collapse) under the hot direct rays of the tropical sun before we reach the calm and isolated mountain pueblo of Jacaltenango shortly after high noon. Over and over again I have to stop and lie down by the roadside to get my wind. Climbing over Santa Caterina Mountain is particularly strenuous, but it offers its own reward, for at the end of seven hours of grueling hiking, Francisco and I come upon the lovely waterfall and the swift current of the Blue River. Here, without the bother of bathing trunks, I have the swim of my life. It is cold as ice, but just what I need. It will give me strength to climb the last mountain before reaching Jacaltenango. Foolishly I lie on the bare ground. The result? Much bug biting and itching. I am right in the nude for it.

Hours of overexertion in the tropical heat immediately followed by an ice cold plunge does something to my ears. For three days I experience difficulty in hearing, but on reaching Huehuetenango, the first big town in Guatemala some days later, I have my ears blown out, and everything is again hunky-dory.

I am still exhausted when I hit the tiny Indian settlement of Jacaltenango at about four. Imagine my joy to learn from the natives that there is a new American priest here in charge of their two hundred year old church. I am too done in to go over at once, but after lying down and getting my breath, I stroll over and introduce myself to the fine young Boston chap who came out only five months ago as a Maryknoll Missionary.

Paul Sommers is indeed a godsend. He gives me a clean bed, magazines to read, clean food and above all, a glass of water. I have not had so much as half a glass in seven days, and that's a long time for one who likes his H<sub>2</sub>O.

I rest up at the church three days until I get back to normal. Think maybe I've had a wee touch of the sun for my old bean wasn't functioning too keenly on my first day at Jacaltenango.



|             | <i>For the Day</i>                        | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                 |
|-------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Jacaltenango to<br>Concepcion             | Laredo to Concepcion  |                                 |
| VIA:        | Mule, 4 miles<br>Shank's mare, 4<br>miles | Public bus, truck, horse, sta-<br>tion wagon, taxi, shank's<br>mare, mule | <i>The<br/>Eleventh<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 8   | 1,634   |                                 |
| ROAD HOURS: | 3   | 126   |                                 |
| FARE:       | Mule, \$.85                               | \$31.13   |                                 |

At the Jacaltenango church I attend two regular morning masses and a Rosary service in the afternoon. The Indian maestro de choro chants the services and the forty Indians in the congregation wail the responses. All without benefit of any instrumental accompaniment; it is truly most impressive. How I wish my daughter, Caroline, could hear the singing.

I leave Jacaltenango at four-thirty for Concepcion, a smaller village eight miles away. I depart riding a mule, but before very long, I send it back to Jacaltenango, preferring to go on my own. The mountains are so rugged that it takes three hours to walk the remaining four miles.

I arrive at Concepcion at seven-thirty, and the local mayor puts me up in the adobe city hall, a mud room about ten by twelve feet. For a bed, he lays three planks and two *petates* (palm mats) on the cement floor and finally gives me a dirty old four foot square sheepskin saddle pad. For illumination I have a candle.

Boy, is it cold? At two in the morning I find three messy old saddle blankets and use these to keep from passing out of the picture. My Indian sleeps outside the door on the hard dirt veranda floor.



|             | <i>For the Day</i>   | <i>For the Trip</i>   |
|-------------|--|---|
| ROUTE:      | Concepcion to<br>Huehuetenango   | Laredo to Huehuetenango   |
| VIA:        | Mule, 2 miles<br>Horse, 6 miles<br>Shank's mare, 17<br>miles<br>Taxi, 30 miles | Public bus, truck, horse, sta-<br>tion wagon, taxi, shank's<br>mare, mule |
| MILES:      | 55   | 1,689   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 14½  | 140½  |
| FARE:       | Guide, \$1.45<br>Mule, 1.00<br>Horse, 1.00<br>Taxi, 6.00                       | \$40.58   |
|             | —————<br>\$9.45  |   |

*The  
Twelfth  
Day*

At three in the morning, my Indian and I leave Concepcion for a fourteen and a half hour stretch of the worst hill country I've seen outside of the Grand Canyon. On level sectors I use a horse part of the way, but principally shank's mare. Bad enough that I should have to make it, much worse an undersized critter.

Approximately halfway along today's tough assignment brings me to Todos Santos at an exhausting eighty-one hundred foot elevation. Next to the Chichicastenango/Lake Atitlan section, Todos Santos is far and away the most interesting Guatemalan village. Just beyond Todos Santos I spend three hours negotiating a single mountain. I am well repaid, however, by the next few miles of level country leading into Paquix. Oddly enough, this last short stretch is covered with white sand, in which grow the most grotesque evergreens, resembling delightful old Japanese prints.

Guatemala is, of course, the most picturesque of all the six countries so far. The Mayan Indians wear distinctive costumes, speak little Spanish and are entirely foreign to anything I see elsewhere in Latin America. They are most courteous and many stop us on the road to shake hands. Because I wear glasses and have a pale face, I am taken for a priest.

At Paquix, I secure a taxi and cover the last thirty miles back to civilization, the Guatemalan Highland City of Huehuetenango. It is refreshingly cool and immaculate. For the dozens of villages located in the remote and magnificent Cuchumatanes mountains, Huehuetenango



(Place of the Old People) is the chief trading center. Market is held daily and is very colorful with the strange costumes from both the hot and cold regions—the red and white plaid trousers of the Todos Santos men, the knee-length full *buijpiles* (blouses) of San Miguel Acatán women, and the gay red coats of the men from Nebáj and Cotzal. Huehuetenango, though little exploited as yet, is a region rich in lead, silver and copper. Its traffic in pottery, leather and textiles is very important, and it is the only place in Guatemala where merino blankets are made.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                 | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                   |
|-------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Huehuetenango to<br>Guatemala City | Laredo to Guatemala City  |                                   |
| VIA:        | Public bus                         | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare, mule | <i>The<br/>Thirteenth<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 175                                | 1,864   |                                   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 16                                 | 156½  |                                   |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$3.50                 | \$44.08   |                                   |

Catching but a few hours sleep, I arise extremely early in the morning to climb aboard the 3:15 a. m. bus for the fifteen hour run into Guatemala City, probably the cleanest Central American capital.

The bus proves a none too comfortable conveyance for it is what they call a *mixta*. As its name implies, this bus carries a mixed cargo of people, chickens, fighting cocks, pigs, and sacks of corn, beans and rice. It is as slow as the very devil.

I arrive in Guatemala City about seven-thirty, a combination of Rip van Winkle and Robinson Crusoe, and visit the barber shop at once for a shave and a shampoo. The latter is particularly amusing as the shop has no hot water. The head barber sends the boy out with a silver pitcher for enough water to rinse the suds out of my hair. The apprentice barber pours water down my neck while the master craftsman gives me what passes in Guatemala for a shampoo. I feel much better now.

To my delight, I find a Chinese restaurant and immediately stow away an enormous meal.

Now to bed for a good, solid night's sleep at the Gran Hotel Continental where I have my first hot water bath since leaving Texas, a matter of thirteen long dirty days. "Economy is filth."

Considerably refreshed in the morning, I go out and buy some flower and vegetable seeds to send to Paul Sommers, the young Boston priest at Jacaltenango. My only roll of film is developed in six hours, which should shame the New York photo services. My laundry of twelve pieces is washed and ironed and very nicely so, between ten a. m. and three p. m. for twelve cents—a pretty good standard for northern laundries to emulate.

Next to the American Embassy where I find the so very welcome wires from home. Here I learn of the necessity of special permits to leave Guatemala, so at the eleventh hour (as usual for me) I dash down to the National Palace and get away with it, the last one in line just before they close for the weekend. Luckily the official in charge of permits at the National Palace turns out to be the same Guatemalan who fixed me up with an entry permit two years ago at Tapachula.

I celebrate by going to a double header movie in the afternoon. Both pictures are good—or seem so, maybe because I haven't been to anything of this sort for several weeks. One features Mickey Rooney and others in a technicolor called "*Canciones en Alas*" (guess "*On Wings of Song*" would be a free translation) and the other is "*Oiga, Recluta*" which turns out to be "*Private Hargrove*." Both are fine and I have a delightful four hours change of venue.



## El Salvador . . . Little Beans and Big Volcanoes

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                          | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                   |
|-------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Guatemala City to San Salvador, El Salvador | Laredo to San Salvador, El Salvador                               |                                   |
| VIA:        | Public bus                                  | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare, mule | <i>The<br/>Fourteenth<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 165   | 2,029   |                                   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 15½   | 172   |                                   |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$8.00                          | \$52.08   |                                   |

IT SEEMS THAT since October, Guatemala and its neighbor to the south, El Salvador, have been on anything but good terms. Both have experienced recent revolutions; several hundred people have been shot in battles at the frontier; and for six months the border has been closed to all traffic other than air. Feeling has been running high, and there are no *camionetas* from Guatemala to Salvador and reverse, just the way I planned to travel. No one can assure me I'll get across the frontier.

Sunday morning, somewhere around seven, I catch another dilapidated bus for Asuncion Mita, which proves to be thirteen miles north of the closed border stations. I land here at five p. m. It is one of the hottest towns yet and about as big as a small cup and saucer. In addition, it is thick with dust and filth, too. I go into one native house and discover that they haven't made the bed yet. To my great amusement, while I am visiting with the owner, a perfectly swell Rhode Island Red hen leisurely springs up on the bed and comfortably settles down for the very commendable and utilitarian purpose of laying an egg, I assume. Why in the name of Guatemalan rural efficiency she doesn't go one step

farther out into the kitchen and lay the egg on the stove will always be one of the sweet mysteries of my life. Maybe the old gal had in mind that fellow's boast that he could do something a hen couldn't do—lay an egg on a hot stove and not burn his feet.

Well, there isn't an inn in the town, so I follow my past hunch and go over to the two hundred year old church. Here I find a most cordial welcome from a German priest about thirty-five years old. More than once in Mexico and Guatemala my German has come in handily. He seems genuinely glad to see me. I am even more delighted to have found him. With traditional German efficiency he scurries around and not only serves me a fine supper but with typically German cleanliness makes up an immaculate and most comfortable bed. This is certainly acceptable to me after nine or ten hours on the road in that ramshackle old bus.

I stroll over to the combination police station and fort. The *Commandante* says that at five-thirty in the morning a truck with road laborers will go to within a mile or so of the frontier and that I may go along.

The priest awakens me at five and over I go to the fort only to wait until ten-thirty for the truck. It seems the Monday morning after in Guatemala is just as unpredictable as in the States.

By twelve I come up to the Guatemalan Customs Building, show my permit to leave the country, and then fifty feet beyond, pass through a four foot galvanized wire fence and up along the path another fifty feet to the equally imposing El Salvadorean Immigration Building. I am quite thrilled. They say that only the day before the border was opened after being closed for six months, and I heard they again closed it the day after I got through, that is, to the Guatemalans for whom they temporarily had scant use. Politically, the indifference is reciprocated, as far as I can learn. Oddly enough, Guatemalans can pass into the country by air, but not by land. But this is all soon settled.

Two buses take me to San Salvador, the capital, in five hours. On the way down to the capital, the bus passes a volcano which spits fire every eight minutes, not unlike the regularity of "Old Faithful" Geyser at home. El Salvador (it's confusing to have the capital and the country with names so alike) is the smallest and yet the most densely populated country in Central America. It's only about one hundred forty by sixty-five miles. Its roads are crowded with oxcarts, one more picturesque than the other. The oxen themselves are beautiful and of white, tan, cream, deep brown, gray and black.

These oxcarts are quite different from those of the north. Because of the greater heat in El Salvador, many of them have awnings under which the mother and children sit. The head of the family walks ahead, guiding the "land houseboat" reminiscent of Lancaster County's old Conestoga wagons. The carts lumber along at the rate of about two and a half miles an hour. The wheels, of course, are of solid wood with no spokes, and I have little doubt but that the chassis are the same as when Columbus struck the shores some four hundred years ago.

I find El Salvador most interesting. Incidentally, nowhere, not even in Louisville or Atlanta, have I seen so many stunning young ladies. The whole town seems on the go in spite of the heat. The tempo resembles ours in the States.

I stay in a charming inn, a little place run by a Miss Clark from, of all places, Atlantic City. She's been here twelve years in one location and five in another and never wants to see a flake of snow or a gutter full of slush again as long as she lives. The patio and bedrooms are tastefully furnished and immaculate, and the meals swell. The charges are absurdly small, about five dollars per day including meals and a laundry. There is all the hot water one can want for baths and a fine bunch of young people, too. (The young people are not for the baths but for companionship.)



## Honduras and Tegucigalpa, Charming "Stepchild" of the Pan American Highway

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                  | <i>For the Trip</i>  |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| ROUTE:      | San Salvador to<br>Comalí, Honduras | Laredo to Comalí   |
| VIA:        | U.S. Government<br>car              | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule, car |
| MILES:      | 203                                 | 2,232  |
| ROAD HOURS: | 11                                  | 183  |
| FARE:       | Free                                | \$52.08  |

*The  
Fifteenth  
Day*

TODAY, I HAVE a stroke of luck. Dropping into the United States Public Roads Administration Office I find that one of the bridge engineers, a Mr. Terzian, is leaving shortly for Honduras, and like a good scout, he says he'll be glad to have me accompany him.

To complicate matters, my sacroiliac goes out with a vengeance, and I consult a doctor. He recommends that I lie in bed for the next five or six days and not attempt the strenuous four hundred mile run to Managua, but I can't think of passing up the marvelous chance to ride down with the bridge engineer, so I go ahead anyway. I seem no worse, though the pain is bad much of the time. I am eager to get on to San José where there is reputed to be a fine osteopath who can no doubt snap the joint back in place. Heaven only knows, I hope so.

We leave hot, dusty San Salvador at nine-thirty in the morning. Early in the afternoon, we pass San Miguel Volcano, a perfectly enormous peak with its top blown off, resulting in a truncated form from which

smoke is forever blowing. It is quite exciting, and for once, I wish I were in a plane, so that I could see what the crater itself looks like.

It's a pleasant uneventful run of about two hundred comfortable miles through fine mountainous country. Just at sunset, the perfect time, we pass through San Lorenzo, Honduras, on the Gulf of Fonseca, where we have the pleasure of seeing the Pacific Ocean and the volcanic island of Tigre.

At eight-thirty in the evening we pull into Comalí, Honduras, a model road construction camp, just in time for a most appetizing and typically "back home" supper of muffins, carrots, peas, fried bananas, mixed fruit and dessert.

Here at this ideal government camp in the Honduran mountains, it is cool and dry. A strong wind blows constantly, day and night. At an elevation of perhaps twenty-five hundred feet, the climate is perfect as an October Indian Summer day in our New England States.

There is no civilian life at Comalí, merely American and Honduran road engineers. There surely must be a fascination in living here on the job. The men are remote from any village and so must be sufficient unto themselves. They have a first aid station, carpenter shop, machine shop, and also a commissary that serves marvelous meals in immaculate surroundings (all screened in) at only forty-two cents. A night's lodging in newly built cabins with clean sheets and heavy woolen blankets is only forty-five cents. Maybe I ought to retire and come down here to pass away my old age at the rate of \$2.00 a day.

The flags and the monetary systems are somewhat confusing when you pass through some three or four of these republics in a week. Mexico has the *peso*, worth five to the dollar; Guatemala, the *quetzal*, worth one to our dollar; El Salvador, the *colon*, worth two and one-half to our dollar; and Honduras, the *lempira*, worth two to the dollar. Tonight when I hit Managua, Nicaragua, I'll have to use *córdobas*, worth six and one-half to the dollar. The flags of Guatemala and El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua all carry three blue and white stripes of equal size, the only difference being in the direction of the bands in the cases of Guatemala and El Salvador. In Honduras the center device is five stars, in El Salvador, the national seal, and in Nicaragua volcanic peaks appear.

The common denominator of all the countries is their unfailing kindness and generosity to strangers, or certainly, at least, to me.

The bridge engineer who brought me down will carry me some ten

miles farther in his car to the Nicaraguan border at three today, where another government car will, I believe, be returning one hundred forty-seven miles to Managua, the capital. Though it seems too good to be true, I shall probably get a free lift all the way. I say "probably" for two reasons. First, there is no supposedly passable road from the Nicaraguan/Costa Rican border to San José, the capital of the latter country. Only jeeps have gone through, and maybe the only transportation will be a horse or shank's mare. The other element of doubt lies in my damnable sacroiliac dislocation. Though unable to spell or pronounce the name of this troublesome part of my anatomy, I experience no difficulty in dislocating it. Generally, it is the other end of my spinal column that is weak and often gets me into trouble.

Time out for dinner. Who says a vegetarian cannot get anything to eat in Central America, at least under the generous aegis of an American chef? Hot vegetable soup, huge tender beets, boiled cabbage, delicious mashed potatoes, bread, butter, coffee, and for dessert, great slices of iced watermelon, all for the standard check of forty-two cents. Apropos of local prices, orchids sell for ten cents per dozen in the Salvadorean markets, and a two-story house with a living room nineteen by thirty-five, two bedrooms, a swimming pool and a tennis court goes at \$80.00 per month. Compares pretty favorably with the States, if I remember correctly . . . and my checkbook back home is ample evidence I do.

Now for a hot bath and a siesta before starting off at three for Managua, Nicaragua. With regard to the two hundred eighty-eight mile stretch between the Nicaraguan capital and San José, no one even thus far can tell me if much of the way is navigable other than by horse or on foot. *Quién sabe?*



*Boletín Latino-Americano de Música*



## Nicaragua and the "End of the Line"

|             | <i>For the Day</i>              | <i>For the Trip</i>  |                                  |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Comalí to Managua,<br>Nicaragua | Laredo to Managua  |                                  |
| VIA:        | U.S. Government<br>car          | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule, car | <i>The<br/>Sixteenth<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 157                             | 2,389  |                                  |
| ROAD HOURS: | 9                               | 192  |                                  |
| FARE:       | Free                            | \$52.08  |                                  |

AFTER A RESTFUL sleep on a most comfortable bed in a screened-in cabin, another engineer drives me down to Sébaco, Nicaragua, where we arrive at noon. From Sébaco, Mr. Milton Adams, the Resident Highway Engineer for the Nicaraguan section of the Public Roads Administration, drives me to Managua, to his headquarters in Nicaragua's capital. With his thorough knowledge of the Pan American Highway and its local history as well, Mr. Adams is an ideal traveling companion. I am particularly appreciative of my good fortune as this is my first trip through this section.

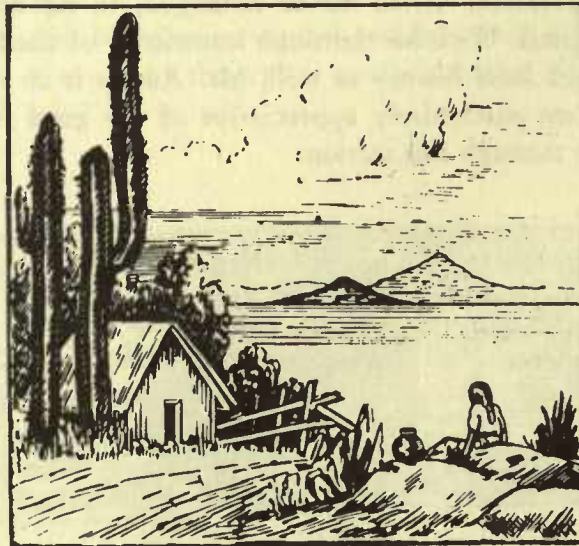
|             | <i>For the Day</i>             | <i>For the Trip</i>  |                                    |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Managua to Rivas,<br>Nicaragua | Laredo to Rivas  |                                    |
| VIA:        | Public bus                     | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mules,<br>car | <i>The<br/>Seventeenth<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 68                             | 2,457  |                                    |
| ROAD HOURS: | 5                              | 197  |                                    |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$1.44             | \$53.52  |                                    |

At noon, I visit with the two friends I met on the bus two years ago in Guatemala, Esperanza Quesada who has since married and Maria Luisa Romero. Esperanza's husband, much to my delight, operates a soft drink factory, and I am treated repeatedly to iced drinks.

The visit with Maria Luisa's family, her mother and two sisters, is good fun as not one of them speaks a single word of English. I really begin to feel I am making progress with my Español, as often it is a case of sink or swim, particularly in remote villages.

After one day in the capital, I am again on my way, this time in a public truck, to the last town in Nicaragua, Rivas. It requires five weary hours to laboriously cover the sixty-eight miles though the road is level and of fine macadam. We stop all along the way, either for a Coca Cola or to take on or let off passengers. The transportation down here is very informal. I ride with twenty other passengers, two huge hogs and a miscellaneous cargo of fifteen hundred roof tiles, etc.

We arrive in Rivas at eight-thirty in the evening, and I am pleased to find this backwoods town unspoiled by tourists. The authorities are generous and permit me to use their typewriter to write my notes for the day. I am comfortably established in the City Hall. Next door is the *cuartel* or soldiers' barracks, and outside is the inevitable *plaza*.



## Costa Rica . . .

### Lonely Guanacaste Province

|             | <i>For the Day</i>   | <i>For the Trip</i>   |  |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| ROUTE:      | Rivas to Rancho San<br>Damita, Costa Rica  | Laredo to Rancho San<br>Damita  |  |
| VIA:        | Public bus, 15 miles<br>Private truck, 5 miles<br>Shank's mare, 7 miles<br>Horse, 1 mile | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car |  |
| MILES:      | 28   | 2,485   |  |
| ROAD HOURS: | 5  | 202   |  |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$.90  | \$54.42   |  |

#### *The Eighteenth Day*

FROM RIVAS, the bus is to take me the twenty-four miles to the Nicaraguan Costa Rican border in one hour and land me there by nine-thirty. Actually, it breaks down completely at the end of fifteen miles, and we passengers start to hoof it the last nine miles when a truck unexpectedly shows up. We clamber aboard. Though it looks husky (she's a three-ton truck), it too expires at the end of a few minutes, and we end up by walking to Peña Blanca where I am challenged by a frontier sentinel. They are great on formality and protocol out in this backwoods section of the world, and though I imagine many of the village officials don't even read too well, particularly the English in the passports, they dearly like to go through all the motions.

At the frontier the splendid macadam roads and other blessings that have been with me the entire length of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, just drop off to nothing as though I were to step off the roof of a house. Beyond lies nothing but the faintest suggestion of a trail for oxcarts.

Peña Blanca may sound important; actually it is a town of just two

houses, counting the customs house and fort combined as one. Otherwise, the country is complete isolation. It is now three p. m., not too long before sundown, particularly as considerable terra incognita stretches ahead.

Luckily, one of the passengers from Rivas is a Señor Amadeo Morici, a substantial sixty year old ranch owner whose horse is waiting for him at the international line. He invites me to stay all night at his place, four miles along the Costa Rican trail. I deeply appreciate this as his ranch is possibly the sole habitation in the next twelve miles. Without it I don't quite know what I should do. It turns out later that I have four river crossings to make before getting to Morici's ranch and still the thirty-pound suitcase to lug with nighttime not over far away.

Grass towers seven feet high beside the trail.

My rancher friend goes on well ahead. When I reach the first river, the deepest of the lot, he has thoughtfully turned back and is waiting for me. He insists that I get up in the saddle back of him, and the little ranch mustang takes all three of us (two men and a suitcase) dry shod through plenty of river.

Then Señor Amadeo goes on his way, saying he will send a boy back from his San Damita Ranch with an extra horse for me. Try as I do I can't imagine folks doing that kind of a favor for a stranger back home. Before the boy with the two horses shows up, I take off my shoes and socks and wade one river and stumble through another, hopping from rock to rock. I am relieved to mount the horse for the last mile to the ranch house.

A plain two story board house, it is remotely situated. The man, his twenty-five year old son and a young fellow on vacation from San José are putting up here for the special work season. Whatever it is, I don't exactly know, but they are very hospitable and go to no end of trouble to make me comfortable.



|             | <i>For the Day</i>                     | <i>For the Trip</i>   |
|-------------|--|---|
| ROUTE:      | Rancho San Damita to<br>La Cruz        | Laredo to La Cruz   |
| VIA:        | Mule, 4 miles<br>Shank's mare, 5 miles | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car |
| MILES:      | 9                                      | 2,494   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 5                                      | 207   |
| FARE:       | Free                                   | \$54.42   |

*The  
Nineteenth  
Day*

My host, his son and their friend are up and about again by four a. m. By seven, Señor Morici and his son mount and are off to the country on ranch affairs. As honored guest, I snooze through until the unseemly hour of six-thirty. In the fresh, cool, early morning air, I stroll across the front yard, pass through the kitchen garden and down an easy grassy slope to the banks of the little river that fronts the ranch house.

Bird life is plentiful here, as might be expected. From the limbs of a few trees swing thirty nests, each two feet long, the homes of Costa Rica's famous *oropéndolas*.

After a cold and invigorating plunge, I retrace my steps to the veranda where the Indian housekeeper has prepared a breakfast of rice, beans, cheese, coffee and thick cream. So remote from any and all other human habitation, we drink water from the swiftly running stream without the far too common danger of dysentery germs.

As I eat, I notice a city newspaper clipping tacked up on the exterior wall of the porch. It reports the recent marriage of my host's pretty daughter to an American of the armed forces stationed at Norfolk, Virginia.

Though Señor Morici and his son have long since left the ranch, I am by no means alone. There is a colorful native family that looks after things generally when the boss is off to Rivas or San José, and it isn't long before a half dozen wild and woolly countrymen come up to the shack armed with machetes and axes. At first blush, it appears that a revolution's brewin' or at least a tropical version of Mutiny on the Bounty, but they turn out to be ranch hands. Shucks!

I leave for the town of La Cruz at nine-thirty in the morning riding one of Morici's mules and accompanied by one of his yard boys who mounts another mule and carries my suitcase. I send him back at the

end of two hours, because I have more sympathy for the mules than for my own "dogs."

There's nary a hut to be seen anywhere, and as the kid leaves me to return to Rancho San Damita, I feel very much alone in the world. But not for long. I am joined by two natives (bless their soles) who are walking all the way from Managua to San José. Traffic is picking up. Now down the trail from the opposite direction come two horsemen. After the manner of men throughout rural Central America, they stop, lean forward in their saddles, and courteously shake hands, though we are complete strangers.

Our next fellow-travelers along the lonely trail make a pathetic group. The family—a father, the mother carrying a baby, and their young son—are all in rags. The man leads a tragically skinny old pack-horse that's missing both ears! All five are footsore and with good cause. They're walking to Managua, some eighty-five long, rough, weary miles ahead.

My two friends of the road and I walk on, up hill and down, over the narrow, stony, winding way, now excessively hot under the mid-day sun.

Yet, it's marvelous how snappily one can react (at least a tired timid gringo) when the occasion arises. I give a lively exhibition as a thirty-inch snake—deadly poisonous, according to my friends—wriggles off the trail to my left.

A few congos and micos, two different types of Costa Rican monkeys, cavort among the tree branches above.

Three hours trudging brings us to La Cruz which is the last village (and heaven only knows, it is small enough) before my real destination, Liberia. La Cruz is big enough to be on most maps, but doesn't measure up much as compared with the size of most towns back in the States. But as little and as dirty and as forlorn as La Cruz is, it still looks most inviting after miles and miles of desolation. It consists of a central store, a few shabby houses and a barracks miles and miles remote from everywhere on a windy plateau in the northern Guanacaste Province of Costa Rica.

Yes, you guessed it. The store is run by a Chinaman who sells me a can of California peaches and one of grapefruit for \$1.40.

On the basis of good will created earlier in the day by splitting half a watermelon with the Major, I bum a cot with the small detachment of soldiers stationed here. They amuse themselves playing checkers with

pop bottle caps. The barracks is a ramshackle structure built corn-crib fashion and cold as a refrigerating plant. It is on a high point of land jutting out into the Pacific Ocean, and day and night for four months this time of year a gale of a wind blows every minute without stopping. After the sun drops below the horizon, the mercury drops even farther. The ceaseless "Constant Easterlies" recall the trade winds of years ago when I lived at Charlotte Amalie in the Virgin Islands.

The fort doesn't provide Beauty Rest mattresses or any of the concomitants at all, no pillow and nary a sheet or blanket. At two in the morning, I borrow three old coffee sacks of filthy, smelly burlap from the sentry, just to keep from freezing. I stick my legs into one, place the second under my back and the third over my chest. They serve a double purpose. In addition to keeping off a little of the night wind, they function as an alarm clock. I am doubly eager to be up and out of the place before ever the sun comes up and I can see the extreme dirtiness of my blankets.

Theoretically, a bus runs each Sunday from La Cruz to Liberia, but I take no chances and so order a guide and horses for tomorrow.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>   | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                  |
|-------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | La Cruz to Liberia   | Laredo to Liberia   |                                  |
| VIA:        | Horse, 8 miles<br>Shank's mare, 11 miles<br>Oxcart, 17 miles | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car, oxcart |                                  |
| MILES:      | 36   | 2,530   | <i>The<br/>Twentieth<br/>Day</i> |
| ROAD HOURS: | 21   | 228   |                                  |
| FARE:       | Horse, \$1.35<br>Oxcart, 5.03                                | \$60.80   |                                  |
|             | <hr/> \$6.38   |   |                                  |

At five-thirty I start out from La Cruz on horseback with a guide. The kid and the horses go back to the village at nine, and I lug my thirty-pound suitcase from here on. It's as devilishly hot and sweaty as it is lonely.

In this prairie section of Costa Rica, there just aren't any roads, only a succession of rather invisible oxcart trails to show in which direction the little town of Liberia lies, some twenty-five miles distant. If it

were not for the friendly telephone wire I find strung along part of this desolation, I confess I might be somewhat nervous about getting lost.

This Provincia Guanacaste of northern Costa Rica is just a great low plateau of long brown and pink grass and many trees, for the most part completely leafless at this time because of the dry winter season. The result is a direct sun that singes me to a crisp.

Judge the density of the local population by the fact that in four hours walking I do not pass a single person, only one coyote and one thirty inch iguana.

At one, I come to a ranch house. Here I negotiate with an old man and his thirteen year old son (and their dog, Fortuna) to drive me the balance of the way in their rumbling old oxcart. The boy and I try to sleep hunched up in the tiny body of the forty by fifty inch solid wooden-wheeled, springless wagon, but it is out of the question. All I can think of is a jolting, vehicular coffin, wide open to the starlit skies above. Much of the time the terrier rides on my stomach.

We pass through totally uninhabited land part of the time with a friendly pale moon over our shoulders. We ford a wide river, and it is all extremely fascinating in spite of the physical hardship.

We see beautiful birds, a deer, and nearly run over a deadly poisonous snake. The driver finds it difficult to understand my opposition to killing it, but with true Latin graciousness, he concedes my point. There is always some excitement.

At the end of the eleven hours, we hit the dirty, tiny settlement of Liberia. I knock at the only hotel door. The owner sticks his head out long enough to say "*No hay cama*" (There is no bed) and that is that. I go to the *cuartel* or fort, but the colonel has long since retired after a heavy session with the cards, and the sergeant chucks me out. I am cold and tired, having been up twenty-two hours, and I guess I am not too polite to the military.

Finally, I discern a tiny light on the wall of a building almost as small. In its pale reflection I read "*Hospital de Maternidad.*" Yes, you guessed it; it's the Maternity Hospital. I am permitted to sleep four hours on a hard bench in the vestibule without benefit of cover or pillow, but with the companionship of the night porter, who observes the formalities of orthodoxy by expelling me at daybreak before the new mothers even suspicion that I have been one of them.

Just one tragedy results from this temporary incursion into no man's



land. Here in Liberia's miniature maternity hospital I give birth to the idea to write this *magnum opus*.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>   | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                     |
|-------------|----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Liberia to Las Cañas | Laredo to Las Cañas   |                                     |
| VIA:        | Public bus           | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car, oxcart | <i>The<br/>Twenty-first<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 30                   | 2,560   |                                     |
| ROAD HOURS: | 3½                   | 231½  |                                     |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$1.80   | \$62.60   |                                     |

From Liberia, I take a local bus for the short, uninteresting ride to Las Cañas. We pass through the dusty, drab, little town of Bagaces, where the few stores are owned and operated by Chinese.

At Las Cañas, I seek out the United States Government Road Camp where I have a most excellent meal as the guest of the Superintendent, Señor Tomás Guardia, who has since been transferred to the Division of Panama.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>   | <i>For the Trip</i>  |                                      |
|-------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Las Cañas to Macacona  | Laredo to Macacona   |                                      |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare, 16 miles<br>Thumb, 31 miles<br>Shank's mare, 1 mile<br>Public bus, 1 mile<br>Shank's mare, 1 mile<br>U.S. Gov't truck, 1<br>mile | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car, oxcart, thumb | <i>The<br/>Twenty-second<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 51   | 2,611  |                                      |
| ROAD HOURS: | 12½  | 244  |                                      |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$.20  | \$62.80  |                                      |

I leave Las Cañas at five-thirty in the morning. Since country buses throughout Latin America have an ungodly custom of frequently starting out at three-thirty or four in the morning, it is too late to catch the single daily trip that the local bus service makes.

So I walk a good part of the hot, dusty way from Las Cañas to the

United States Road Campamento at Macacona. It is excessively hot and dust lies on the road, ankle deep.

Passing Rio Javillo, children to the left of the road sing in a minor key but express scant interest in foreigners.

In San Miguél I see two horses, a bay tied to the tail of an old white horse. Outside of one of the huts, a six month old baby sleeps in a burlap bag hammock. Other than that there is but little life visible.

Out in the open again. What big black or scarlet beans fifteen inches long on the ground! I am later told they contain milk.

At noon, I come upon a farmer woodsman and two barefoot boys. They carry five foot axes and a great machete. Have lunch with this family a half mile down the road. During the meal, the farmer throws corncobs at the chickens under the table. Nonchalantly, he picks his toe with the knife with which he cuts open a coconut.

A short distance behind his farm, he and the boys gather green coconuts. Since I am afraid to drink the water hereabouts, my host adroitly clips off the tops of the coconuts with a machete to afford me my first really quenching drink of the day. Refreshed, I am glad to be on my way.

After a sweaty, dirty eight hours grind afoot to my utter amazement and keen relief, a touring car comes through this all but forsaken country. It is driven by two fine young Costa Rican chaps who are courageously negotiating the dry weather trip all the way from Managua, Nicaragua, to San José, Costa Rica. It's the first auto to get through, so far as I know.

Even by auto, there are many obstacles to be surmounted. Dead-heading it with them, we are "mired" against a big rock which was invisible because of an eight inch layer of fine, gray dust. We delay half an hour while two oxen extricate the car with the assistance of several men shoving and pushing. Next the car helps to extricate the two oxen. This particular part of the Pan American Highway is great stuff for local color but is not precisely pleasurable motoring.

Since they are headed for Puntarenas and I for San José, we part company just before sundown at the cattle-shipping town of Barranca. Here, in Barranca's single store, run incidentally by four of the pleasantest Chinese merchants I ever met, we say *adios* over three ice cold Coca Colas. To my embarrassment and their credit, while my back is turned these two chaps, who have already driven me miles and miles over the hot dusty road, graciously pay for my drink, and then disappear like the Arabs who folded their tents and silently stole away.

I drown my shame in four tall glasses of iced lemonade and again resort to shank's mare for the last few miles to the road camp where I am to put up for the night.

Outside the town, just as the sun is setting, I cross the beautiful, broad, cool Barranca River. The temptation is too great. As the surrounding countryside is obviously not over-populated, I slip down under the high bridge, throw care and all my clothes aside and have a most refreshing quarter hour swim. The crazy old native straw hat bought that morning in Las Cañas floats down the stream, never to be retrieved.

Later, a local bus and a truck take me the remaining short mileage to Macacona.

What a contrast Macacona presents! Hard surfaced roads pass over higher and therefore cooler undulating country. The camp's screened-in cabins, ample supply of pure water and well-kept grounds are more than fair exchange for the low, hot, dust-laden Guanacaste villages of Las Cañas, Bagaces, Liberia and La Cruz.

Luck is with me. I find Ted Smith in charge of the Macacona camp. He is the splendid chap whom I met last year back in the "Mountain of Death" section of the Highway south of San José. He and his family receive me most hospitably, making me feel very much at home.

Selfishly I direct the conversation almost exclusively to that nightmare of some one hundred nineteen miles of uncharted jungle south of San Isidro, through which I have yet to go. Ted Smith is intimately familiar with the country in and about the northerly end of this line, and I pump him for all he is worth.

My host places at my disposal a private room, graced with a shower-bath, an immaculate bed and plenty of reading matter. His only unkind act (unintentional, of course) is to lead me to my sleeping quarters past the Doctor's Office where I am confronted with a collection of preserved poisonous snakes. This is the stuff of which dreams are made.



|             | <i>For the Day</i>                                 | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                     |
|-------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Macacona to San José                               | Laredo to San José  |                                     |
| VIA:        | U.S. Gov't truck, 19 miles<br>Public bus, 47 miles | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare, mule, car, oxcart, thumb | <i>The<br/>Twenty-third<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 66   | 2,677   |                                     |
| ROAD HOURS: | 6  | 250   |                                     |
| FARE:       | \$1.60   | \$64.40   |                                     |

This morning Ted Smith more than compensates for his inadvertent disservice of last night. He introduces me to one Señor Nicolas Soto, his man Friday seven days a week, who turns out to be the most helpful friend I am to find in all Costa Rica.

Today is Señor Soto's day off, and as his home is in Alajuela, a suburb of San José, we shall make the bus trip together. Ted Smith considerably drives us by truck the short distance to San Ramon where we experience little difficulty in boarding one of the many buses for San José.

The road is well paved, and the Highway passes through a restful, rolling, and most fertile country. Pineapples thrive in the rich agricultural section in and about the delightful town of Alajuela.

From time to time as we lazily roll along by bus, there pedal by in the opposite direction sweaty, exhausted participants in Costa Rica's major sporting event of the year, a grueling all-day bicycle grind from San José to San Ramon to Puntas Arenas and back to San José. I forget the precise value of the first prize, but, take it from me, whoever wins the cut glass suspenders sure does earn them. Imagine twelve hours or so of competitive pedaling over innumerable hills under an extremely hot tropical sun.

The route enters San José via San Ramon, Palmares, Naranjo, Grecia, Alajuela and Heredia.



## San José and the "Mountain of Death"

|             | <i>For the Day</i>  | <i>For the Trip</i>   |
|-------------|---|---|
| ROUTE:      | San José to Millsville,<br>Millsville to San<br>Isidro del General    | Laredo to San Isidro del<br>General   |
| VIA:        | U.S. Government<br>car, 62 miles<br>U.S. Government<br>jeep, 23 miles | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car, oxcart, thumb,<br>jeep |
| MILES:      | 85  | 2,762   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 7   | 257   |
| FARE:       | Free  | \$64.40   |

*The  
Twenty-fourth  
Day*

I INDULGE IN pleasant matutinary musings while I gaze lazily out of my San José hotel window before starting off for San Isidro. Appropriate to the occasion, three rangy *zopilotes* (carrion buzzards) are neatly poised on the roof opposite, like my potential undertakers. They are macabre and distressingly expectant. The United States Road Engineers will gratuitously drive me the eighty-five miles from San José to San Isidro del General, the last jumping off place in Costa Rica. As the road from there on can be traversed only on foot or by horse, before leaving San José I exchange my suitcase for the more practical native saddlebags (*alforjas*).

We start out at an altitude of some three thousand feet and on the short ride go over ten thousand nine hundred fifty feet, the highest point between the Canal and the Rio Grande. It's over the timber line and bitterly cold and foggy. Known as *Cerro del Muerte* or the Mountain of Death, this high point proved a danger spot in days gone

by as many north-bound natives of very early times succumbed to pneumonia along this wind-swept pass after sweating through the hot steamy trails below. Occasionally, we see the Atlantic on one side and the Pacific on the other from the Continental Divide.

This run is conceded the most difficult highway engineering task in the entire Western Hemisphere and is only partially constructed. We change cars repeatedly and in the eighty-five miles use a touring car, a truck and two jeeps. There are marvelous thrills.

Somewhere down the line, an engineer points out the *Cueva de la Puma* (Grotto of the Puma), so called because a foot *correo* (postman) in passing this cave (head bowed upon his chest and weighed down with his sack of mail) innocently looked up to see a mountain lion confronting him along the narrow trail. No, don't get scared. Here's the anticlimax. In fright, the poor Indian fell flat on his face, his rifle flying out of his hand. The mountain lion considerably turned his back and fled in the gracious manner I've previously noted among all Latins.

If ever I'm caught with my hat off in a similarly precarious predicament, I'll be carrying a hunk of soft soap in my pocket. I learned this trick from a traveling soap salesman out in the Rockies who was trapped in a similar jam with a seven foot grizzly that charged him with open maw. With complete and obviously well-warranted faith in his product, the ingenious chap rolled up his sleeves, lathered his forearm, jammed it down the bear's mouth, grabbed its tail and before either he or the beast had time to say Jack Robinson, yanked the surprised bruin inside out.

Riding along in a jeep, my driver stops at a lonely spot and leads me up the steep bank, completely carpeted with cool, damp, pink sphagnum moss, into which we sink our arms clear to the elbows. What a New York florist wouldn't give for this treasure which incidentally extends uninterrupted yard upon yard.

Farther along, there's an area of strange ferns. I'm told this is the oldest form of vegetable life on our planet today.

In the early construction days, this was indeed a treacherous section, the underlying ground being much like quicksand. Both mules and men were known to have sunk beyond saving.

At the end of the line are spotless beds, a laundry, the tastiest meals imaginable, medical service and much helpful advice. Again I become the guest of a splendid government road camp.

Later, I sample "native life." San Isidro's Hotel Central charges \$1.40 for a day's lodging and three meals. Here's a typical midday menu: soup, scrambled eggs, beans, macaroni, rice, and fried potatoes. Long quantitatively but not quite a well-balanced diet according to our standards.

The drinking water here is definitely "out" but Coca Cola is always on tap.

### JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS

IF seven days of principally rice, beans, fried eggs and those livid gray, indigestible, non-skid tortillas would prove monotonous chow, particularly with little or no water with which to wash them down;

IF Simmons' Beauty Rest mattresses be essentials and a coarse hammock, a rough bean-pole roost, and a crude cot with your shoes, puttees and saddlebag serving as pillows seem unsatisfactory substitutes;

IF you speak no Spanish;

IF thoughts of nine-foot boas, or smaller yet more deadly poisonous snakes, skin-boring insects, and equally poisonous blind lizards adversely affect your sleep;

IF malaria or amoeba's infection be alarming;

IF, when you're afoot, you have to slide, stumble and trip up and down narrow stony trails at times only ten inches wide, or if tramping over utterly bare stretches with sweat pouring down your face be disconcerting; or

IF, when enjoying the less uncomfortable experience of mounting a mule, the thick growth of the dark, drippy jungle presses both against your knees and from above, making you think this proposed junket is not quite worth the gamble;

I respectfully submit, it were better you remained at home and substituted for your trip, the next hundred odd pages, admittedly quite tiring of themselves though probably not quite so much as the rigors of the actual experience.

### PRELUDE TO THE JUNGLE TREK

They tell me there is not a single road fit for wheeled vehicles, not even an oxcart (and they're the ultimate in rugged vehicle transporta-

tion), along the succeeding one hundred and eleven miles that stretch between Río La Union, Costa Rica (some twelve miles from San Isidro del General), and El Volcan, Panama. Travel afoot, by horse and by mule over the route will be sufficiently arduous. There is little safe drinking water. The food is limited largely to rice, beans, fried eggs and tortillas. Sleeping (?) in dirt-floored, windowless, palm-thatched shacks, coupled with the dangers of dysentery, malaria and poisonous snakes will complicate my problems.

I, therefore go about and arm myself with whatever information I can dig up. Here, then, are some of the pleasant local conditions against which I am warned.

### MALARIA

Particularly in the low, hot country, it is essential that I sleep under a net at all times to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. There is some consolation in the fact that only the female (as is largely true in human life) will prove dangerous. I am told, too, that this particular type can be easily recognized as it bites only when standing on its head (or yours). Furthermore, there will be no danger unless the mosquito has just bitten a native suffering from malaria.

At all costs malaria is to be avoided. There are many kinds, and the aftereffects are likely to continue for at least a year. The common symptoms of all types are recurrent fevers and chills. Some attacks recur every day, some every three days. One shakes all over, then burns up. It is good to learn that the germ requires nine days for incubation. Unless my plans go awry, I should be able to negotiate the entire distance in eight or nine days and, therefore, will be within reach of medical treatment before any attack can set in.

Dry weather is most propitious. In addition, the net is to be carefully tucked under the mattress if I be obliged to sleep out in the open. I am to take along either citronella or a special Navy insect repellent. Mosquitoes usually do their dirty work at dawn and at dusk, but for me to start long after sunrise seems a bit inconsistent with the suggestion that I commence my hikes or rides extra early because of the intense heat on the trail after the sun is fairly well up in the sky.

It is recommended that my mosquito netting be subjected to DDT



bombing before starting out. One government authority advises my taking atabrine as a preventive. Another strongly urges neither atabrine nor quinine saying that both the Army and Navy forbid their use in the tropics, as both drugs, though they fortify the system, for that very reason makes cures more difficult. This latter statement proved 100% false.

#### SNAKES

So far as I can see, or rather hear, there are many kinds of snakes, all deadly poisonous with the exception of nine or ten foot boa constrictors. Among them are five types of vipers. Two types very decently remain on the ground, while a third, the palm viper, habitually hangs from trees and is easily mistaken for a branch. Bushmasters are common, as are coral snakes, the most poisonous of all. The resident engineer says, "If a person is foolish enough to sit on a coral snake, he deserves to be bitten."

If I be obliged to sleep on the ground, it is suggested that a circle of rope laid about my bed might discourage reptilian intrusion. The natives are said to rub garlic on their legs because snakes of good taste dislike garlic quite as much as most people dislike the snakes. Road gangs habitually chant or yell while working in the bush, on the premise that all snakes presumably avoid noises of any kind. Some advise taking along an anti-snakebite hypodermic set, but this counsel I throw to the winds—likewise a small rubber suction gadget should a snake be so inconsiderate as to strike other than at an extremity where a tourniquet might prove practicable.

#### SCORPIONS

Though not necessarily mortal, certain scorpions are considered very dangerous. My friend, Ted Smith, chief engineer at the Macacona Camp, experienced two unfortunate encounters when I visited him recently. One morning in dressing he failed to take the usual precaution of investigation and put on his trousers in which a scorpion was taking a siesta. A few evenings later while Ted was leaning forward writing, another scorpion dropped from the ceiling down the neck of his shirt. The results were equally painful in both instances, and it was some time before Ted took a siesta.

## OTHER CRITTERS

It is rumored that some blind, poisonous lizards relax beneath rocks in stagnant pools. Two other creatures must be avoided, the *tigre* and the *sabino*. Both ranging about thirty inches at the shoulder, the former is a sort of mountain lion or puma, the latter a species of wild hog said to be dangerous when confronted in herds.

## TRAILS

I am warned against the mild inconvenience of *quebradas* or ravines. Actually, we pass over no less than twenty-three such river beds within the first thirty-seven miles. Some gullies (euphemistic for chasms) might be five hundred feet. At Las Sabanillas, the cuts will be extra steep requiring that we dismount and lead the horses down and up.

Somewhere along the road I'll be under the trees for three days. Sounds cool, but disquietingly snaky. There will be a good swift river to ford about every ten miles.

Sweet harbinger of hope. The trail will definitely not be overcrowded with people though it will be quite overgrown with underbrush and trees. In certain sections, these may require hacking our way through with the old machete.

## PEOPLE

Somewhere along the line there is supposed to be one Englishman. And oh yes, farther down a bit there lives a Yugoslavian ranchero. I just can't miss the place, as he has (with considerable originality, I think) painted his name on the outside of his shack, but backward! Not that it really is of any consequence, as most of his neighbors can't read a word anyway, even forward.

The vicinity of Las Cañas will seem to be the toughest. Just two or three straw huts, a single store and most probably I shall see no one at all, Englishman, Yugoslav or native, for stretches of five or ten miles. Somewhere along here I shall cross the Costa Rica/Panama frontier, but to quote verbatim, "You'll have a heck of a time locating the border line even when you are right astride it."

There is absolutely no danger as regards the natives themselves. They

are honest, simple and hospitable. In the more remote parts, they use bone arrows. Some still possess ancient gold artifacts that would gladden the heart of any archeologist, at least so I am told. However, the principal folks along the trail will be the *arrieros* or cowboys driving their cattle over the old Indian trails north from Panama. Few pass through this country with the exception of some official survey parties.

#### FOOD

This will be confined largely to rice, tortillas and beans, not too exciting a prospect for a week or more. Yet with true Latin consideration, I am assured a variety in the service at least. One day the beans will be dished up standing on end; next day they'll be lying on their backs; while at other times I'll have them reclining on either their right or their left side. How few Anglo-Saxons would go to such extra bother to satisfy the whims of a transient. Dietetically, this cheers me no end.

#### EXTREME DYSENTERY

Amoeba germs will be prevalent everywhere. The American doctor in San José goes so far as to advise against eating any uncooked vegetable and many fruits. I am not to drink any water, even from swiftly flowing streams unless it has been actively boiled for twenty minutes. Apparently he even lacks faith in the so-called chlorotablets others consider excellent insurance against the germs of dysentery.

The amoeba takes twenty-one days to incubate, so I'll have three weeks additional worry after coming out of the bush. As a comforting corollary, the doctor adds that some cases are so severe as to necessitate a return to the tropics for specialized medical treatment.

#### MONEY AND EXPENSE

Though *colones* only are accepted in Costa Rica, once over the frontier either the *balboas* of Panama or our own American dollars serve as legal tender.

Ideas concerning probable expense are of the most hazy variety. Maybe a hundred *colones* each for horses, for guides and for food, with another fifty tossed in for the inevitable incidentals and sundries, would suffice. Altogether seventy-odd dollars might take care of the seven to

nine days expense. A *colon* is the rough equivalent of one-sixth of an American dollar.

\* \* \* \* \*

As counterirritant to all these potential dangers, one Nicolas Soto is the greatest comfort and best counselor imaginable. Señor Soto, a native Costa Rican practical engineer, has worked with the Public Roads Administration for years. Without doubt he is better informed on this particularly trying section of the highway than anyone else, being one of the very few who have actually passed over the line from San Isidro to Volcan.

With the conscientious generosity typical throughout Middle America he sits down with me in his delightful little home at Alajuela and supplies, in most helpful detail, a welter of invaluable data. His thoughtfulness is very shortly to prove the most effective kind of accident and life insurance policy. The very next day, he supplements this with a memorandum I shall always treasure, plus a number of equally helpful letters of introduction.

And so, "Good night, Sweet Prince." Pleasant dreams for the morrow's happy trek from San Isidro.

"Call me early, mother, for I am to be Queen of the May!"

"You must wake and call me early,  
Call me early, mother dear;  
Tomorrow 'twill be the happiest time  
Of all the glad New Year,—  
Of all the glad New Year, mother,  
The maddest, merriest day;  
For I'm to be Queen of the May."



From San Isidro to Volcan

One day of walk, warm climate, good road—  
dirty water only from rivers with hard cu-  
rent. Use your mosquito net

From Volcan to Buenos Aires

do not scratch your skin when ever you  
feel lithe. There is a kind of very small  
mosquito that leaves on the skin a very  
small red spot; when ever it hapen, squeeze  
the red spot untill the red spot and blod  
comes out.

Buenos Aires to Potrero Grande

Wide open eyes because of the snakes  
all poisons

Potrero Grande to Cañas Gordas

Two complete days of hard walk, one  
dangerous river crossing—Rio Bruce. one  
very steep cuesta named La pita

Use cloro for your water, one pill for each  
cantine, Afebring two daily prevents ma-  
laria, do your best not to step on the ground  
if obliged to do it use a piece of canvas

All the way down since leave San Isi-  
dro the most common food is rice, beans  
and eggs and mostly cooked with lard.

Better take 3 pounds of sugar with you and  
~~so~~ go easy with it.

Saddle bags is the handiest thing for this  
trips

Excerpt from a Washington letter of "encouragement"—

It probably is humanly possible to get through from San Isidro to Volcan. As a matter of fact our survey parties have worked in this area, but it is a distance of 125 miles through rough country covered, as you know, with dense jungle growth where the going would be difficult and the danger of getting lost would not be inconsiderable.

## Shank's Mare and Otherwise

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                        | <i>For the Trip</i>   |
|-------------|---|---|
| ROUTE:      | San Isidro del General<br>to Río la Union | Laredo to Río La Union  |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare                              | Public bus, truck, horses,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mules,<br>car, oxcart, thumb,<br>jeep |
| MILES:      | 13  | 2,775   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 9   | 266   |
| FARE:       | Free                                      | \$64.40   |

*The  
Twenty-fifth  
Day*

6:05 a. m.

AFTER a breakfast of one cup of black coffee from the thermos bottle, I leave a note of thanks at the doorstep of the camp superintendent and start on foot toward Buenos Aires, lugging my twenty-seven pound *alforjas* (saddlebags) and a roll of two blankets. The night watch failed to awaken me, and the guide and packhorse have not come as promised by 5:30. The guard's alibi for failure of all three to show up on time is: "*Duerme bien la gente aquí, Señor!*" ("Folks sleep well here, sir!") It is fresh and cool and beautiful, too, with mountains framing the green of the lowlands. I am to follow Public Roads Administration jeep tracks to kilometer 13.6, about eight miles. Estimates vary from three to four hours as to when I shall arrive at this last outpost, the engineers' "fly-camp," after which I have about seven or eight days travel.

6:13 a. m.

My guide (and snake-protector) appears in the form of half-pint Isidro astride a gray horse, Carita, followed by the family dog, Violeta. Securing the bags and blanket roll to the saddle, we four start off down

the narrow, rough, red dirt road toward Buenos Aires, thirty-seven miles away. Although the natives find it difficult to understand, I refuse to ride any part of the distance, as the combined weight of cargo and me would exceed two hundred pounds. At my insistence, young Isidro, the size of a split second, rides all the way to Volcan.

Scared in San José about the ever-present poisonous snakes as much as nine or ten feet in length, I was assured the night before that I would have a mature guide, versed in first aid, who could act in any emergency. When you are bitten out in the bush by our good friends *cascabela muda*,\* *víbora terciopelo* or *la culebra coral*, there is little time for thinking things over. Should you want to live a bit longer, you must get busy with razor blade, tourniquet and antiseptic. My little Isidro (who looks ten but claimed sixteen years) is charming, but I confess to no great faith in his profound knowledge of serpentine surgery. I make no bones about it, either! Before we are beyond the town limits I complain that I was promised a full-grown "hombre" to go along. However, it works out all right, as so many tangles in life do. Pedro, his father, has overslept. He will join us later. Isidro, the son, is merely going along "to see the world." In all likelihood this boy has never before ventured more than five miles from his native San Isidro!

"Father" boasts 56 years, is knee-high to a grasshopper himself, and has a broken nose and harelip combination which doesn't improve the clarity of his colloquial Spanish, but I am relieved by the presence of this five foot adult toting a three foot machete. My guides are barefoot. I, the *gringo tímido* (timid American), wear high leather shoes and am further guarded by puttees. What a softie! Oh, yes, I have also purchased long leather gloves as protection against snakes striking from branches along and over narrow trails. A bite means reliance solely upon native first aid treatment. Notwithstanding service in two Mounted Field Hospital Units, I have no confidence in my ability to apply a tourniquet with ten five minute circulation releases to avoid gangrene, and then to follow this by a succession of razor blade cross-incisions. But I do pack the blades on the very top of the saddlebag, where they are quickly available. Along the most reptilian parts of this first day's eighteen mile trail, I think often and ominously of the blackboard bulletin in San Isidro announcing that a medico would minister to the town's fifteen hundred inhabitants a certain *two* days during the month of April. "Is there a doctor in the house?" No, probably not within eighty miles!

\**cascabela muda* and *víbora terciopelo* are more commonly known as bushmaster and fer-de-lance.

6:20 *a. m.*

I cross over the "million dollar" bridge, the iniquitous offspring sired by military expediency and damned by everyone, which spans the San Isidro River at the outskirts of the town. With a deep breath one could quite easily spit over the stream! Many country people pass us, mostly on horseback; the women riding astride unlike the conventional side-saddle of the north country. The natives here regard their horses as pets. The bridles of rope, far more humane than our own of leather straps and steel bits, are decorated with gay tassels of red, blue and yellow, vying in brilliance with the kaleidoscopic, hand-painted oxcarts that lumbered by us on the way down. Often on a single horse there'd be either father or mother in the saddle, and, afore or abaft, a kid or two.

How relaxing this countryside is with its gently rolling fields to either side. The lovely green vegetation pleasantly complements the color of the road itself, an eight foot cart-trail of the richest red imaginable. Now and again the lush green patches of farmland are accented by burnt-over fields. The smoke, aromatic but stuffy for walkers, curls lazily up from hundreds of hewn trees. Such is the Costa Rican farmers' sensible way of clearing off woodland for later planting of their dietary trinity of rice, beans and corn. Tree and bush growth in these parts is so rich in sap that forest fires are impossible unless the trees are slashed down and permitted to dry out a year before the torch is applied. The ground itself is so fertile in this section, as well as throughout the more than one hundred mile stretch I am to traverse, that no one ever bothers to plow! After the vegetation dries and is fired, the farmers merely walk along the ground, poking a few holes here and there with a six foot pointed stick. Later a helper drops in the seeds. Neither plows nor hoes are used for original tilling or subsequent cultivation.

Gosh, how I wish that my brother Don were along on this hike. Selfishly, I'd like his company, for there was never a more delightful walking companion. Too, he would so enjoy the experience. Just thirty-eight years back, he and Patro and I spent six glorious weeks together in the restful countrysides of Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Shakespeare's "Merrie England." Why do so few of us enjoy walking, the only transportational way to become truly acquainted with any land and its people? If we Americans had to pay twenty-five cents per mile for the privilege of hiking, the cobblers back home would be working overtime.

We are now passing through fine, tropical country with aromatic



scents, stiff, prickly century plants and straight, clean-cut palms. These palms, very tall and very dignified, stiffly bow their plummy heads as I pass by and are silhouetted boldly against the bluest of blue Central American skies. We five (Pedro, Isidro, Carita, Violeta and I) leisurely slide down one side and up the other of numerous *quebraditas* or miniature ravines which crisscross our wagon road. Sometimes there's a bit of cool running water at the base. Often as not there's nothing but a stony, waterless brook-bed, since the dry season of virtually no rains is still on. As we walk along the way, a succession of banana groves, spotty plantings of sugar cane and even *manzana* (apple) orchards and orange groves appear. The inherent love of these simple people for all that is beautiful in nature, is evidenced by the many cans and jars of ferns and orchids. Despite a prolific jungle growth of trees, bushes, flowers and grasses which creep and crowd to their very doorsteps, the natives hang even more plants against the exterior walls of their tiny houses. These folks simply can't get close enough to Mother Nature and all these hundred and one glories she has to offer.

Yet, in ironic contrast, how can folks so fond of flowers and above all so consistently kindly to strangers like me, be so utterly indifferent to animal suffering? A man has just passed me on the road, blithely carrying along a bucket of hot blood. As I expected and dreaded, a few steps farther on I pass a freshly slaughtered cow. Near by is a tiny store displaying the usual ghastly, hacked and bloody remains of other animals. For the millionth time, I'm reconciled completely to being a vegetarian, for aesthetic as well as humane, reasons. May I never make a perambulating cemetery of my stomach!

7:30 a. m.

Papa Pedro and I take to a double, yet quite narrow, log footbridge. Our three fellow-travelers and an oxcart or two ford the little stream. We meet "Shorty" Lewis, our engineer-host of yesterday, coming back from the Peña Blanca fly-camp, where he's spent the night with the advance surveyor's crew. Soon he and his powerful little jeep will be rolling along the new highway back over the 85 miles to "the big city." In the rear of his jeep rests a huge bunch of bananas, greener'n St. Patrick himself though, so I give up my idea of stealing a couple. With only a cup of hot coffee under my belt since last night, the temptation is strong. "Shorty" says I still have some thirty-three miles to the first objective, the handkerchief-size village of Buenos Aires.

7:50 a. m.

Cross Río General (General River) sixty feet wide. It's not deep, yet there are swift rapids. Sweaty hot, I courageously strip off the puttees, passing them to Isidro that he may strap them to his saddle. I become less timid about reptiles as the road continues sufficiently wide for jeep passage. Now we go by a miniature store (there isn't one bigger'n a minute), then skirt great smoky fields and later notice a one-room school. Outside the school is suspended a chunk of iron and slightly to one side, a bar with which to strike it. I was to see many more of these little rural schoolhouses, frequently with men teachers only, reminding me that Costa Rica has far more schoolteachers than soldiers. The amazingly complimentary proportion escapes me, but this small, economically starved nation sets an ethical example for some of its more prosperous Latin neighbors. The veneer of so-called civilization is dangerously thin, indeed.

There goes an extremely brilliant scarlet tanager, reminding me of our own lovely Jersey woodlands. How much more dazzling these crimson, black-streaked birds appear in this tropical sunshine. Just as I begin to forget there even were such things as English words, I'm startled to read, painted on a shabby garden gate, "Victory Garden 1943." A bit of nostalgia and a natural itch to get back home and mess around with our own spring planting grip me. Many fences down here are of plain bamboo stalks, at times simply long rows of thorned cactus. We saw so many of these in Mexico.

Practically every house and barn is of the simplest construction. Architecture in these parts doesn't vary one thirty-second of an inch. Each building has a dirt floor, six foot sidewalls, one door, probably no windows, and a solid palm-thatched roof acutely pitched to shed the torrential downpours that deluge this land four months every year. Not one house in a thousand boasts a second floor, unless one may properly refer to a single four by seven foot split bamboo platform, nine feet in the air, as a second floor! The natives sleep upon these platforms, which they call *forones*. There are no chimneys, though the fire in the kitchen hearth of stone and clay burns and smokes with its ubiquitous coffeepot from early morning until late at night. No attempt is made to direct this smoke out of the shed. Of its own accord, it eventually trickles or seeps out of any odd cracks there may be in the walls or roof. The first ten or twenty times I saw these smokehouse phenomena, I was sure "Scotland was

burning." But no, it was just easier not to bother to construct even the simplest chimney.

Household furniture, as we know it at home, is almost nonexistent, if one excepts the crudest of unpainted tables, a coltskin cot and a couple of chairs. Often these "chairs" are only stumpy, crudely-hewn log sections. Even in the remote jungles, the shack-owner's love of color, if not fine art, is reflected in gaudy chromos, religious pictures and commercial calendars. Rotogravure supplements of big-city papers decorate, or desecrate, walls and door both inside and out. Heaven alone knows how they manage to get hold of them. Once in a great while I have seen a solid board standing up against the straw-shack door, opening to exclude, at least nocturnally, the filthy pigs, chickens, turkeys, cows, dogs and cats from the sleeping and eating quarters of the family. This, however, was indeed a rare and squeamish exception to the architectural rule.

8:00 a. m.

Again Papa Pedro and I resort to the primitively wired, narrow and wobbly suspension footbridge. Isidro, Carita and Violeta, not schooled in tightrope-walking and sensibly drawing some comfort from the cool, bubbling Hermos River, pass by the ford. Beyond the stream are sugar cane, six foot tree ferns; brilliant butterflies, lantana-like blossoms and light pink roadside flowers similar to our own clover at home. There are lacings of long stringy jungle vines and weird, awkward trees and always, always, always that monotonous, buzzing insect choir.

8:10 a. m.

Now we come out to level open country with mountain ranges in the distance to the right. Here beside the way is a neglected, overgrown cemetery or *panteon*. Over the mounds rise weathered, home-made crosses of various colors, shapes and sizes. Each cross has a tiny roof above it to shed the heavy rain that soon will be the order of the day (and night). The roofs give the crosses the shockingly secular, purely temporal appearance of R.F.D. boxes back in the States. Neglected though they be, at least the graves are not molested as they are in Cuba. There the poor dears' bones are tossed over the fence into the potter's field, when, as and if posterity falls in arrears with the vault rent. I'll never forget in 1910 how a sergeant of the Cuban Army, as my host of the morning, graciously spent considerable effort tramping about the fringe of a Havana burying-ground looking for an odd knucklebone or

two as a souvenir! What was asked, "Why the devil should we do anything for posterity? What did they ever do for us?"

Pedro points out Palmares, a small pueblo or village a mile to the right. Too bad, we'll miss it entirely. Along our road, natives are planting rice. It comes as a surprise to me as I have always associated the cultivation of this crop with coolies knee-deep in the paddies of Asia. These Indians have developed an upland variety of rice which thrives in this temporarily dry-as-Sahara climate and dusty soil. Now to the opposite side of the trail (I meant to write "trail" but my legs get more and more weary, my shoes decidedly more and more heavy and the sun more and then even more damnably hot), there appears the rattiest, most microscopic patch of tobacco I've ever laid eyes upon. The whole field isn't over twenty feet square, nor are there two plants of similar size, shape or color. A few straggly lookin' "hands" have been strung over a bamboo pole to dry out. "Those who came to scoff, remained to pray," for in another four days, exhausted and ready to flop, I was to be everlastingly grateful to a guide for the gift of a few leaves of just such minus 150% tobacco to stuff in my old Jimmy-pipe. They staved off the blues of nostalgia brought on by the black and blues of slipping, sliding and foot-pounding up and down steep, stony ravines hour after hour under the sweaty sun.

8:50 a. m.

Jagged, saw-tooth mountains appear to the left. There's a sign in Spanish (though typically un-Spanish in its inhospitable phrasing) which reads: "Forbidden to pick fruit," the only such ungenerous admonition I remember seeing in some twelve thousand miles of tropical travel. Blushingly, I admit it smacks of home. Who knows, maybe some fellow *Norte Americano* owns the ranch and atavistically has translated our all too familiar "No trespassing" into the tongue of the land.

9:10 a. m.

Long wire footbridge over the forty foot wide, three foot deep Peña Blanca River. Humans again become tight-rope acrobats, horses and oxcarts sensibly taking to the ford. Two Costa Rican road engineers from the advance camp assure us we are but *cien varas* (one hundred yards) from their shacks. Welcome news indeed! I'm already fagged out by only ten miles over this hilly country, shod in brand-new snake-proof clodhoppers and still fueled up on nothing but that single cup of black coffee back in San Isidro. Was that really only three hours ago? Seems

a lifetime. Wonder if there'll be anything to eat at the camp, also whether as a reluctant and involuntary taxpayer I can muster up courage to sponge on the Public Roads Administration for grub. Ten to one's an easy bet. I most emphatically can and will!

9:15 *a. m.*

"Oh joy, oh rapture unforeseen!" What a vision! Can it be true or just a tantalizing dietary mirage? No, "so 'elp me" as Charlie McCarthy would say, it's a real camp kitchen, about eighteen feet square, sanitarily screened in and cool-looking, nestling down beneath the dense jungle shade. To one side stand two screened-in dormitories on the banks of the cold, rushing, white-flecked Peña Blanca River. What a sight for sore eyes and a thoroughly empty stomach! There's even a modern refrigerator and a cookstove. A generous looking young chef is on the job. Through sweat trickling down over my eyes and glasses, I see such cylindrical, familiar home faces as cans of Campbell's Soup, Quaker Oats and Del Monte peaches. What a temptation to quit right here and relax as Eversharp has it, "not for days, not for years, not for life, but for ever!" Who in the world ever put this damnfool bee in my not-too-sensible bonnet anyway, this harebrained resolution to "do" the whole Pan American Highway by land? Why not just rusticate ad infinitum along the shores of the cool Peña Blanca?

The cook turns out, as cooks always do, to be a fine chap. In no time at all, he's given me soap, a clean towel and a basin of fresh water for external treatment. For the department of the interior, there are fried eggs, good, rich American cheese, catsup, piping hot coffee with cream and sugar, and all the bread and cold filtered water I can take aboard. I compound a felony by obtaining for my gal friend, Violeta, the dog, about the best collection of luscious meat scraps she's encountered in many a hungry canine year. Pedro and Isidro dine royally, too.

Violeta, Pedro's boon companion (bless her four tired little legs and her big heart), has elected to go the entire twenty-five or thirty miles with us. Truly, "a dog is the only creature in the entire universe that regards you more highly than he does himself."

9:45 *a. m.*

Again a refreshing wash-up. Once more we hit the road assured that in an hour we shall come up to an advanced survey group at El Cajón. In five long hours we should reach our first settlement (Volcan, Costa Rica—not to be confused with El Volcan, Panama, later on), but it's

devilishly hot and my new heavy shoes hurt! Hope to contact Mr. Kafe, the chief road engineer, by 10:45. He speaks English. One of the graceful snow-white herons of which I am to see a great many more later, takes to the air. Some fellow-travelers pass along this ever narrower and less-used path. First comes a native on a bay pony, then an oxcart brightly decorated with flower motifs, and now a *cargador* or overland porter with the leather cargo band across his forehead, so reminiscent of last year's sixty mile hike over the mountains of Guatemala yet so exceptional in these more southern countries. On his shoulders he lugs the typical, primitive, skin-covered, cage-like pack. Following the porter is another horseman. What's that he's balancing precariously against the pommel of his saddle? By golly, none other than a live pig in a sack!

The monotony of the trip is further lessened by the necessity of fording two more rivers without benefit even of log footbridges, though the water is knee-high. Next we thread our way, fairly dry-shod, over a river bed of precariously round stones. Carita and Violeta obviously appreciate the opportunity to cool their respective hoofs and paws and slake their equine and canine thirsts in the fresh, rapid current. I want to, but recall the doc's caution against drinking other than water actively boiled for twenty minutes and the two priests at San Isidro who had warned against walking through cold rivers when one was overheated.

Iridescent, light, powdery-blue butterflies flit about. Big ones too, yet even these ordinarily carefree fellows seem to feel the tropical mid-day sun for they're not hurrying about one single bit. They seem more like miniature helicopters half-suspended in midair, waiting, as am I, for Nature to cool off.

10:30 a. m.

The first snake, to the left in the grass, but happily not over-big!

11:13 a. m.

We arrive at El Cajón. The big Public Roads Administration truck, knee-deep in jungle grass, looks awfully good to me. Costa Rican road engineers with perhaps half a dozen linemen, chainmen and bushhackers accompany it. They're munching early lunch in a shady grove. It's been excessively hot. Sweat flows freely, and sticky arms are made less comfortable by swarms of irritating insects that settle on you as eagerly as bees go for sugar. Quite exasperating.

The engineers, not the insects, have a goodly supply of the all-important boiled water and pour a more than generous amount in my helmet

which serves excellently as a cup. Papa Pedro ingeniously improvises his own sanitary "Lily" cup from a near-by leaf.

Boy, oh boy; is this drink of fresh, cold water ambrosia after five hours of hot up-hill and down-dale trudging! The boys say we've covered about ten miles from San Isidro del General. This slow rate serves as a yardstick of the country's terrain, or better phrased "not going ter rain." What I wouldn't give for a refreshing shower. They tell us Mr. Kafe, the *jefe* (chief) is but a short distance ahead. Looks as though we might reach Volcan by 6:00 p. m. That village is temporarily at least our first night's objective.

More natives planting rice, most primitively. Castor oil bushes grow beside the road, apparently wild.

11:30 a. m.

Cross El Cajón River. Off to the left stand clusters of dejected looking shacks, no doubt some former *campamento* or road camp.

11:32 a. m.

Second snake, also to the left. Isidro, from atop the good four-footed ship Carita, gets a clearer view of the reptilian picture. Thank heaven, I see only the movement of the grass while the boy calmly estimates the length as slightly over nine feet with a thickness of five or six inches. They seem incredible dimensions, but tie in with the report of a most reliable friend of mine who has seen a nine or ten foot snake cross a road in these parts. Frankly, I'm scared stiff, or rather stiffer, as I am already stiff from the waist down from tramping along the trail. I regain my poise and kid myself by thinking it might be a smart stunt to teach the lad aloft to announce: "Thar she boa's," kinda like the old New Bedford whalers of the sixties who cried: "Thar she blows." Being a coward at ankles, as well as at heart, I don't lose a split second in putting back those protective knee-high puttees so glibly discarded three hours ago.

My next predicament: How can I keep meticulous notes, a worthwhile log of this journey, if I follow Nicolas Soto's original injunction "Wide open eyes for snakes here?"

11:45 a. m.

Ford small river beneath dilapidated bridge eighteen kilometers from San Isidro. At kilometer stake 18.94 we stumble upon two jeeps and more engineers. One man with a transit is up to his knees in grass. Slight

vestiges of a foot-trail remain. Four men are slashing down twenty foot trees. The rank vegetation is too thick for the surveyors to follow "the line." Very snaky. Emphatically, I don't like it!

12:05 p. m.

Papa Pedro claims that the *bestia está cansada* (the horse is tired). He doesn't mean that at all for it casts unfair aspersions on Carita. He is getting more and still more disgusted with this durned-fool gringo and his addlepatated idea to go afoot from Pedro's good old homeport of San Isidro del General to the thirty-shack metropolis of Buenos Aires, still twenty odd miles ahead in this increasingly less navigable country. I confess to being doggone tired myself. Sweat is salty and irritates my eyes. It blurs my eyeglasses and proves most aggravating. Natives try to be polite and encouraging by assuring us that the next pinpoint *pueblito*, San Pedro, is but one hour distant. However well-intended, roadside information is lamentably unreliable, and I don't for one minute mean maybe, either.

12:15 p. m.

Come up to still three more advanced engineers. They sport a twenty-five gallon can of unboiled water. Being an amoeba coward, I'm afraid to take even a swallow, though I'm about perished from thirst. Isidro and his father are far less squeamish.

12:30 p. m.

More men slashing trees. Swarms of irritating insects flop on my hands, and I hope they're not dangerous. I remember the injunctions against *paludismo* or malaria mosquitoes, but it's consoling to recall that they get in their most insidious deviltry only at dawn and at dusk. At last, here's just one way to be thankful it's high noon. Better by far these annoying bigger rivers of sweat than a later attack of chills and fever. Meet Chief Engineer Kafe who figures we have come sixteen miles. Says Volcan is perhaps twenty kilometers or thirteen miles beyond. Speaks of the Río La Union ahead of us. No rose without its thorn, it will be a little less hot in the denser vegetation, even if more snaky. Ponder seriously upon razor blade availability, in case of a bite and the need for hasty incisions. Seem to be nearing San Pedro's five or six small straw shacks, but, as usual, *Quién sabe?*"

1:15 p. m.

Gosh, it's discouraging, this damnable unreliability of roadside in-



formation! An abysmal ignorance of distances from here to there. Now they say San Pedro is still a half hour ahead. Natives passing us along the trail invariably stop and shake hands. Their guesses as to the time it will take to Volcan vary from three and a half hours to *un día*, one whole day. "You pays your money and you takes your choice." Here, on distances ahead it invariably proves much longer than estimated, even by the most pessimistic. To learn that Volcan is still so far away is depressing, for it's awfully hot. Isidro reaches up from his saddle and rips a fifteen inch pod from an overhanging branch. He breaks it open and offers me the fleecy white fruit, but I refrain from sharing this unexpected feast. When hot and sticky, I for one don't hanker for fuzzy cottony-looking beans.

1:15/1:50 *p. m.*

I insist upon a thirty-five minute respite. What's the use of going Latin so far as heat and dust and sweat go without consistently taking a siesta, particularly as we've now trudged seven and a half hours along a rough trail?

1:50 *p. m.*

Proceed, slightly rested. Beside the trail a native pounds a huge thirty inch mortar and pestle. These primitive mills for grinding or beating corn, rice or what have you, though rather startling at first, soon become the common denominator of every household along the route, even beyond the Panama border eight days south.

Our path now strikes off beside the banks of gurgling San Pedro River which we men cross by means of a fifteen foot log bridge with bamboo handrail. The course swerves toward high misty mountains. Yellow butterflies flutter beside the path. Clusters of new purple flowers appear. Perhaps sixty feet off the trail, we pass four tall poles supporting a straw roof. Beneath the shed is a simple native grinding device propelled by horse or ox and used for crushing sugar cane. By its side is a huge, smoke-blackened forty inch kettle. In this kettle the juice is later boiled down, fired by the dried, crushed cane itself. I have seen this self-same primitive contrivance down in the more remote mountain sections of eastern Tennessee and Kentucky.

2:10 *p. m.*

Cross three bridges and finally come up alongside three windowless *ranchitos*, the highfalutin' designation for these impoverished bamboo-

walled, straw-thatched, dirt-floored, windowless and doorless homes. A *pulperia* or village store completes the settlement.

A horseman about to pass us stops, leans forward in his saddle and graciously shakes hands and wishes me a *buen viaje* or happy landing. This simple, kindly courtesy was to follow often for the next one hundred miles, from mounted *ranchero* to the most humble, barefooted Indian. From old men and women, who are not infrequently smoking deathly black cigars, to five-year-olds, they can all give "aces and spades" and still beat us hands down on such little courtesies. Simple as they sound, they prove most stimulating.

Our path leads by another small and pathetic graveyard of a half dozen weed-tangled mounds with rain faded, hand made crosses. Papa Pedro removes his well-worn hat, reverently muttering the single word, *panteon*.

A short distance and we come across another small village store where we hope to slake our thirst. They have nothing I dare to drink. Offered for sale are bottled water or orange pop from San Isidro, but, knowing the good burghers of S. I. were none too strong on sanitary precautions against the dreaded amoebas, I forego a temptation to guzzle. When the proprietor consoles us with the crack that we are still four hours walk from Volcan, I again plead for another horse. Carita herself is not a bit tired; only her master is. His one hundred percent impracticable suggestion is to wait until Tuesday, when I can travel with the *correo* or rural postman. Yet today is only Friday.

Now I'm doubly discouraged. Oddly enough, the overexertion in the direct sun and high altitude has done something detrimental to both ears. I can't hear clearly, and it's irritating as the very devil when one is tired out generally, anyway. Also, my feet hurt. I'm sore at both ends!

3:00 *p. m.*

At Río La Union, it's unexpectedly but pleasantly cold. About thirty feet wide, it is at most only twenty inches deep. This is definitely the end of the line from Texas to points south, because of huge boulders which litter the river bed. Think optimistically that I may rent a fresh horse here and send back the tired Papa Pedro, his son Isidro, and their two four-footed companions. However, the only man visible lugubriously reports first, that there are no horses anywhere in this unhappy vale of tears and second, that Volcan, that will o' the wisp settlement we've been traipsing after since sun-up, is still four hours walk beyond.

There is no village in between. This chap operates an antique sawmill driven by a water-wheel. Its involved contrivances would delight the mind of the inimitable, if somewhat impractical, cartoonist-inventor, Rube Goldberg.

I, the thoroughly exhausted ancient mariner, am too dog-tired to do other than breathe (and that not too freely) for a straight forty-five minutes. There is no doubt about it. I am too fagged to proceed farther. Having had nothing to eat since 9:30 at the fly-camp, I eventually pull myself together sufficiently to lift the eight ounce flap of the saddle bag to extract and consume a five cent box of Sunmaid Raisins. These I wash down with three of the nine cups of germ-free water toted all the way from San Isidro. What do you suppose I then wisely but unorthodoxically proceed to do?

I strip and soak in that heavenly Union River for an unbroken half-hour, with the back of my stomach completely and frigidly submerged in the rushing rapids. The water is like ice, incredibly exhilarating. I lie on my back . . . I lie on my side . . . I lie on my tummy . . . I virtually stand on my head in the stream. Completely reborn, I wash and hang out my clothes before retiring.

With three *colones* (but fifty-three cents in our money) Papa Pedro returns to the store to purchase ample supper for himself, his son, the dog and the horse. Living in the open country, unlike San José, is most inexpensive. Carita gets her supper of freshly-cut green sugar cane which she devours with relish. The sawmill operator tells me oranges are for sale at a ranchito but ten minutes farther along the road. I commission Isidro to do this bit of neighborhood shopping. It's still light, about 5:15, and I expect he'll be back in less than half an hour. Darkness comes on, no Isidro. Papa Pedro and I become alarmed. At last he shows up with no less than twenty-four oranges for the ridiculous price of fifteen cents. An even more startling result of his sortie is his report of a *tigre* but recently killed down along the trail we are to take next morning. He claims it was about 30 inches tall! "Sweet dreams, Daddy, you old scare-cat."

I bribe the native woman to boil me a kettle of river water. I request that she boil it very hard and for twenty minutes, stipulating I be allowed actually to check this sanitary operation. Boiling hard reduces the amoeba's danger to a minimum. For this service I pay six cents. Later I take the kettle to the river where I support it in a shallow place with several stones. This cools the water for tomorrow's journey to

Volcan and Buenos Aires. That thermos bottle is already proving its worth in gold.

My body cooler and my heart warmer, I spread myself financially by giving the woman's husband thirty cents extra for a slug of hot coffee for Papa Pedro and son Isidro, plus an extra course of real grain for Carita. Horses out here rarely get grain. Their diet is confined principally to what little grazing they can do, and in some places, particularly in the dry season, that is darn meager for any self-respecting draft animal.

The twenty-four oranges I share with the woman, with her husband, with the woodsawyer, and with my two traveling companions. Down by the river as I cool my kettle of boiled water upstream, natives come down to the ford and bathe their beautiful little saddle horses. After dashing cold water all over their mounts from stem to stern and from roof to hoof, they groom them with a corncob and a gourd.

Returning to the mill, I step carefully over an astounding procession of thousands upon thousands of prodigiously industrious ants. Each carries aloft a section of bright green leaf, fully sixty times its own size. A wiggly, black, three-inch band, they march tirelessly up and down the rough woodland trail. Later, as I made my way across country, I was to see many more of these insect parades. Occasionally I'd pass ant-hills, or more properly ant mountains, some eight feet across.

Darkness settles down about six. As I was cautioned against nocturnal travel (snakes, holes in the trail, roots, etc.), there is just one thing to do—camp beside the La Union River for the night. There's no village, just the primitive shed of the sawmill, one wooden shack, the mill proprietor's ten by twelve foot home, and another doll's house across the road. The ten by twelve home proves only large enough to accommodate an undersized bed, chair and stove for the boss and his by no means undersized wife. That shack across the road, upon the most cursory examination, seems far too filthy for even me to sleep in, yet I admit I've not been over-meticulous in this respect upon more than one occasion in the past.

I drag six newly-sawn, green-wet planks (two by twelve's) from the pile, and construct the most springy substitute for a Simmons Beauty Sleep mattress you could imagine. Protected by two new Costa Rican cotton blankets and my *mosquitero* (mosquito net), I am not half badly off. Only about three-eighths. Tactfully, I suggest that Pedro and Isidro go to bed, but beneath another section of the shed, fifteen feet away.

For some unfathomable reason, maybe a feeling of close good neighborly kinship inspired and abetted by our Washington Administration, both guide and son insist upon sleeping in a spot that seems almost on top of me. The sawmill operator, to my amazement, sleeps eight feet above us in a roost of his own. Violeta, the ever-faithful meathound, joins our intimate group for the night. Luckily, Isidro has considerably and securely moored Carita eight feet away, so the horse finds it impracticable to snuggle up with the rest of us on our damp and newly-sawn communal couch.

Fortifying myself against mosquitoes with copious applications of citronella, and throwing my net completely over head and body, I proceed to sleep (?), having first made a pillow of my shoes and puttees beneath which I stuck my flashlight, billfold and gold watch. Everything else seems so primitive that possibly I should have substituted a sun dial. The night's sole excitement proves of minor importance. At three-thirty a. m. a crash as though a rock were falling from the shed roof! Papa Pedro lets out a cry of alarm. He's kind of a Nervous Nellie, anyway, but whatever it is (I don't to this day know) he sleepily blames it, of all things, on the least suspect of our troupe, Carita, that patient mare anchored to the corner of our bedroom.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>   | <i>For the Trip</i>  |
|-------------|--|--|
| ROUTE:      | Río La Union to Volcan, Costa Rica<br>Volcan to Buenos Aires | Laredo to Buenos Aires   |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare, 10 miles<br>Horse, 13 miles                    | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare, mule, car, oxcart, thumb and jeep |
| MILES:      | 23   | 2,798  |
| ROAD HOURS: | 9  | 275  |
| FARE:       | Packhorse, \$7.64<br>Horse, 1.83                             | \$73.87  |
|             | \$9.47   |  |

*The  
Twenty-sixth  
Day*

4:50 a. m.

Arise and eat half a box of raisins and a few oranges for breakfast.

5:30 a. m.

Off again before the sun's too hot. Pass dead fox on the path. Local inhabitant estimates range, as usual from one and one-half to four hours for the walk to Volcan—a village, mind you, only nine miles away. The provincialism of these folks baffles one's imagination.

When tired, hot and low in spirits, little can more quickly dissolve the remaining starch from one's lagging ambition than to have local yokels sympathetically, but incorrectly, assure you that the next objective is *aquí no más* (right around the bend) when in stark reality it proves a good, or rather bad, thirty minute session.

Though of itself cooling, every river exacts its breath-taking toll of a hot, exhausting scramble up the opposite side of its own particular *quebrada* or ravine.

I stop frequently to rest, not because I want to but because I just have to. Guess my carburetor needs adjustment.

6:25 a. m.

See and hear my first tropical *carpintero*. That's what the Latins call a woodpecker, a "carpenter." The natives underrate rather than exaggerate, which is the common Spanish tendency. Never have I heard such whacks as that *carpintero* gave his particular tree this particular morning. Better to have called him a steam-riveter, or even a pile-driver.

6:30 a. m.

Exceedingly high mountains. Notice for the first time that the narrow dirt trails have taken on the appearance of ten by four inch steps. Uncomfortable as railroad tracks to walk upon, the spaces are just short of what a normal human step would be. It's particularly noticeable in ascents. Because they appear so mathematically uniform, I am amazed when the guide assures me that they are the chance results of countless mules and horses trudging the trails in the rainy season. I'll be passing thousands of these road ruts from now on as we approach the ravines of the frontier country straddling the Costa Rica/Panama border.

6:35 a. m.

Rio Soledor . . . and rough walking beyond.

6:40 a. m.

Heavens above, we are crossing two more rivers! The weather is decidedly hotter, so I repeatedly take my helmet on and off to admit air

drafts. There is much irritating sweat on my glasses. We pass two much more honest, or at least better informed natives. They say Volcan is one and one half miles off, not but thirty minutes away!

6:50 *a. m.*

Now we ford the Convento River beyond which I see several monkeys. They are comical large black creatures with gray ruffs.

7:17 *a. m.*

Another river.

7:25 *a. m.*

Snake in the grass wriggles beside the trail.

7:30/8:00 *a. m.*

Again I insist upon a half hour rest and lie down flat on a big log. Passing Indians on horseback report ample fresh fruit ahead just to be picked, not formally bought. I'm terribly tired. As I lie stretched out full-length along my log, I stare up through the great spreading branches fully one hundred and fifty feet above. They're about the tallest I've ever seen, and quite striking with long branches and thousands of leaves silhouetted against the clear, bright blue of the tropical sky. We're deep in the jungle. How Eugenie Harcomb, my fern mentor back home, would revel in this vast variety of plants and vines. Innumerable airplants and a dozen or more species of palms stand shoulder to shoulder with oaks. This may seem botanically incongruous, but they do just that all right.

Bango! What's that loud crack? Nothing more serious than the fall of a huge fruit or dead branch. Uneasily I cogitate on Brother Isaac Newton lying beneath his fifteen foot apple tree, dopin' out the famous law of gravity. What, in time, might be the velocity of, let's say, a five-pound coconut falling from a hundred foot tree and landing plump on my noggin?

8:05 *a. m.*

'Nuff said on that score! Let's get out of here, and pronto! What, another little river to cross?

8:17 *a. m.*

Another burial ground. Goody, goody! Cemeteries always make one so buoyant.

8:35 a. m.

Another river. We rest ten minutes. Papa Pedro hears *gallos* (roosters) crowing, which is, according to him, ever an infallible index that a village is near by. I wish I could but share his optimism. Maybe it really is Volcan.

9:00 a. m.

Still another river. Incredible. This is the very river-est country I've ever tramped, or rather waded.

9:57 a. m.

Yet another river, but lo and behold, there above the bank is the proud and haughty metropolis of Volcan, in the Sovereign Republic of Costa Rica.

10:00 a. m.

This dear old durned fool is too completely tuckered out to be thrilled by anything, not even a pueblo, far less a straw shack. Actually, the community consists of but two Lilliputian stores, plus possibly ten or twelve huts, but even the first store to which I can stagger looks awfully, awfully good to me.

I flop down on the floor. Both my feet stick out the doorway, to the natural amazement of the proprietor and a few passers-by. For fifteen straight minutes I'm literally too fagged to talk. When I don't talk, it's a sure sign of being all in! Eventually I get sufficient wind to send Isidro for some fruit. He returns with fifteen large, juicy oranges he'd bought for a nickel. Financially reckless as a result of overexposure to the sun, I buy two messy, undernourished, home-grown chiclets for another nickel. I even dispatch a second chap horseback for a couple of bottles of Coca Cola, recently arrived in this wilderness by Taca plane. Disgustingly warm when it arrives, the storekeeper takes the stuff across the trail and leaves it immersed in the cool, shady Rio Volcan.

Then the boss lugs in no less than four huge pails of water from the same river to a three by four shed adjoining the rear of his place. Here I strip and am eager for the "shower." He brings along an empty Quaker Oats can with which I douse myself from head to toe for the better part of a half hour, with considerably more comfort than privacy. Numerous natives stare at this mildly deluded and completely denuded *Norte Americano* as he transforms their country store into bedroom, parlor and bath.



Again the gracious and generous Latin! For all these ministrations, Friend Shopkeeper reluctantly accepts *un colon*, less than eighteen cents. I went fifty-fifty with him on the two bottles of Coca Cola with a "*Salud*" or good health toast chucked in for good measure.

Then I pay off Papa Pedro the contracted amount, \$7.64 and blow a quadruplicate kiss to him, Isidro, Carita and Violeta. This paltry sum covered the horse and man two days out and one day returning.

Buenos Aires is the real objective, ten miles beyond Volcan and thirty-seven from San Isidro. An equine pirate with colossal nerve suggests twenty-five *colones* for two horses. I turn the robber down without a blush. Later, my Coca Cola messenger who has a sleek little bay, agrees with me as to the exorbitance of the other chap's price. Within a half hour he corrals an equally fine gray. Seems he lives in Buenos Aires, and for but ten *colones*, \$1.83 American, he will take me along and return the horse in three days to Volcan. What a delightful two and a half hour's single-foot journey, the last two miles through a heavy but refreshing tropical downpour! The rain lays the dust of the red dirt trail and completely cools us off. My newly found friend's name is precisely what it should be—Pancho. Trim and good-looking, he is an alert Costa Rican of twenty years. Previously he had even offered to put my twenty-seven pound saddlebags and blanket up on his cantele free of charge if I wanted to walk over the last ten mile stretch to Buenos Aires later in the cool of the afternoon. An odd coincidence develops after we strike our bargain. Not only does he speak some English, but at one time, a year back, he had driven a bulldozer for the Public Roads Administration. We have mutual friends. Before we reach Buenos Aires, it turns out that he is the son of the police chief in Buenos Aires, one Rafael Angel Garita, to whom I carry a letter of introduction!

12:25 *p. m.*

We're off *a caballo*, for the ten mile stretch at a fast single-foot, as Pancho fears rain. He's suffering a touch of *catarro*. Accompanying us is another young, dark, equally good-looking youngster of the same clean-cut type as Garita's son. Altogether, it's a genuinely enjoyable experience. My gray is keen to go; she needs no coaxing.

12:30 *p. m.*

Cross Volcan River.

12:40 *p. m.*

Cross smaller stream.

1:15 p. m.

Cross Cañas River. It's getting a bit hot again, but we're halfway there.

1:25 p. m.

We say *adios* to our companion who turns in at his own ranch, "Finca de los Angeles" ("Ranch of the Angels") after urging us to come in for a visit. Pancho still fears rain, so we push on. He's right, for we are only a few minutes along the trail when down comes the anticipated shower in sheets, most welcome to me, but disgusting to friend Pancho.

2:47 p. m.

Here is Buenos Aires at last, thirty-seven miles along our route from yesterday's early start at San Isidro del General. We've come about a third of the entire trip to the other El Volcan in Panama.

3:00 p. m.

Guess I'm not quite as refreshed as I thought. For the first quarter hour I'm too weary to do other than sprawl out on the narrow hard wood bench in front of the miniature drug, dry goods and grocery establishment run by the elder Garita. All in, I admit. Tramping thirty-seven miles over hill and valley in long jungle grass, fording rivers and finally riding a stiff two or three hours on horseback, have proved a strenuous assignment without previous conditioning. No less than twenty-three river beds in those first thirty-seven miles.

Nor do I present a pretty picture sartorially. My muddy shoes, dirty spotted khaki pants, and perfectly filthy shirt make me a more fitting candidate for Chief Garita's calaboose than a guest within his household. He turns out to be one of Nature's noblemen, however, and waits patiently for me to get my breath before conducting me across the commons to the *intendencia*, or town hall, where I am to stay while in Buenos Aires. Meanwhile three of his numerous kids grab a big pail and go off to the spring.

Looking out of my window, I see a diminutive trio hot-footing it back across the green, lugging heavy pails of cold water to a three by four annex back of the building. Here I shall bathe, screened modestly by just a tacked-up burlap bag between me and the populace. I lose no time in discarding my grimy clothes, and for the next twenty minutes splash myself. Standing ankle-deep in one pail, I douse water over my

head until revived sufficiently to once more pleasantly accept this world of ours, upon which for the past twenty-four hours I'd looked with utter disgust. A change to my only remaining clean shirt and socks, and off goes a fourth young Garita with a mountain of accumulated laundry. These are to be washed and returned tomorrow afternoon at the latest, as I wish to lose no time. My schedule calls for but a day's breather here. Refreshed, and considerably more human, I stroll back to the store. Awaiting me are hot coffee and six little cakes!

An hour later and Señora Garita has laid out in the parlor where I am to eat alone, a fine supper of specially prepared non-meat soup, boiled rice, beans, fried eggs, fried bananas and sliced cabbage. Beside these there sit two tempting glasses, one of milk and one of water. Afraid of amoeba, like an ungrateful coward I touch neither.

Last night's sleep (?) on the sawmill's planks was not over-restful. Immediately after eating, I say my "*muchas gracias*" and "*buenas noches*" to *la familia* Garita and head for the "city hall." While I've been eating, my host has considerably set up a cot and borrowed a thick, springy mattress, clean sheet, pillow and pillow case from the only American in town. Consequently, upon arrival at the mayor's office, my bedroom, I find awaiting me as inviting a layout as I could have at home. What a comfortable surprise!

Feeling fit as a fiddle after all the attention *El Jefe* and Mrs. Garita have lavished, I begin to look around a bit. First at my apartment. It's a clean, cool, single story affair. Since my living quarters are about eighteen by twenty-four, they will be shared, I discover next morning, by the town's elderly, white-shirted, lavender-trousered secretary. He sleeps elsewhere but daily puts in his clerical stint, pen in hand, writing up the city records and frequently reading aloud to some illiterate citizen the contents of obviously weighty documents, the gist of which I never really do comprehend. A sweet old soul, he is as courtly to me as a Spanish cavalier.

On the walls hang rusty handcuffs, strips of fat, official-looking reports and *manifestos* (perhaps twenty hooks full) and highly colored commercial calendars with, oddly enough, considerable British war-propaganda poster stuff. Three big windows and two doors assure ample circulation. The windows are without glass, of course, and have solid wooden shutters. I have been cautioned never to leave my new home without locking it securely. For this purpose I have a big, rusty old key. The warning to lock up this local lock-up brings to mind certain signs

in Mexican churches abjuring parishioners to be on the alert for pick-pockets. Others supplicated the faithful please not to spit on the floor!

The building itself is of boards with a corrugated iron roof. It is single-storied, some fifty feet long, and of a cool green color faded by the sun to a soft, mosslike tint. To my left is a room for the radio office. To the right another occupied by the *Jefe de Sanitacion* or local health authority. To the rear, as I am to discover later, are four or five windowless and utterly furniture-less box-stalls for the bad boys of the community. Of these last, there are surprisingly few. To the left stands that decidedly informal, burlap-screened bath; while aloof and apart are two "powder rooms" of, to say the least, pronouncedly original design both inside and out.

6:00 *p. m.*

Learning of another American in town I smoke him out before turning in. He has come to Buenos Aires from Panama but four months previously, and his home is at one corner of the immense village green on which my city hall faces. Brundage, a California cattleman of possibly fifty, turns out to be a truly charming chap. His Costa Rican bride of six months is equally delightful. Temporarily they rent this little three room house, but they will shortly build a new, modern home on the thousand-odd acres recently purchased. The Brundages have an inexhaustible supply of cold, definitely boiled, amoeba-free water from which I am to drink long and deep throughout the remainder of my stay in Buenos Aires.

I spend a happy half hour with them, smoking a real Tampa cigar presented by Brundage. That's my first in over two months and how it warms the cockles of my heart. I indulge in free and easy English. La Señora, unfortunately, speaks only Spanish.

This unspoiled hinterland appeals strongly to Brundage. There are no land taxes. Property can be had at five to ten dollars per acre, and not the least of the many advantages is a commendable tendency on the part of one's neighbors not to pry into other folks' affairs. Like me, he loathes cities and wisely aims to spend the rest of his days here. He sensibly resolves, however, to revisit so-called civilization every two years as a preventive against ever going completely native.

He will raise cattle and goats. A few weeks ago he received by plane his first lot of goats which are excellently kept and treated more as pets and members of the family than anything else. To the Costa Rican Gov-

ernment's credit, the Department of Agriculture defrays transportation charges and admits duty-free the fine breeding stock imported from the States. Another activity may be the erection of a rice husking mill, as five thousand sacks of rice come into Buenos Aires each year, all by horse and mule from the surrounding hills.

La Señora, formerly a nurse at Grecia, a small town to the north of San José, obligingly extracts a finger thorn that had been annoying me all day, dispatches a native gal out into the country for two nice juicy pineapples next morning and fills my litre thermos bottle with fresh water. Meanwhile the boss scares up a couple of magazines for me to read back home in the city hall should I have difficulty falling asleep. His fears are groundless on that score though. I need no sedatives this night.

6:30 *p. m.*

Say a sincere *gracias* to my friends and head straight for bed, to remain there eleven hours.

#### REST DAY AT BUENOS AIRES

5:30 *a. m.*

Arise, thoroughly rested. Feeling swell, thanks! It's a treat just to look through one of my three big windows upon the spacious, flat, but intensely green village common. It measures fully a block in both directions. To the left, facing the park, stands a little sun-faded, green-steeped, board church nestled in a grove of trees. That's all to the south. Facing me across the field are two stores run by Cantonese cousins, two homes, and the low one-story school over which floats the bright red, white and blue striped flag of Costa Rica. To the north at the far corner are Señor Garita's combination store and residence as well as the small straw hut of another native, and beyond it the home of my good friends of last evening, Señor and Señora Brundage. The town hall where I sleep is the only building on the east flank of the common.

Birds are singing. It's surprisingly cool, for a soft breeze blows, and I decide to explore Buenos Aires before the sun climbs too high. It's heavenly. For a mile in every direction, extend fresh green pastures backed up by low hills almost completely surrounded in turn by high blue mountains. In the middle distance, spotted all about the fields, squat thirty or forty huts, primitive yet artistic. Their windowless,

weathered bamboo walls and steeply pitched palm leaf roofs blend restfully into the picture. Across the village green straggle footpaths. The huts front upon sixty or seventy foot "avenues" of the greenest grass, through the center of which run the oxcart trails of deepest red clay. The color combination sounds a bit crude, but the greens and reds are complementary. This is indeed one of the cleanest and most-eye-pleasing countrysides I've seen. Aside from an occasional horseman or native attending early mass, there is little movement about the village. Except for a cockcrow or a whinny from one of the numberless saddle horses hitched about the village green, there is no sound. Buenos Aires is at peace with the universe, as am I, momentarily.

Stepping in at one of the Chinese stores, I buy, of all things, two cans of Heinz soup (vegetable and cream of pea) at forty-eight cents each and a can of stewed tomatoes from California for thirty-eight cents. Passing along the common on the way to my pineapple breakfast at Brundage's, I stick my nose into other people's affairs as is my unfortunate custom both at home and abroad. I bawl out a couple of young louts fighting cocks within spitting distance of the church. This has but slight effect on the two guys, no doubt, but it sort of clears my own conscience for having registered my disgust.

Parenthetically, just a few words regarding these shops so common to all Central America. For the most part they are operated by Chinese, Latin America's best small-town merchants. The stores are of small size and are completely open to the road. They consist principally of one great counter running the entire length of the establishment, behind which the inscrutable Chinese and his Chinese/Latin offspring tend shop. Countless shelves reach to the high ceiling, displaying an astounding variety of merchandise, almost fifty percent of which is imported from the States in cans and bottles. One third of the shelves and counter is often as not given over to a *cantina* or bar. More brands of booze are on tap than a dog has fleas. Jefe Garita's store is an exception. In place of liquor, this third of his store is confined to drugs and medicines. In the absence of any resident doctor, he prescribes for and dispenses to the villagers and Indians way back in the surrounding mountains. I doubt if there be a regular physician within one hundred and twenty-five miles of Buenos Aires. Garita is an authority on the treatment of snake bites. Because of his all 'round goodness and specialized knowledge, my host is recognized as *patrón* or sort of friend-in-need for every mother's son of the surrounding jungles.

After my purchases, I retrace the path back to Brundage's for that pineapple breakfast and more long draughts of boiled cold water. Invited for supper tonight, I contribute the two cans of soup and the stewed tomatoes.

Back "home" now to the city hall for a two-bucket bath and a shave. Then to church, returning later to my room for a half dozen chocolate malted milk tablets and a shot of orange juice. The sun being fairly well up and torrid, I indulge in another two hours siesta. My legs are still sore, and I'm somewhat fagged. Have been lying down now, fourteen hours out of the last twenty-four. Tomorrow's ride to Portrero Grande, over many tough ravines and by narrow trails, warrants easing up in preparation. The old gray mare she ain't what she used to be.

Brundage cautions against one more apprehension, jungle irritation, which is caused by almost invisible black insects that bore in under one's skin and infect a hole as big as a dime. Mrs. Bug has an annoying habit of breeding beneath the skin. As soon as discovered she must be excavated with a needle and the incision treated with iodine.

12:30 p. m.

A drunken native boy rolls by, inviting me to the river for a swim. I decline, discretion being the better part of valor even in rural Costa Rica. Instead I borrow the radio man's sole English magazine, *Time*, for September, 1944. It's reminiscent of good old Myer's *Ancient History* of high school days, for it is now April, years later!

2:00 p. m.

I arrive at Garita's. Rain pours down, cooling everything off. Most refreshing. While I eat my Sunday dinner of two fried eggs, beans, fried cabbage and onions, bread and coffee, preceded by a delicious bean/macaroni soup, one of the boys plays a guitar. The Jefe and I discuss in Spanish, as he speaks no English, the next leg of the trip, the strenuous nineteen mile Buenos Aires/Potrero Grande stretch. Garita points out a few errors both in my own United States map and his from San José. Next we fall to discussing school matters and the *Fruitera's* attempt to aid the Indians, including, among others, the near-by Mosquito tribe. We even go so far as to scratch the surface of Latin American national politics, an ever provocative line of chit-chat, whether in one's mother tongue or in colloquial Spanish.

With the help of a freshly made, original map generously drafted for me that very morning, Garita convinces me that it is safer and more

economical to rest Monday for an early Tuesday morning start with his good and faithful friend, Francisco Flores. Flores is the postman. For years each week he has trudged the rough Buenos Aires/Potrero Grande route. "What's a delay of but twenty-four hours?" Garita asks. With some reluctance, I abide by his counsel though more than anxious to be on my way. Both the *correo* (postman) and I shall walk the entire distance, taking along Garita's mule to carry my saddlebags and blanket roll. Foolishly I had expected to make the Panama frontier in three days. It will require four or five. Obviously, the hardest terrain stretches ahead of me.

A change in route becomes desirable, and I quickly defer to my host as he is *Jefe de Policia* not alone for Buenos Aires but for this entire section of Provincia de Puntarenas extending to the Panama frontier. Here's the new itinerary, a sharp departure from the plan originally drawn up by Nicolas Soto:

1st day— *Buenos Aires to Potrero Grande*—seven hours of hot country. I am to stay with Garita's friend Claudio Arce.

2nd day— *Potrero Grande to El Garrote*—eight hours but cooler. Stay with his friend, Domingo Justabino, to whom he thoughtfully gives me a letter of introduction. Justabino in turn will fix me up with road or rather trail advice as well as the name of some acquaintance farther down the line.

3rd day— *El Garrote to Platanillo*—another eight hours and still cooler!

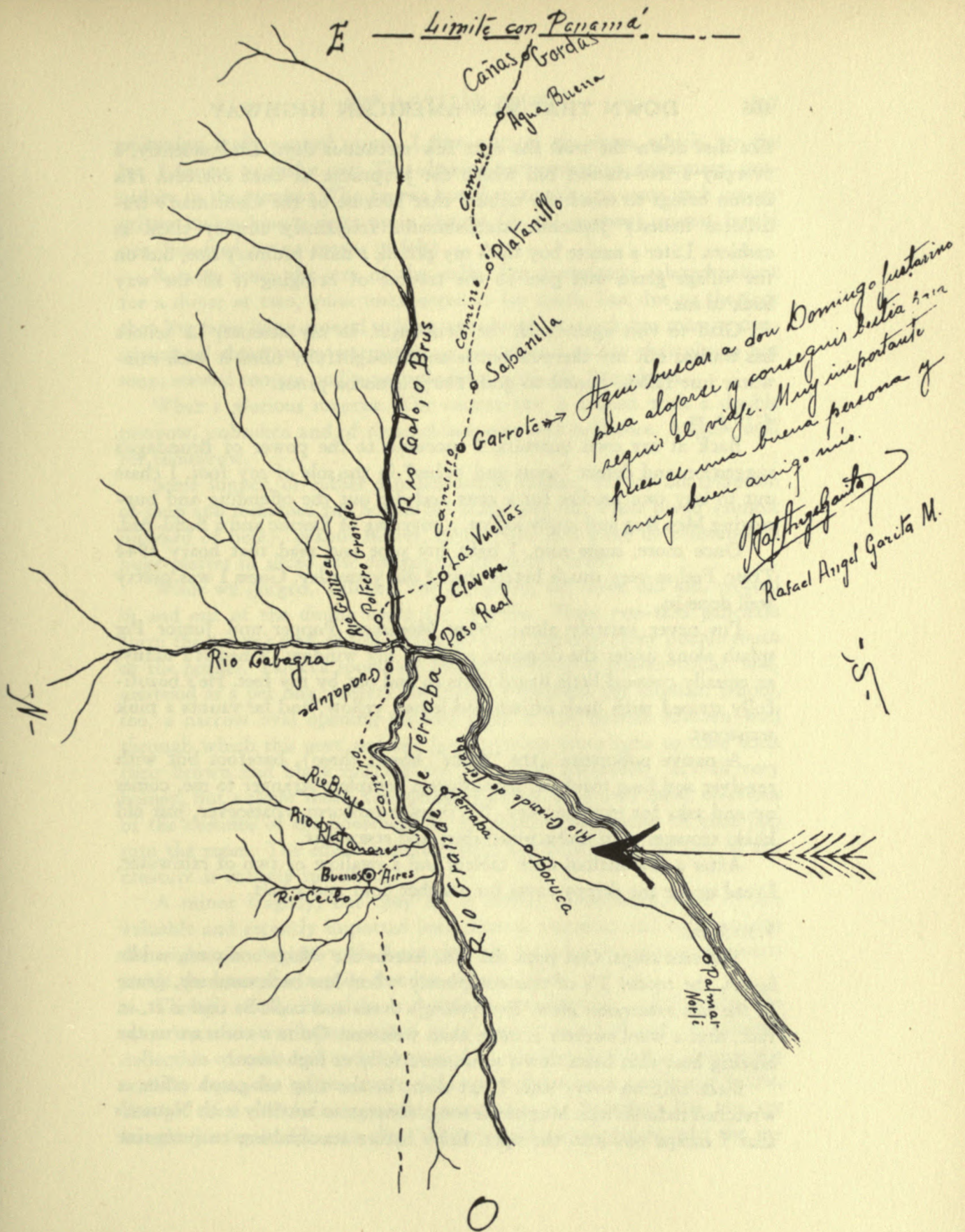
4th day— *Platanillo to Cañas Gordas*—at the Costa Rica/Panama border. Again an estimated eight hours on the trail, yet progressively less hot due to a gradual rise in elevation above the Río Brus. Not many *quebradas* after the second day from Buenos Aires, other than an extremely steep one at Sabanilla, wherever that village may be.

5th and— *Cañas Gordas to El Volcan*—the final lap, journey's end.

6th days—At El Volcan I'll find an "auto-able" road for the remaining thirty-seven miles into David.

No more rain so I say "*adios*" and head for Brundage's. On the way I pick up an extra can of Heinz vegetable soup at the Chinese grocery. I stow this in my saddlebag should I go too sour on the local bean and





Jungle section: Buenos Aires, Costa Rica to the Panama Frontier.  
Original map especially drawn by Señor Rafael Angel Garita, M., April 4th, 1946

rice diet down the trail the next few strenuous days. Inadvertently, I overpay a five-*colones* bill which the proprietor at once corrects. His action brings to mind the tribute that because of the Chinaman's traditional honesty Japanese establishments frequently employ them as cashiers. Later a native boy finds my pencil, a most ordinary one, out on the village green and goes to the trouble of bringing it all the way back to me.

Glad to visit again with the Brundages. In my absence, La Señora has washed out my thermos bottle and thoughtfully filled it with rain-water just fallen, honest-to-gosh 100% amoeba-proof.

4:30 p. m.

Back at my own quarters, I succumb to the power of Brundage's suggestion and detect "spots and itches" in the sole of my foot. I chase out to buy two needles for a cent and dig out the offending and burrowing Mrs. Bug and apply iodine, a covering of Essenic and a Band-Aid.

Once more, some rain. I light my pipe and read that hoary 1944 *Time*. Feel so very much better than I did yesterday. Guess I was pretty well done in.

I'm never entirely alone. Now Mommer, Popper and Junior Pig splash along under the dripping eaves of my window. When it's sunny, an equally comical little lizard darts in and out by my feet. He's beautifully striped with dark brown and lemon yellow, and he vaunts a pink waistcoat.

A native policeman (the "force" boasts three), barefoot but with revolver and long machete, heretofore a complete stranger to me, comes up and asks for my door key. No regular uniform whatsoever, just old khaki trousers with unbuttoned shirt and straw hat.

After a few malted milk tablets and a swallow or two of rainwater, I read under the drippy eaves for another hour and a half.

5:30 p. m.

The rain stops. Out pops the sun. Across the village common, saddle horses, the model T's of this completely wheel-less back country, graze in the late afternoon glow. Everything's fresh and cool. So cool is it, in fact, that a wool sweater is more than welcome. Quite a contrast to the blazing heat that beats down so unmercifully at high noon.

Birds sing on every side. Next door, in the tiny telegraph office, a wretched radio shrieks. Man-made songs contrast so horribly with Nature's that I escape out into the open fields before succumbing to ptomaine

poisoning from canned music. I first put on my shoes, which, by the by, I forget to shake out. This shaking-out process is customary procedure in the tropics. Who knows but that a spider or some such creepy critter isn't taking a siesta up in the toe for the moment unseen, but if not dislodged by no means unfelt!

Remote from the jazz of the radio, I'm completely relaxed except for a shiver or two, quite unexpected so far south, but due to the fact that I've been lying around so long uncovered. A quick ten minute constitutional about town warms me up and then I go for that piping hot soup, stewed tomato and pineapple fiesta with the Brundages.

What a glorious surprise. The eastern sky is arched with a double rainbow, unbroken and of unusual intensity and brilliance. Augurs well for tomorrow.

Some supper, or rather a multi-course dinner. To my contribution of soup and tomatoes, my hostess has added hot tea, white bread (almost unheard of here), peanut butter, honey and, as a *pièce de résistance*, a huge platter of sliced raw onions, my favorite "fruit."

While we gorged, Yalucca, the pedigreed, ten week old kid, trotted in and out of the dining room for tortillas. These non-skid pancakes form the native's staff of life and grace every table in every pueblo south of the border. Yalucca sports an almost unheard-of leather collar, and, unafraid as a pet dog, reflects the family's fondness for animals. I note, too, a narrow oval opening nibbled right in the outside kitchen wall through which this goat and her four relatives from time to time stick their brown and black muzzles for additional handouts. It's all very homey, but a slight shock for strangers eating their own meal, oblivious of the customs of the household, to see four or five inches of goat pop into the room. The effect is particularly startling since the rest of the creature is entirely invisible.

A minor tragedy, but only for a matter of minutes. One of the valuable and recently imported herd slips its mooring and vanishes into the night air. Armed with flashlights we retrieve the goat and return inside the house for a quiet Sunday evening chat.

Though small, the place is definitely comfortable, quite unlike the majority of native houses which to us appear bare and stiff. A colorful collection of odds and ends, so typical of the frontier, hangs against the walls or from the rafters above. Of course, there are a saddle and bridle, though these articles are purely anticipatory as Brundage has not yet bought his horse. He says they are too costly until prices take the in-

evitable postwar toboggan. A good one costs as much as sixty dollars, American, whereas one can be rented at but eighty cents per day. Ropes, straps and other tack are suggestive of this equine country where wheels and wagons are unknown. Back toward the kitchen, strings of onions dangle head-high.

My dining room chair is a twenty-five gallon barrel of whiskey, the year's supply. Don't raise your eyebrows; for where transportation is minus-zero, buying ahead becomes a sheer necessity, not, as you may wrongly suppose, a mere rationalization for excessive stocking. Affairs of such grave import must be attended to betimes. Haven't I stressed right along how very venomous snakes lurk about these parts? What better accident or life insurance against such serpentine danger than that innocent-looking chair of mine?

Now, just before saying good-night, the Brundages administer a sedative in the form of a wild tale of violence rare down in these parts. The story is true enough, all right, for upon my return to San José a bit later I am to learn to my sorrow that the victim was the son of a delightful old laundress whom I had known the preceding year in San Isidro.

It seems this chap, richer in worldly things than in worldly ways, moved into Buenos Aires with more money than most of the folks hereabouts ever dreamed existed in the whole universe, some twelve thousand *colones* or about \$2,200 American. Not only did he bring his treasure along in cold currency, but he also compounded a felony by boasting of it. That was fatal! He took up with a young native gal. In the accepted fairy-tale manner, but with less gratitude than one would have really expected under the circumstances, our heroine pulled an inside job and admitted two other gentlemen pals at four in the morning. Together, the trio slit the poor chap's throat. Then they hied themselves to the great beyond, not overlooking in their haste, however, the twelve thousand *colones*. But here we must divert a bit from that same fairy-tale procedure. Our friends did not live happily ever after. At least two-thirds did not. The lady and one of her accomplices are doing time in an island prison (Costa Rica's laws bar capital punishment), and the other third of this remarkable trio remains "out in the bush." There, I understand, various members of his family pay him frequent but, of necessity, clandestine visits.

As a counterirritant, I borrow most of Brundage's English library, one perfectly good *Horse and Stock Journal*, plus a February 15th issue

of the San Angelo, *Texas Weekly Item*. I'd give not only my right ear, but both, and gladly, for a current *Reader's Digest*; yes, even the Spanish edition, *Selecciones*.

Back to the city hall, where, after reading in bed by candlelight in imminent danger of setting the place afire, I turn in for the night with some apprehension of a nightmare. That murder yarn keeps crowding into my mind regardless of how consuming I find the stockman's journal and the February society notes of San Angelo. The jugular-jag took place right across the way from where I sleep, or am supposed to sleep.

Suspicious noises awaken me at two, but, thank heaven, they are too noisy even for Costa Rican ghosts. A village cop has captured three of the village *chicos malos* (bad boys), one of whom is in a jam with a lady (?). The others have swiped a neighbor's pig. After considerable argument, the law's minion salts them down for the night in the village pokey behind my room.

## SECOND REST DAY AT BUENOS AIRES

6:45 a. m.

Throughout Spanish America church bells ring loud and long and most awfully early. Not infrequently they start at five. But what I hear now is a schoolbell, for the kids of Buenos Aires attend from seven in the morning till noon, six days a week. ("U. S. Papers, please copy.") There are no afternoon sessions, however, and not too many months a year. I'm amazed at the large number of men teachers even in the smallest backwoods schools. Down the line in the more remote sections, the student body consists of as few as six or eight children who are protected from the elements by mere shacks of straw. Regardless of how microscopic her settlements, Costa Rica, be it recorded to her everlasting credit, affords all her sons and daughters educational opportunities. Along the road of practical pacifism, they go further, for Costa Rica even wants no War Department as such, merely a Department of Security. Maybe you'll dub this too subtle a differential in nomenclature. To me, it's a perfectly swell step forward in the right psychological direction. In a section of the universe where revolutions, showy uniforms, saber and medal-rattling are more than traditional, it's a refreshing exception.

This particular school at Buenos Aires, though one-storied and of two or three small rooms, is well constructed of wood. Painted green

with white trimmings, well shaded by palms and bushes, and with the national colors flying out front, it's decidedly attractive. Occasionally, the classes are held out of doors under the trees which seems particularly sensible down here. I saw one teacher playing a fiddle while the children sang. Much of the recitation is done in noisy unison. To the uninitiated on the outside, it suggests at least a child's size revolution.

Something's forever happening on the square. Small boys go by with strings of bloody meat fresh from the butcher's. Now a man on horseback passes me towing potential beefsteak in the form of a cow securely tied to the horse's tail. This cruel practice is contrary to Costa Rica's humane legislation, but it's the accepted thing out in the sticks. Next, another fellow rides up with a full-grown deer, just slaughtered, neatly but revoltingly slung before him over the saddle's pommel. Less than a half hour later it's my misfortune to pass the Chinaman's store in front of which the disgusting butchery had been completed. Nature itself is lovely beyond description out here miles away from any civilization if one excepts man's cruelty to animals. I'm reminded of the Englishman week-ending in the country who, immediately upon arising, stretched himself, took a look out the window and remarked: "It's a glorious day! Let's go out and kill something."

'Nuff said.

Inside the store I ask for forty-five cents worth of stamps for an airmail letter. I'm required to pay fifty. Why? Well, there just isn't a post office for thirty or forty miles. The five cent differential is the store-keeper's profit, bless his dear, old Asiatic soul. As I emerge from the store, huge eagle-like birds fly overhead. They have pure white underwings streaked with jet black. I walk a quarter mile across the fields to the little windowless shanty that serves TACA as its Buenos Aires airways office. I stick the letter behind the padlock on the door, hoping the agent may see it and put it aboard today's plane. These airfields are at first quite startling. Generally they consist of nothing but a tiny jungle clearing with a weather-beaten privy constituting the sole technical field equipment.

Returning to the village, I see a row of thirty beehives beneath a narrow, straw-thatched roof. They look for all the world like a flock of R. F. D. mailboxes back home. Didn't suppose the natives bothered with bees down here where sugar is presumably so plentiful.

Drop in again at the store. What a thoroughly filthy place. One boy is running his unwashed, grimy paws through a bag of rice, not too

appetizing a sight. I'm thirsty as the devil. They sell nothing but alcoholics and even more deadly San Isidro "pop," so I pass up the cantina end of the establishment. Learning I'm a vegetarian, the Chinaman tries to unload no less than a three quart can of okra. I compromise on a can of California asparagus for one dollar American and an almost invisible can of peas for forty cents. These I take to the Brundage household, and with considerable effrontery invite myself to dinner, suggesting a farewell party with fried onions on the side. I win them over easily as asparagus is La Señora's favorite vegetable.

With all its infernal heat, this is a most interesting town, nestling as it does in a green valley completely encircled with cloud-capped mountains. Thatched shacks face the deep red gullied roads along which laze cattle, pigs, colts, dogs and turkeys. Few townsfolk, if any, are evident. Unlike me, the natives are intelligent enough not to tarry long out in the broiling sun.

11:00 a. m.

Stroll over to Chief Garita's where his son is still strumming that crazy old home-made guitar, ingeniously equipped with a *capo* made of a rubber band and a pencil. He sings "Cielito Lindo." Wonder if ever there were a Latin between the ages of five and ninety-five who didn't know that one. He fingers a couple of chords for me. While practicing, I read a notice on the store wall. It's the sign of an itinerant dentist, sort of a circuit-riding tooth carpenter who promises to "appear at places and times set forth below."

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Volcan       | Monday, April 6th, at the home of Don Eralio Bermudez     |
|              | Tuesday, April 7th, at the home of Don Eralio Bermudez    |
| Cañas        | Wednesday, April 8th, at the home of Prudencio Vallanueva |
| Buenos Aires | Thursday, April 9th, at the store of Rafael Angel Garita  |
|              | Friday, April 10th, at the store of Rafael Angel Garita   |

11:30 a. m.

"Home" for a shave and this time a three bucket bath in the burlap-screened three by four shed beside the jail. As I perform my primitive ablutions, pathetic looking relatives of the prisoners bring a few dietary additions to the meager fare supplied by the authorities. Their meals finished, the four involuntary guests are herded back into their bare box-stalls, sans windows and sans so much as a stick of furniture!

12:00 noon

Now at high noon a luncheon of macaroni soup, the inevitable and inseparable black beans and livid gray tortillas, fried eggs, cabbage and onions fried with rice, washed down with all the hot coffee I can take aboard. Later, the little daughter again emerges from the even littler kitchen and deposits two fine oranges. As a guest, I am destined to eat alone in the parlor, at a small bare wood table facing, among other decorations, photographs of mater and pater, war pictures, religious chromos, a mirror, two well-used hair combs and a pair of steer horns. To my right is a gramophone of ancient vintage (remember the enormous brass horns decorated with painted morning glories?); to the left, twenty or thirty packages of brown sugar neatly wrapped and tied in dried cane leaves. Overhead, suspended from the rafters hang the usual decorative saddles, bridles, ropes, spurs and the customary long strings of dried onions.

Pancho, the oldest son has returned to Volcan, but a brother expands with disquieting detail upon the friendly (?) forest folk I may meet on tomorrow's journey.

Let's see now, there's the *manotuna* (or so it sounds) snake which, please page Mr. Ripley, though short is reputedly of equal diameter from head to tail like a common or garden species of reptilian rolling pin. About fifteen inches long, its poison is fatal. "I ha'e me doots!"

Should you suffer from jungle-lonesomeness and yearn perchance for intimate association with a few coral snakes may I caution that you be selective? These boon companions of the trail come in two attractive "packages." Corals with bands of red, yellow and black are poisonous in the extreme; false corals with red, black and yellow sequence are harmless.

I no sooner grasp at this straw of fractional solace when Garita, Jr., knocks the wind out of my sails by appending to this Reptilian Repertoire two more. First the black vipers. They come, thank you, in sizes to suit every taste and are just about as dangerous as the aforementioned species. Not as big as the old constrictors, they are graciously endowed by Nature with four fangs. Second, the blind lizards. Soft, but deadly if one runs amuck of them, these lurk beneath rocks in half dried-up pools. I must bear that in mind when dunking my overheated bean for a refreshing draft.

Garita, Sr. is an expert on snake first aid, but as a warning that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing in Buenos Aires as elsewhere, the



son cites the case of a native boy who, when bitten, heroically severed his toe with a three foot machete. This drastic treatment prevented poisoning all right, all right, but he succumbed from sheer loss of blood, a tragic jungle variation of "the operation was a howling success but the patient died."

Tomorrow's guide is reputed to know all the answers when it comes to snakes. We're scheduled to leave at five in the morning. He's one of three postmen that make weekly trips on foot up and down the narrow trails. One goes back over the road I came, to Volcan. One makes his way up the steep range to the Indian mountain village of Peruga. The third will walk the thirty-five kilometers with me down into the low, hot country to Potrero Grande.

My wash comes back. Only fifty cents for a veritable mountain of junk, including two rough blankets.

Sharing my room during this eight hour stint is the town clerk, bowed down with his weighty title of *Secretario de Jefetura*. A fine old gentleman of seventy, slightly deaf, arrayed in brown oxfords, green socks, white tieless shirt and pinkish-lavender trousers, he spends much of his time, as I remarked earlier, in reading aloud weighty legal documents to illiterate citizens. He leads me to the wall and points out a thermometer. Over eighty degrees inside, it is extremely hot from eleven until three or four outside. Lying down on the cot, I look out at the eaves and try auto-suggestion, with little success, by thinking of the two-foot icicles now dripping from our own roof back home. It's no use. The heat following the rain makes a steamy, stifling combination which augurs ill for tomorrow's twenty-one mile jaunt.

Unable to sleep I decide to count my money as I'll have slight chance of cashing traveler's checks, no matter how small, until I get to Panama. Next I go for a swim in what they tell me is a fine river on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Any really wet river would be fine on a day like this. That's not facetious, either. At this time of year, fully half the riverbeds are stone dry.

4:00 p. m.

Attempt an hour of photographing (I loathe taking pictures) on the way down to the ol' swimmin' hole. I'm accompanied by a seventeen year old chap armed with a primitive blowgun which consists simply of a four foot pole bored with a quarter inch hole. Through the hole he blows beans, small shot or what have you, with amazing force and some accu-

racy, the piece being equipped at one end with a couple of bumps to serve as sights. Our particular river is the fourth. After threading down the customary nine inch narrow trail which the rain has obligingly cut in the deep, red, gritty ground, we ford three streams. Upon reaching the fourth, Río Seba, we strip and dip. My companion is lithe and of a *café au lait* shade. I'm nowhere near so lithe and positively of a sickly white.

There comes to mind this Indian legend. When the first man was molded in clay and placed in an oven for baking, the Creator impatiently withdrew the form too quickly from the fire. The result was one of us white men, pasty and colorless. On the second trial, the result was just the reverse. The chap came out black and charred, progenitor of the present Negro race. However, the third attempt proved a howling success. In between the too hastily and the too excessively baked trials, the last one was of the most beautiful light brown imaginable. Of course, he was the forefather of the Indian who told me the story.

Together we dive, splash and cavort like porpoises in the cold rapids of this forty foot stream. It's just sunset. Finding a calm spot, I lazily float along with the current. As I look up through the branches of tropical trees in which birds sing on all sides, I find it a welcome contrast to the hot village.

The sunset is still glorious as we wander back home through a maze of long, stringy Tarzan vines, a heavy undergrowth which provokes further conversation on the major topic of each day and the subject of our dreams each night—snakes.

My companion, like all Latins I meet, is eager to learn even a few words of English. Hence a good part of the return trip is given over to mastering "one, two, three, four . . ." and a few simple phrases. "How much would a dictionary cost?" the poor soul asks.

My postman guide of tomorrow awaits me at the store. A man perhaps forty-five, he has as kindly a face as I've ever laid eyes upon. I suggest we start at five to avoid some of the heat of the day. He counters with six-thirty. Wisely he insists upon a substantial meal before setting off. Suits me as I have a complicated job of saddlebag packing to do.

6:30 *p. m.*

My last supper with the Brundages. As usual, it's a corker, a welcome exception to "the rule of three"—beans, rice and tortillas. We have fried onions, canned asparagus, canned peas, fried bananas and tea with goat's

milk. Speaking of goat's milk, Yalucca, the pet kid is again in and out all over the house. Jungle bugs, locally dubbed "aeroplanes" and seeming almost as big, fly in and out the unscreened doors and windows. Enters one Señor Guallardo just up out of Las Vueltas, one day's journey in the direction I'll be going tomorrow, I pump him for information. He's a husky young rancher so handsome I don't quite see how he stays a *soltero* or bachelor. If I'll put off my start until Friday, he'll ride all the four days with me as guide, clear to the Panama border. Though it's a powerful temptation (he reports some of the trails as most difficult to locate), I decide I'd better push on as planned with the *correo*.

Just before hitting the hay, I have one last consultation with Garita who, bless his heart, spent much of his precious Sunday afternoon drawing that map of all villages and principal rivers we are to pass en route to the border. Chucked in for good measure, is the letter of introduction to Domingo Justabino in El Garrote who, in addition to other outstanding attributes, supposedly possesses a fine sturdy mule I may be able to rent.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>             | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                       |
|-------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Buenos Aires to Potrero Grande | Laredo to Potrero Grande  |                                       |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare                   | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare, mule, car, oxcart, thumb, jeep | <i>The<br/>Twenty-seventh<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 19                             | 2,817   |                                       |
| ROAD HOURS: | 9                              | 284   |                                       |
| FARE:       | Packmule, \$5.27               | \$79.14   |                                       |

5:15 a. m.

Arise early. Laureano Villanueva, the ever-courteous, bare-footed, straw-hatted cop, brings a final bucket of water to pour over my head as a refresher. I say good-bye to the Brundages. Laureano, who urges me not to forget to send him a photo of himself, has already returned the gringo bedclothes and mattress generously lent me by my lone fellow-American.

I cross my heart and promise upon my return to mail Brundage from

the States one copy each of the *New York Sunday Times* and *Selecciones* as well as a can of California asparagus for La Señora.

The last meal at Garita's is a quickie of fried eggs, rice and coffee, as neither time nor tide is disposed to wait either for Francisco Flores or for me. The little girl slips me a bonus of two oranges as we are about to start. For good measure, I swallow three malted milk tablets and, camel-like, take an awfully long drink of water. Who knows when the next will be had, and the thermos bottle only holds a quart.

Buying a box of matches, I'm asked how many "leaves" I want. Tobacco, of course. That's the only way one buys the weed in these parts. Black as a new derby and, if anything, a trifle less inflammable.

Garita's charges prove embarrassingly low:

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| The five meals, all excellent .....     | \$ .90 |
| A mule and bay horse for two days ..... | 4.50   |
| The guide .....                         | .90    |
|   | \$6.30 |

6:45 a. m.

Many handshakes all around and by six forty-five, as the schoolbell rings, we are off in a blaze of glory, Francisco, the mule, the mare and I. The small bay, fitted with a native, saw-buck wooden packsaddle, carries the baggage. Francisco, as is his custom, walks with the tiny government mail pouch. I ride the dun mule until I reach the outskirts of Buenos Aires in order not to offend Garita. Then, for the mule's sake, I dismount in ten minutes and negotiate half the day's trek afoot. I heartily dislike riding the diminutive animals common throughout all Mexico and Central America. No doubt, as advertised, they are exceedingly sturdy, but I just don't feel comfortable. Furthermore, walking, so far as I'm aware, never permanently hurt anybody.

From the town common, our road strikes out for two miles across the rolling, clear green fields of suburban Buenos Aires. The bright, red clay shale turns to black loam. Grass hummocks appear on all sides. Many birds no bigger than sparrows, and a few larger ones with six inch tails fully as long as their bodies, fly about. High mountains frame the *sabana*, or level plain, and over all float huge, billowy clouds, low cumulus, I guess you'd call them. It's all pretty as a picture.

What, another endless procession of ants? Yes, and as usual, each lugs a huge "umbrella" in the form of a bright green leaf section many, many times its own size. It wears me out just watching such prodigious,

endless communal labor. With nary a glance to right or left, the ants trudge interminably on. Say, what in the devil am I so modest for anyway? I'm not doing so badly myself on that "trudging along interminably" stuff.

7:45 a. m.

Opening my billfold, I consult Garita's sketch of the proposed route as we attack what is to prove the first of oh, so many hellish hills. Garita believes in snake-cure injections, but as an ardent antivivisectionist, I have decided against carrying the hypo needle. Wasted effort and expense anyhow, as I am just about to expire beyond medical redemption (hypodermic or otherwise) if a real, live snake so much as puts in an appearance. Three pacemakers, a woman from Buenos Aires with two kids, precede us afoot along a shady, narrow, woodland trail overhung with many trees and exotic airplants.

7:50 a. m.

Two more women, this time armed with masculine-looking machetes and carrying baskets of fruit, stroll down the path on their way to town.

Good Nicolas Soto's admonition, wide open eyes here, comes to mind as we traverse this gorge-slashed piece of jungle. Now we pass from under the dense shade to a long open ridge. A deep valley lies off to the left. To the right there are logs and rocks, among which great clumps of luxurious caladium or elephant's ear plants thrive. Devil's ivy creeps ten to fifteen feet up silver-barked tree trunks already blanketed with thick, damp moss. Our trail, in many places only a trough ten inches wide, was carved out by the torrential rains, and becomes deep and steep and crooked.

8:15 a. m.

Here's our first river. I dismount while both mule and horse drink freely. Unlike me, they do not fear the amoeba. Never before have I so fervently wished for four legs, long ears and most particularly, no sanitary inhibitions. Now we pop out into the open again, where burnt-over hillsides have been planted with maize.

8:30 a. m.

This time it's a somewhat deeper river, and it's rushing plenty too. Francisco rolls his trousers above his knees and starts across the seventy-five foot Plataneres leading the horse. The mule and I follow. The water's stirrup-high and the river bottom seems a complete carpet of big, round,

slippery stones. The current or the rocks of themselves would be troublesome enough, and the combination is messy.

Once on the opposite bank, it's pleasant enough. Not half bad going and the surroundings are extremely interesting. There are rocks, all sorts of creepy vines, many trees, incredible as it seems, with trunks three to eight feet across. Butterflies and birds add color and song respectively. Quite a way back from the path tall individual trees, with no leaves but with very large and brilliant pink flowers, are silhouetted against the mass of green jungle growth and bright blue sky above.

9:00 a. m.

What, some human beings for a change? Yes, three men planting posts.

9:15 a. m.

Dismounting, I ford the next very shallow stream and again emerge into bright, sunny open country. In fact, it's just a little too sunny.

9:30 a. m.

Here's the first habitation since we left town three hours ago, so you can see there's still no problem of overcrowding. It's off to one side a piece, but dead center in the narrow jungle trail, so we can't possibly miss it, is stuck upright a four foot stick. To it is attached a crudely penciled note reading: "*Chico Flores—Cuando pasa, nos haga un grito!*" which, freely translated, means: "Kid Flores—When you pass, give us a yell!" In compliance therewith, "Kid" Flores does let out a blood-curdler, quite in contrast to his otherwise abnormally mild nature. Out comes the young Indian lady of the house with a letter for us to take along to Potrero Grande. Her home is another of the high-pitched, palm-thatched shacks with bamboo walls and no windows.

We hear a rushing river a short way ahead. Way back in Alajuela, I was duly cautioned about the one hundred and fifty foot Río Brus with its powerful current which can only be ferried in a native canoe, swimming the horse and mule aft. Because the hard seasonal rains will not set in for a month, "Mr. Río" has only a twenty-five foot run of water, though the rough rock bed is many times that width. It must be a corker when the torrent rushes down this gorge from the surrounding ravines. Notwithstanding the warning of two priests in San Isidro against walking in cold water when one is hot, the temptation is too great and I wade straight through, finding the sensation well worth the risk of whatever

disease one is supposed to invite. Thirsty as I am, I still lack sufficient courage to risk dysentery by drinking, though I envy the mule who swallows a gallon or two without batting an eyelash.

9:35 *a. m.*

We clamber up the far bank and bear left. In ten minutes we reach the exciting confluence of the Brus and Térraba, the latter the broadest river yet, close to one hundred feet wide and extremely swift. Innumerable rapids result in foamy whitecaps. Their very noisy swirling is mightily refreshing to eye and ear when one is dog-tired, hot and sticky.

Bugs and lizards along the low riverbed, and up a way we see the matted, dark, green vegetation which always evidences the closeness of running water. Deep green banana trees appear, alternating with light green single fifteen foot stalks. Each supports a spatula-shaped leaf resembling a South Sea Island paddle. The jungle growth crowds right up to our trail. Black and orange flowers wave on stems a yard high, resembling the rare bird of paradise flowers occasionally found in the better New York florist shops. There are strange, henna-red flowers towering higher than a man on horseback and blue and yellow birds.

It's pretty enough, but hot again as we follow the course of the Térraba winding its way down through the lush and nigh impenetrable forest. As I stumble along—hot, tired, thirsty and hungry—I lift my helmet on and off to admit a draft of air. I fall to wondering which is the greater river of the two, the mighty Térraba or the one pouring down my forehead and cheeks. Though prejudiced, I'm betting on the latter, the Amazon of sweat.

9:50 *a. m.*

Here we are obliged to traverse two hundred feet of absolutely bone dry riverbed unprotected by a single tree and suggesting a desert as the sun is reflected up into our faces. Three pure white egrets fly up to break the monotony.

10:00 *a. m.*

Another broiling hot, rocky riverbed, relieved in part by gorgeous rapids. The river leads off to the right. Francisco drinks. I mount the mule for a while to gain my second wind.

10:05 *a. m.*

The joke's on me. Five minutes later I dismount as we approach the toughest climb so far in Costa Rica. Halfway up, we take two minutes

rest, and I eat those two oranges the little girl gave me. Boy, what sweat.

10:20 a. m.

At the top. The guide warns there's one more big ravine ahead and frequent small ones. He thinks we'll reach Potrero Grande by two-thirty. Four hours more seem an eternity.

10:25 a. m.

Mount the mule as we come out in the open where it's still hot, but happily level for a change. There are many lavender flowers, reminding me of home. Beyond the rolling *sabana*, mountains rise off to the left with clouds floating overhead. Another trench-like trail cut deep with rain-steps opens up a vista of still more ranges ahead.

10:40 a. m.

There is temporary relief from the stifling heat as the bare fields lead into the shade of the jungle. Palms appear. Grassy hummocks of the rolling open hills give way to dank, black humus from which rise vines and mosses and a generally dense undergrowth. Without a machete, you couldn't penetrate so much as ten feet to either side of the narrow trail. Small brown monkeys scamper from branch to branch, pausing a split second here and there to satisfy their curiosity as to who intrudes upon their primeval, primate privacy. One mother has her youngster clinging to the maternal necktie.

A fallen tree stymies us for a few minutes till Francisco hacks it away. The growth becomes so thick it brushes us on both sides as well as overhead. Now and again a tough vine stretches across the trail just about neck-high. Were I to ride through at a trot and fail to see one, either I'd be off the mule or my head would be off me in a jiffy.

10:55 a. m.

What, another river? Yes, but so small I could spit over it, tired as I am.

11:00 a. m.

Now the comparatively wider Río Antonio, and Francisco rolls his trousers up over his knees again. Leaving the mule beside a tree, I dare to rinse out my mouth. Splashing water over my head cools off the outside anyway. It's a good preliminary for the steep, narrow trench that leads up the opposite bank. Five minutes of steady grind over this stiff grade may not seem long when you're sitting down reading a book, but after more than four hours tropical trekking, scrambling up a bare hill



with the sun beating down is not all skittles and beer. There are other complications, too. Leading the mule, I am always in trouble. Either he treads on my heels or I collide with the after deck of the small bay the guide has in tow.

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail,  
"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail."

At the top I remount. That huge blue and black butterfly may prove a harbinger of hope. Maybe that was the last big climb. Who can tell? Scrambling out of the ravine, I see that everything is changed. Instead of a bare, dazzling, stony hill we plunge into a thick jungle jumble with only a shaft of sunlight shooting through here and there. Though it's noon, the thick foliage makes it more like very late afternoon, refreshingly cool, though dank and snaky. Coral flowers, maidenhair ferns, wild banana groves and elephant's ears (big, broad, flat leaves on stiff three-foot stalks) run riot among the silver and black moss-covered forest giants whose graceful trunks spread more than four feet at the base. Vines festooning in one hundred and fifty foot loops are not unusual. And, just for variety's sake, dense groves of yellow-green palmettos, ten feet high, appear every so often. A vine which seems to be a type of devil's ivy thinks nothing of shinnying thirty feet up the trees, shaming our feeble attempts at home to coax their northern brothers as little as thirty inches in six months.

*11:35 a. m.*

Wet branches press against both knees. Overhead is a marvelous rendezvous for all those vipers and boas described with such gusto by my fine friends back in San José. Some, they said, have the vulgar habit of hanging from limbs (not theirs, of course, but those of the trees) which crowd in on the all but invisible jungle path.

Just as I'm getting scared again, we emerge into the dazzling sunlight, passing under an arch of palms beyond which stretches a fine old vista of high mountains against a blue sky. Courage returns in proportion to the breadth of the trail. Though there's a gully to negotiate, I relax, close my eyes, and leave it to the mule not to stumble.

*11:45 a. m.*

Only a brief breather. Once more the scene changes, and once more I dismount. Up we scramble along a crooked, rocky, unbelievably narrow, wild ravine. It's hot as 'ell as the sun beats down, but maybe that's a river I hear ahead. I hope, I hope, I hope.

*11:50 a. m.*

By golly, it is a river, the biggest yet, some two hundred and fifty feet wide. We trail along the shore. The rapids are glorious.

*12:00 noon*

On the dot we reach Quebrada Andreas as the water splits off into two streams. Boy, it's sweaty hot. Not a single river only, but three hundred feet wide. I stop to bathe in the white-capped current, cold and so powerful that I must brace myself on all fours. It's time to tie on the old feedbags. Francisco produces and unwraps his palm leaf package containing a lunch of rice and meat. We share a 5¢ box of dried raisins. I go on a drinking spree with four of the nine tiny cups of water the thermos holds. Finally, with the probability that we'll reach Potrero Grande in two hours, I recklessly toss down the whole litre and eat the last two oranges, burning my dietary bridges behind me. My guide soaks his sandals in the river preparatory to tackling the last big ravine reported just ahead.

*12:50 p. m.*

At last my will power gives way. Chucking caution to the wind, I take several deep draughts direct from the Río Grande. I even fill the thermos. Might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. Relaxed, I buy two cents worth of the tobacco leaves which my friend carries wrapped in a newspaper. A pipeful is pretty comforting.

For the first time in five days a stiff breeze comes up, and how welcome it is. Raising the old helmet every few minutes to let in the fresh air does wonders to my outlook on life. A couple of cows with calves amble down to satisfy their bovine curiosity. Their presence indicates a house somewhere, which of itself is encouraging. With only a single shack on the trail in six hours, this particular part of Costa Rica proves itself not over-populated. A straw hut is sighted a quarter of a mile away to the left.

Now a stand of fifteen foot prickly cactus, beside a grove of graceful bananas, and there's that sun again.

*1:00 p. m.*

Oddly enough, most open spaces between stretches of thick jungle are heavily fenced with barbed wire. Though this is evidence of cattle country, I haven't yet seen a single steer. A fellow pipe addict, Francisco plods along, proving his virility by continuously smoking the thoroughly

vile native tobacco. Unless spoken to, he never so much as utters a syllable. He is by no means anti-social, merely not loquacious. He takes advantage of the next stream-crossing to soak his sandals again.

1:05 p. m.

I dismount for another brief but hard climb up the rough trail. Francisco tries to cheer me with assurances that most of the remaining ravines, with one exception, are *muuy chiquitos*, very little. That's music to my ears, and solace to my hot, heavy, tired feet.

1:15 p. m.

"On again, off again, Finnegan." Once more I get aboard the mule as we emerge into a huge bowl of rugged, torrid, but tolerably level country, fringed with weirdly shaped trees which remind me immediately of Arthur Rackham's pen and inks. A hot wind, sort of a Central American version of a Libyan sirocco, blows against my face as we approach a hill of grass beyond the far rim of the bowl. The going is smooth here, so I take a mental census of the past seven and a half hours journey. Traffic has not been exactly congested. Altogether, we've passed one girl and three men. Oh yes, and alongside the entire trail, has been just one little straw hut. Getting not courageous but so hot, tired and sticky, I remove my snake-proof *polainas* (leather puttees) and walk with less discomfort, if greater danger. I light my pipe and burn my fingers which serves further to divert my mind from the rigors of the road.

1:30 p. m.

Once more I get up on Mr. Mule for we have hit another relatively level stretch.

1:40 p. m.

What a panorama as we start along a great plain of about fifteen square miles. Strong, hot wind. No shade. Very rocky, twelve inch trail up a small ravine.

1:45 p. m.

What temptation to steal the fresh, sleek, young saddle horse resting in the shade of a tree. Our own bay whinnies a greeting. Huge billowy clouds make me think of Harry's lovely landscapes. Here's a patch of welcome shade with many airplants and huge balls of black hornets' nests perched precariously among the branches. We approach yet another river.

2:00 p. m.

Consult Garita's map. It looks like twenty minutes more to Guadalupe, and then a half hour more to Potrero Grande which, though only the size of a handkerchief, will be damnably welcome.

We follow a fifty foot dry riverbed as it is the only trail available.

2:10 p. m.

More monkeys. I dismount and tackle a stiff ravine, remounting at the top, as it is extremely hot.

2:25 p. m.

We all walk down hill.

2:30 p. m.

It's stifling hot in the unshaded valley. The guide points out that *allí están las casas de Guadalupe* (there are the houses of Guadalupe), a settlement of a dozen shacks. The sun beats down so hard upon our necks and backs that I hope to heaven it rains buckets as it did last Saturday and Sunday.

2:35 p. m.

Rest ten minutes under a tree which I inadvertently touch. As a result, I am covered with small ants. They even crawl into my helmet. Must be more careful next time. These Costa Rican ants are fast workers. Now a three to one cold water application: three cups inside my mouth, one dashed over my head.

2:50 p. m.

The population, if not the plot, thickens. Can scarcely believe my eyes. Here comes a woman with a pail. She is accompanied by a couple of children carrying gourds. Why there's even a house where two young folks sensibly rest in the shade. In the yard, a woman hangs clothes on the bushes to dry, having wisely protected her head from the sun with a bundle of rags. When natives bother to take such precautions, the mercury's really up in the air.

2:55 p. m.

Dismount for the last time, maybe.

3:05 p. m.

Here is an abandoned, red caterpillar tractor *de la carretera* (of the Highway). How the devil it ever landed in this roadless jungle is a mystery. Now across a hot, almost dry river bed where we slosh through

a little brook to wet both ends, our heads with sweat and our shoes with the stream. Hear a real river ahead. Though ever a welcome sound, it all too frequently exacts that penalty of climbing a stiff ravine on the other side.

3:08 *p. m.*

Chemagre River, supposedly the last river, is five hundred yards ahead. Eighty feet wide, it proves an exception, as it is sufficiently deep to make Francisco roll up his pants before fording. The water splashes about my stirrups. Palms, quite tall and always erect, stand in deep shade occasionally shot through with shafts of sunlight. Very snaky, but I'm much too tired to care. No "wide open eyes." Branches overhang both sides of the leafy trail.

3:15 *p. m.*

The last small river. My mule still nibbles a mouthful here and there. Obviously, he's feeling far better than I. A second tiny black pig scurries across the road, and another red-headed *carpintero* hammers away at a near-by tree trunk. As we four scramble over a seventy-five foot dry river bed strewn with round, hot rocks scarcely six inches apart, our way lies along the river's edge, matted with jungle vines. We ford a small river with a blessed respite of shade on the far bank.

Here comes our first fellow-travelers of the afternoon, a peon riding a bay towing a cow tied to his horse's tail. Behind the cow strides a boy with the customary wicked-looking machete. As is customary and most gracious, we stop, shake hands all around and wish one another the Spanish equivalent of "happy landing."

Gosh, trees attain generous proportions in these parts. There's one with a ten-foot diameter.

3:25 *p. m.*

I dismount as we approach a straw shack before which are two children and some six or seven pigs. In a few minutes we are at the bank of the Río Lineal Potrero Grande which is sixty feet wide and fairly deep. Again I am obliged to remount for fording. Francisco dashes some cold water on his face, rolls up his trousers and wades across. When a native dashes some cold water on his face, that's news.

Scant risk of freezing to death in these parts.

The other side proves to be a precipitous, curved and rocky ravine. Heavy, wet clodhoppers hang like weights. I plead with the guide for just

five minutes rest. While we relax, the mule nibbles, and Francisco cheers me with stories of fresh, juicy oranges which can be had at the store of Claudio Arce, the chap in Potrero Grande to whom my letter of introduction is addressed.

3:37 *p. m.*

We struggle up the rough ravine trail on foot and reach level ground. I climb into the saddle for the last time today as we approach Potrero Grande. There will be no more hills to climb between here and there.

3:42 *p. m.*

Potrero Grande, at last, after nine hours stiff going, or better put, coming. It has been nineteen miles, and tomorrow good-natured Francisco Flores, the mailman, will retrace his steps to Buenos Aires, leading back my mule to Garita. Flores does not ride and will do the whole thirty-eight miles in two days on foot. He has a well-deserved reputation for being *bravo* as well. Even in the rainy season, when the innumerable rivers are swollen and dangerous, he continues to make this weekly mail route without horse or mule, but I personally find today's expedition quite fatiguing, even in the dry season and with a mule.

Potrero Grande proves, as I feared, low, flat, small and hot. The town consists mainly of a single lane less than a hundred yards long with perhaps fifteen or twenty bamboo, palm-thatched, small homes, all extremely primitive. Emerging from the jungle, the first building we come to is the well-constructed *pulperia* or store of Señor Claudio Arce Gamboa. In the back of the store, itself not more than nine by twelve, are the living quarters for our Arce, his wife, their two youngsters aged two and four, and the baby. Because of the heat of this section, the family lives most of the time on a large, airy twenty by twenty section. I don't know whether you'd call it a porch or a parlor, but it boasts probably the only wooden floor in all Potrero Grande. It also has a substantial roof, but no sidewalls whatsoever. It smacks much of the frontier. Tiger skins lie about. Saddles, rolls of barbed wire, two coarsely woven hammocks, a plain table and a few chairs complete the furnishings, at least the inanimate furnishings. Roosters, hens, dogs and kids maneuver freely, frequently and noisily all over the place.

As on each previous arrival (first at La Union, later at Volcan, and last at Buenos Aires), I am so exhausted from the trials of the trails that I just more or less flop down to get my breath, without too keen an observance of the amenities. Seeing me pretty well tuckered out, Arce

loses no time offering a cold drink of fruit juices which I tactfully refuse, exerting the greatest will power of my entire life. Gosh, I am dying for a swallow, but as Potrero Grande is by reputation one of the worst danger spots for amoeba-poisoning, I decline. Pineapples are safe, but to my keen disappointment, *no hay piñas* (there ain't no pineapples). Next, I'm offered a delicious, luscious melon, but because it has already been cut by possibly an amoeba-infected knife (against which the San José medico has cautioned me, durn his hide), I pass up that thirst aid as well.

Don Claudio and his very pleasant wife prove charming hosts. Señor comes to the rescue by stepping out into the grove back of the shed where he gathers no less than ten oranges for me. Returning, he whips out his penknife and adroitly pares five. As fast as he peels them, I gobble down the whole setting. Then I am offered the inevitable and most welcome *cafecito* or cup of hot coffee. Maybe his knife was infected!

The Arces are a delightful couple. In their early thirties, they are much above the average intellectually. He has worked for the Pan American Highway, apparently with such admiration for the Americans as to have named one of his boys after one of the gringo engineers. She speaks French and a little English. Both originally came from San José or its vicinity, and one of the señora's sisters even married a New Yorker. She proudly displays a neat announcement but recently received from Miami Beach modestly attesting that a new star has arisen on the Bronx horizon in the form of a six and a half pound nephew, one Alberto Blumberg.

Not without reason, Arce's wife finds life quite monotonous along Potrero Grande's single, hot, dusty lane, lined with those few dirty, depressing, floorless and windowless hovels. Nor do I blame her for not liking to tend store. However, as she observes with a well-justified sigh, *con tres hombrecitos* (with three little men) one is never at a complete loss for anything to do. With a typically Latin courteous *con permiso* (with your permission), she sits down at the table to read a newly arrived letter. Probably my guide of the day, Francisco Flores, brought it along from Buenos Aires.

With an equally gracious *con permiso*, I quickly remove my heavy shoes and hot, holey socks. My host immediately leaps into his little store and out again with a brand new pair of socks. He takes my breath away. Imagine such hospitality to one whom he has just met and shall never see again. He insists that I accept them as an outright gift. I flatly refuse

to do this at the imminent risk of giving offense since he is so eager to be helpful.

The sun's going down. An incessant insect choir starts up in the jungle directly in back of Potrero Grande's row of huts. It's cooler, and I revive. Mrs. Arce boils some water, and I step out into the backyard and place my collapsible mirror on the end of an upturned, rusty oil drum. While my mirror rubs elbows with two iron chamber pots of medium and small diameters, I enjoy a close shave and the first hot water face wash in five days.

5:00 p. m.

Reincarnated, I return to the shed to devour fried onions, beans, rice, tortillas, real homelike pickles, and six more oranges, topped off with *flan*, a sweetish, cornstarchy sort of dessert.

Potrero Grande's entire constabulary, in the single but dignified form of Don Miguel Alfero, comes in for supper. A somewhat lame, slightly built but very pleasant chap, he apparently takes all his meals with the Arce family, though he lives up the lane.

Later, a tall, cheerful Jamaican Negro drops in for a chat in English. It's probably his first opportunity in years to converse in the old mother tongue. Out of touch with the world, he wants to know if it be true that we Americans will continue to rule Jamaica for the next ninety-nine years.

Obviously, my intrusion into Potrero Grande's social life is a matter of considerable moment. In the half shadows of early evening, three young native girls stare at me, one from each of three of the four corners of the veranda. We men sit discussing tomorrow's disquietingly uncertain route on toward the Panama frontier.

It is not exactly what one would term peaceful. Both kids start bawling. Then they bedevil the poor, patient dogs until finally Papa Arce grabs them all up and impartially administers a healthy dose of catarrh medicine before he bundles them off to bed. This treatment applies to the kids, not to the dogs.

There are no pack animals available in Potrero Grande other than Arce's own mule. However, there lives here one Tobias Sanchez, who for a number of years served as mail carrier in just the section through which I must pass. Arce sends for him, and we discuss ways and means of reaching Cañas Gordas on the Costa Rica/Panama line. It's decided I shall take Arce's mule and Sanchez will accompany me on foot. The



mule will carry my packs while I walk, as far as Javilla, the first day's objective, where we hope to obtain a second animal.

Offhand, things augur well for the next stretch. We shall be ascending to a higher and presumably cooler (or more correctly, less hot) temperature. They say the trail will be less hilly. This I doubt muchly, for it never works out that way.

Sanchez promises a very early start. This means a good deal when hiking along the rough, hot, tropic trails, though it's a procedure contrary to the warning to avoid malarial mosquitoes at dawn.

Feeling more kindly toward my fellow men as a result of all the optimism afloat, I treat to cigarettes and local soda pop. To my amazement, La Señora does not smoke. So many of the older country women not only are cigarette chain smokers but even like big, black, stringy cigars.

We set a fee of forty *colones*, something under eight dollars for the two to three days services of Sanchez, the guide, and Arce's mule.

The itinerary is approximated as follows:

|         |   |              |
|---------|---|--------------|
| 1st day | Potrero Grande to Javilla .....   | 6 hours      |
| 2nd day | Javilla to Santa Clara .....  | 8 to 9 hours |
| 3rd day | Santa Clara to Agua Buena, Costa Rica Border<br>Constabulary Headquarters ..... | 3 to 4 hours |

Señor Arce tells me there are but two families living in Javilla and only one family in Santa Clara. There is very little between these two towns, not even rivers.

"The tumult and the shouting dies, the captains and the kings depart," and so do I. I go to bed, but not to sleep, in one of the two coarse hammocks. No luck at all, so I flop on the porch floor with my two cotton blankets, one under me and one over. My saddlebags, shoes and puttees serve as a pillow. Since this is a high spot, I mean low spot, for malaria, I lie carefully tucked beneath my net. As I retire, the servant kindly says, "*Pasa esta noche bien.*" "May you sleep well this night," a well intentioned wish, which I regret to record was not even fractionally fulfilled.

El Capitán, the diminutive family dog with the big lungs, senses something alarming and raises the very devil right under my ear. Señor Arce, in night-clothes, makes two or three trips out in an utterly ineffectual attempt to quiet him. The last time he shuts El Capitán up physically at least by dragging him off and impounding him in a back yard shed, from which now float moans and groans even more disturb-

ing than the earlier barks. Roosters crow and pigs grunt in alarming proximity to my downy couch. And so on far into the night.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>           | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                      |
|-------------|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Potrero Grande to<br>Javilla | Laredo to Javilla   |                                      |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare                 | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule, car,<br>oxcart, thumb, jeep. | <i>The<br/>Twenty-eighth<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 12                           | 2,829   |                                      |
| ROAD HOURS: | 5½                           | 289½  |                                      |
| FARE:       | Free                         | \$79.14   |                                      |

4:55 a. m.

Arise early and walk one hundred yards down a snaky, narrow path to the river for my morning wash. On the climb back, I pass kids carrying gourds of water for their family's daily supply. I fill my thermos with water, considerately boiled by Señora Arce. For breakfast, I find awaiting me old-fashioned animal crackers and coffee.

6:15 a. m.

Start off with Sanchez, after leaving five *colones* for each of my host's young sons. Even these Arce most reluctantly accepts. Can you match such hospitality? Here was a man who had never before laid eyes upon me. I dropped in without a moment's notice and in all likelihood he will never see me again, yet he flatly refuses to be paid for the supper, the twelve to fifteen oranges, the cigarettes and pop I bought at his store, his invaluable guidance or for the night's lodging. Furthermore, he's done his level best to force me to accept these new socks as a going away gift.

Incidentally, posted in Arce's tiny bit of a store out here in the wilderness are official ceiling price regulations from San José.

Tobias Sanchez, wearing blue pants, dark blue shirt, coarse shoes and a yellow straw hat, has a bright red bandana sticking out of his hind pocket and a white flour sack slung over his shoulder. Although he can say a few English words, our conversation is confined almost entirely to Spanish.

His first observation is slightly pessimistic. "*Qué lástima, no segunda bestia hasta El Garrote*" ("Alas, no horse or second mule available before

El Garrote"), at least two hours up the line. Until then, I'll hoof it all the way except for fording rivers. Sanchez estimates that we shall arrive at El Garrote at nine; at Las Vueltas at eleven; and at Javilla at three in the afternoon. He says that during the eight or nine hour trek, there will be no houses, little drinking water and just a single stream. But who can tell?

6:30 a. m.

Handshakes all around. Technically, we start at six-fifteen, but a quarter hour passes before we've gone a hundred yards from Arce's store. Just leaving town when Sanchez excuses himself to go back home for some *dulce*, the sweet, coarse, dark brown sugar cakes often eaten as a substantial part of any meal. Later as we are really getting under way, some fellow back in the village lets out a shriek. Apparently something awful has happened. No, he just wants to wish us a *buen viaje* or happy trip.

Open fields lie to the south of Potrero Grande. As we walk across them, Tobias points out Puruque, a tiny Indian village 'way up high on a distant mountain. Paso Real, which we shall also by-pass, lies to the right and is also among the mist-drenched mountain ranges.

6:45 a. m.

Here's a solitary bamboo walled hut, empty.

6:50 a. m.

Two more shacks, but far, far off the trail.

Golly, what a mass of thoroughly unreliable information one does get. They said at most one river for the entire day, and now here is a series of three in less than the first hour. I'll be damned and the rivers should be. After eating four oranges as, let's say, a second breakfast, I mount the mule to ford the rivers while Sanchez removes his shoes, rolls up his pants and wades across. The first river, Río Coto ó Brus, is sixty feet wide. After crossing it, we walk one hundred and fifty feet to the second river which is twice as wide and which has an extremely swift current flowing over an even rougher stony bed. Someone miscounted, or the third reported river dried up. Anyhow, it has mysteriously and completely disappeared.

7:00 a. m.

We enter the jungle path as a beautiful white *garza* or heron flies up out of apparently nowhere at all. An aeroplane zooms overhead. Birds

are singing everywhere as the trail skirts along the river's edge. Just to hear the gurgling of the rapids is refreshing.

Of a sudden, my mule shies. Why, I just don't know, but I do recall the story of the horse that similarly shied and, being forced by a stupid rider to proceed up the trail against its will, was pursued and bitten by a snake, from which attack it died.

All sorts of pleasant thoughts. Here's a stagnant pool of just the type against which Garita's son cautioned me for blind lizardlike creatures whose bite is likewise deadly poisonous. Swell place for germs too.

Grotesque trees appear with multiple two inch angular roots radiating out for all the world like bastions to a castle moat.

Sanchez endeavors to divert my mind by promising three solid hours of jungle walk tomorrow, with no hot sun at all, though he offers no guarantee against snakes.

*Monos colorados*, little red monkeys, leap among the tree branches as we pass along the trail.

7:20 a. m.

Who said this day's journey would be level? An hour out of town and here's a hill. Instead of leading, I drive my mule ahead of me because then he can't step on my heel, and it's safer from a snake angle. The horse and mule sense reptilian danger far more quickly than a gringo greenhorn, or even a native, for that matter. Believe it or not, as we pass over this hill known as Las Cuestas de las Vueltas, giant palms with leaves no less than four by twelve feet appear to either side.

7:45 a. m.

Correction, please. I should have said mountain, not hill. Perhaps as a more fitting correction "hell" should be substituted for hill. We are still climbing up.

Now here are palm trees of another type. Trunks straight as arrows rise branchless for a full one hundred feet. At least, so I'd estimate it, hard as it must be to believe.

7:50 a. m.

Two huge eaglelike birds take wing. Probably they're only *zopilotes* or buzzards. As we emerge into the dazzling sunlight from the dense, dark jungle, an exceptionally high mountain range appears five miles to our left. And we are still climbing up. Notice red spots on my forearm that are probably more of Brundage's insect friends.

8:00 *a. m.*

The first real sweat of the day flows as we traverse the rolling, open grassy plains of La Sabana del Coto, exposed as we are to the direct rays of the tropical sun. There's another one of those noisy giant woodpeckers.

The trail narrows to a mere fifteen inch trench. Awkward to stay in, it suggests more than anything else, a tight-rope walker. This country is lonely. Haven't passed a soul yet.

Oh, this must be the town. Beside the trail is a one room palm-thatched school. A man teacher inside, a woman out in front, and perhaps half a dozen children at class. Guess that's about all there is, folks, to the metropolis of Las Vueltas.

Tobias says three hours more to Javilla, another two-shack settlement and our objective for the day. He's certainly a cheerful little earful.

As we ascend a forty-five degree grade, the mountains seem even bigger. I insist upon at least a five minute breathing spell and seek the shadow of the only tree in the locality, and devilishly inadequate at that.

Our mule grazes while Tobias skips off fifty yards or so for five minutes gossip with the first native we've seen close by since starting out early this morning. All's well with the world until the guide returns with the sad news that the extra mule upon which we counted is not available. We must, therefore, continue on foot. The path is again narrow and still exposed to the sun as we pass along a sharp ridge but twelve feet in width. The ground falls abruptly away from either edge. There's a two hundred and fifty foot cliff to the right. Beyond rise great, tree-blanketed mountains.

8:30 *a. m.*

Far to the left stands a small shack. We tramp along the razor-edge ridge trail of the Sabana de las Vueltas as a slight but most welcome breeze blows up, making it a degree or two less unbearable than yesterday's hot waves.

Lovely lavender flowers, little more than three inches high and resembling the ajugas in Alice's garden at home, grow on the hot, treeless plain through which we trudge. The heat and the incessant buzzing of insects on every side make it very, very easy to doze off.

8:45 *a. m.*

Another shack far off to our left and now, on the other side of our path, the last thing in the world I'd even expect to find here. Beneath a

tree lies a fifteen foot boat hewn from a solid log. And we are more than three hours by oxcart from the nearest navigable stream, even if there were such a thing as an oxcart in this neck of the woods, which there definitely is not. Will you please solve that one? I'm too doggoned hot, tired and foot-weary.

For nearly one blessed hour, we mosey on our way, shaded by a thick overgrowth through which only streaks of sunlight penetrate here and there.

Fifteen minutes rest while my new guide, Tobias Sanchez, ducks off the road to visit another acquaintance whose hut is shut out from view by thick undergrowth. He comes out with ten delicious oranges, for which he paid five cents. They're big and juicy and extra sweet, or maybe they merely seem so good, because I'm extremely tired and thirsty. Along the road on the left, we see a grove of bananas to which Sanchez helps himself. Nine of the yellowest, plumpest ever to come our way, and we immediately gobble down two apiece. The mule swipes a couple for himself when our backs are turned. No doubt he questions our disposition to divvy up fairly.

To ease my weary dogs, I take off shoes and socks, hang the latter up on a bush away from ants and relax.

9:25 a. m.

Again we hit the trail, resolving this time to go at least a full hour without resting.

9:30 a. m.

Can already feel that resolve literally sweltering away as we clamber down one ravine and up another.

9:40 a. m.

It is stifling hot as we cut through another one of those fields where the trees have been burned off preparatory to next year's sowing of beans, rice or corn. We hop over a two foot log, still smoldering and warmish but pleasantly aromatic.

9:50 a. m.

Two miles off the trail, we see two straw shacks and the insignificant Coto River. Our path still lies along the stifling, flat, unshaded Sabana Establo. To take my mind from the sticky, sweaty stretch ahead, I conjure up an imaginary cooling-off tour back home, just as if I were to stop at each house for its favorite refresher. Sounds utterly insane, but

a kindly Providence decrees it impossible to think of two different things at the same moment, so it's iced tea with lemon next door at the Eddy's; lemonade at "Briar Patch"; strawberry ice cream at Caroline and Bill's; Pepsi Cola right out of the refrigerator at Hill's; and last, ice cubes floating in tall glasses of mixed fruit juice at Patton's. I smack my lips as I proceed down Prospect Street purely via autosuggestion.

*10:15 a. m.*

Four hours on the road, mostly all up-grade, with but twenty minutes rest. Either I'm getting old or else this is a tough rap. Demanding a full half-hour's respite, I guzzle down much of my meager supply on Tobias' promise that additional water can be had ahead.

Sweat flows like the Mississippi at floodtime. Off come my clodhoppers, off comes my belt and out comes my shirt to improve, even if ever so slightly, my personal ventilating system.

Sanchez swears that the next settlement, our goal for the day, is just an hour more, but I'm suspicious. "If a dog bites you once, shame on the dog. If he bites you twice, shame on you." I've fallen too many times for this type of well-intentioned yet entirely misleading road dope.

For some weird reason, the guide's single fear is not of snakes, malaria and amoebas, but only of catching rheumatism. Incidentally, he gets quite a kick out of looking through my eyeglasses.

*10:20 a. m.*

It's not blood, sweat and tears (apologies to Brother Churchill), but sweat, flies and more sweat.

*10:30 a. m.*

I'm gyped a quarter hour on that badly needed breather, but off we go, I with marked reluctance. Should be arriving at Javilla by eleven-thirty, maybe. I ha'e me doots, and with complete justification.

*10:35 a. m.*

A straw-thatched home to the left, and across the way a road camp, Campamento Guasimal, on a shaded hill. Perhaps we are approaching civilization after all. For good luck, a blue, black and orange butterfly of generous tropical proportions flutters across our path. Ahead stands a tree with wistaria-like lavender blossoms. To the side of the road, odd-looking, squirrel-like animals scamper in the trees. They're unlike anything I've seen before, about seven inches in length and furry and black.

11:35 a. m.

Here it is. None other than the metropolis of Javilla which is comprised of just two shacks of the usual architecture. Abruptly pitched, thatched roofs, dirt floors, and bamboo walls without windows, through which smoke seeps out as best it can from the fire burning within on the clay stove. An opening, ungraced by door of any type, impartially affords ingress and egress alike to humans, pigs, dogs, chickens, turkeys and stark-mad gringo explorers. A young widow with two kids and her sister occupy one hut. Sanchez and I are to put up for the night across the lane in the other. It's to be full house in Javilla, nothing less. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

Tuckered out from the day's journey, upon sighting blessed Javilla, I plump myself right smack down in the dirty trail, too exhausted to negotiate the last fifty yards to the hut. With shirt open, mouth open and eyes shut, I lie flat on my old back, to remain pretty much motionless for a solid half-hour. Then, mustering up a little energy, I hobble in past a most primitive thirty inch mortar and pestle for grinding corn and rice, to meet my hostess and the kids. They are not too over-joyed at our arrival, but quite curious. Still weak and with scant formality, I hurry over to my hotel, the second hut across the way. It's about fifteen by fifteen with not a stick of furniture except the seven by four chicken roost nine feet above the filthy dirt floor. This platform of unsecured and wiggly three inch bean poles, called by the natives *un foron*, will serve tonight as my bed of thorns. It's reached by an even more wiggly and unsecured ten foot pole in which a half dozen crude notches have been hacked. These good souls have not evolved to the inventive stage of constructing ladders, much less steps. I don't recall having seen either anywhere along the trail.

Rough as it is, I lie in this dusty loft for better than two hours. For lunch, a pineapple, raisins and seven malted milk tablets. Thank heavens, it's raining by the bucketful. I stand under the drippy eaves and breathe deeply of the cool, fresh air, the first since yesterday. By the time the rain stops, I've regained enough strength to look about a bit. Nature has done her part, if man hasn't, to provide a gorgeous setting. Red hibiscus blossoms contrast brilliantly against the fresh green foliage. Javilla perches high up on a hilltop, beyond which rise tremendous mountain ranges. Clouds and mist mix indistinguishably for we're up quite high.

Before the hut stands a native woman in a flowered cotton dress, with a five foot stick of sugar cane over her shoulder and a shiny, new,



bright red handbag under her arm. Looks as though the bag had just come from Macy's. In the muddy front yard is a hammock loom, a very crude contraption.

Inside the hut, the widow swears she has boiled my drinking water as well as the can of vegetable soup I've brought along from Buenos Aires in my saddle bag. This constitutes my sole supper.

I shave and wash in a meager cup or two of water before returning to catch up on my diary. As I sit in the open doorway, Tobias Sanchez, intrigued by my writing, crouches almost in my lap for a full fifteen minutes, saying nothing but continuously picking at his arm and spitting. It kind of gets my goat but, for once, I keep my big mouth shut. After all, he and I are to be trail-pals for yet another long day and a half through the Costa Rican jungle. Emphatically, this is no time and no place for dissension.

Discretion being better, I give up in disgust and retire for the night. It's only six o'clock, but it's getting dark. As there are no windows to my chateau, I want to get securely moored to my raft while I can still see. Dragging blanket roll and heavy saddlebags up the wobbly notched staircase proves a bit awkward, but eventually I get comfortably (?) ensconced between my two blankets. It's right up under the peak of the straw roof and dusty and musty as a mildewed hay-mow, though not as sweetly scented. It is an ideal locale for spiders and scorpions, so I decide not to undress, though I take the precaution of removing my belt and lashing myself to one of the several wiggly bean poles that constitute my beauty rest for the night. I don't want a nine foot flop to a hard dirt floor in the wee small hours when the nearest bone mechanic is four days distant by horseback.

A suspicious sound rises from under my *foron*, warranting closer investigation. Armed with a flashlight, I peer beneath my roost in true who dunnit fashion and count exactly eleven pigs. Hope I don't give the poor dears any insects, of which, incidentally, I have a not inconsiderable supply myself. I am surprised, but really not annoyed, much like the old maid who found a man under her bed.

Saddlebags, shoes and puttees again form a pillow. I bathe pretty freely in Navy insect repellent as this may well be a malaria section. Later it gets cold enough for a sweater in addition to the blankets.

8:15 p. m.

In comes the guide who is to sleep directly below me. What's that

stamping down there in the dark? More particular than I, he chases out the eleven pigs, and then, because of a clearer conscience or perhaps none at all, he falls immediately into a too-sound slumber and snores, darn his soul!

2:15 a. m.

Sawing wood, he strikes more than one raucous knot, keeping me awake for six long hours, tired as I am.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                     | <i>For the Trip</i>   |
|-------------|--|---|
| ROUTE:      | Javilla to Rancho Santa Clara          | Laredo to Rancho Santa Clara  |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare, 7 miles<br>Mule, 8 miles | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare, mule, car, oxcart, thumb, jeep |
| MILES:      | 15                                     | 2,844   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 8                                      | 297½  |
| FARE:       | Free                                   | \$79.14   |

*The  
Twenty-ninth  
Day*

5:15 a. m.

A hot glass of black coffee. It's the custom to use tumblers, not cups. I berate the guide for lateness. I hoped to get under way even earlier, but he rationalizes his oversleeping by saying the mountain trail would be too dark for safety so early in the morning. To strengthen his argument, he speaks of bushmaster snakes, tigers and monkeys ahead of us. He still holds out hope of reaching the Panama border at four-thirty. We'll be fortunate if we reach even Rancho Santa Clara by nightfall, if you ask me.

Warned by the snake and tiger observations, I put on high shoes and even higher puttees.

Looks like a cheerful day ahead with prospects of no water and but one ranch along the trail. Just what does one do if either he or I break a leg or find ourselves tête-à-tête with a snake or a tiger?

5:30 a. m.

My companion wraps his lunch of rice and beans neatly in banana leaves, and I carry a fresh pineapple in my saddlebags. We pay our hostess five *colones*, about ninety cents American, for meals and lodging and hit

the trail. I tire early today and complain bitterly about Tobias' miscalculation of distances. He philosophically observes that when the Americano *está cansado* (gets weary), one minute seems like ten and ten minutes seem an hour. His feelings are hurt. I think of a somewhat similar instance seventeen years ago down the Grand Canyon where another guide whom I pestered about the many wooden crosses along the way irritably explained that they'd been erected to the memory of his fellow-Texans, talked to an untimely death by eastern dude tourists.

To a "*viaje muy bien*" ("good traveling") from the widow Lenora, I grunt an audible "Adios, Javilla" with an inaudible "for the last time, ever, I hope." We move down the line.

In the cool of the early morning, the surrounding country, drenched and cleansed by yesterday's torrential rain, is delightful. We enter a great grove of palms and bamboos to find the vegetation dripping wet. Jungle birds call loudly. Nature is at its loveliest, and I think of Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee* and J. Fabre's equally fascinating spider stories.

5:35 a. m.

Why, there is another shack and a woman strolls by. She's quite a surprise. Anybody here would be.

5:45 a. m.

Using the pineapple as an unsteady and none-too-comfortable chair, sufficiently high at least to make me temporarily antproof, I await Sanchez who has gone off in search of a second animal to carry my luggage over the tough section ahead. In fifteen minutes he's back with a sweet little gray mare. She's gentle as a kitten, but blind in one eye. Parenthetically, should you ever have occasion to accelerate a horse or a mule in the Costa Rican jungles, may I respectfully suggest that "giddap" has no effect whatsoever? "Hotcho" is the magic word. To throw the beast into reverse gear, the natives pull on the tail and yell "Yeyta."

6:10 a. m.

What's that rustle to the right? A snake? It's an ideal locale for one; branches press against both legs to either side and down against my head from above. My trousers are soaked ten inches above the knees.

6:35 a. m.

It's already proving a tough stint. Only out an hour and here's a terrific ravine, La Pita.

6:50 *a. m.*

For the past fifteen minutes I've been climbing on foot, or rather slipping and sliding. Insects inconsiderately land on the quarterdeck of Friend Mule.

7:00 *a. m.*

As we arrive at our first little stream, the ground levels out, and I mount. In another ten minutes the joke's on me, and I'm off the mule. By seven ten, we're ascending Alto del Conejo. It's too steep a ravine to ride. I call Alto del Conejo (Peak of the Rabbit) a gross understatement. Fairer to dub it the Peak of, let's say at least, the Elephant, if not the Mastodon. Or am I just getting old and does this climb only seem terrific?

7:15 *a. m.*

Tobias hacks a passage for us through a fallen tree. It's marvelous what these natives accomplish with their machetes. With equal facility, they delicately pare a small orange or fell a forest giant, slay an ox, or, I'd venture, even manicure their nails if occasion requires, which it never does. Every man, woman and child throughout rural Spanish America totes one of these murderous-looking, thirty inch knives, and paradoxically, every machete so far as I could check was born in Connecticut.

7:30 *a. m.*

In the excitement I lose my helmet, but not for long. A wild turkey calls somewhere off in the impenetrable jungle. Stopping dead in his tracks for a full minute or two, Tobias says they're so huge that one will suffice for plenty of dinner, enough to feed no less than twenty-five men. I take his word for it with justified reservations. He next reports that we are in Garrote, to me a completely invisible village. This is where we are to find Domingo Justabino to whom I carry that introductory letter from Garita. Regretfully, the visit proves impracticable. Brother Justabino, the owner of that fine mule Nicolas Soto thought I could rent, lives an hour's ride off the main stem. Tough luck.

Two boys, a cow and a horse pass by, the all too few signs of life in this lonesome hinterland.

8:10 *a. m.*

I'm amused by the monkeys, which are much larger than I've seen before. They appear in the trees to the left, scampering from branch

to branch having the time of their sweet primate lives. Remote from the turmoil of that commercial cesspool back in Manhattan, possibly our distant relatives aren't quite so foolish. After all, maybe they've got something here in the arboreal life of carefree monkey-shines in the cool, shady jungle. The monkeys chatter excitedly as we go by. Pieces of branches begin to tumble down, and the guide urges me to hurry. Our intrusion is resented. They are chucking things down in our direction. This is the first real inhospitality I've encountered since leaving the old homestead north of the Rio Grande. Yet, the creatures are entirely justified, for in this picture a New York businessman is out of focus.

Dripping branches barring our narrow path again require the guide's machete.

With a jump the mule negotiates a belly-high tree trunk as we start along a weird, tunnel-like trench. Here the trail, the result solely of erosion, narrows down to a scant fifteen inches in width. It is hardly wide enough for the little hoofs of the mule, yet it boasts sheer, bare side walls of fifteen feet in height.

8:30 a. m.

It's less hilly as we come out of the cut, and I dismount, only to trip over a gnarled root and fall. Hoof prints of big wild pigs appear on the trail, but we see no animals. If confronted in herds, their usual manner of traveling about, these pigs can be quite dangerous. They're called *sabinos*.

9:00 a. m.

Though the road to the border will be rough, I'm consoled by the report that but two very insignificant rivers lie ahead.

9:30 a. m.

Should be approaching Las Sabanillas, a town reputedly of but a single deserted hut and with no inhabitants.

Gosh, but these are strange-looking trees. They have multiple roots which look for all the world like ten or twelve bean poles leaning up against the main trunk. Never have I seen anything quite so grotesque.

9:35 a. m.

In the next convenient water hole, we bathe our heads and hands. Tobias partakes of a bit of rice and *dulce*, washing them down with the ingeniously and instantaneously constructed leaf cup. I consume the pineapple. Though the water is said to be drinkable, I take no chances.

9:55 a. m.

Off again. It's hot, but as the terrain is not over-hilly and the mule rested and watered, I remount. My gams (apologies to Marlene Deitrich) can do with some rest.

Grass and weeds six feet high line the trail. A gorgeous scarlet tanager darts by. I'm assured two hours of comfortable riding along the quite level plains of Platanillo.

10:00 a. m.

Here are more of those crazy, bean-pole rooted trees. Each covers a circle ten feet in diameter. They resemble uncovered Indian tepee skeletons.

Tobias and I indulge in some prognostications. By twelve o'clock maybe we'll be in Platanillo; and by one thirty, maybe we'll be in Rancho Santa Clara. By the same token, five o'clock may find us in Agua Buena on the Border.

As we trudge beneath the trees, insects keep up that never ending and extremely loud chirping and buzzing. They don't stop for a split second.

Red flowers grow head-high even when one is in the saddle. At the fringe of the forest, bright bird of paradise flowers grow in rich profusion. The petals of these blooms have a vividly contrasting dash of jet black to set off the predominant crimson or orange. What thrills any botanist would experience meandering along this one day's trail from Javilla.

10:20 a. m.

Sanchez finds more evidence of wild pigs, supposedly about thirty inches high. "Have I a *pistola*?" he asks. No, and even if I had artillery, to his amazement and disgust, I'd refuse to kill.

From the chilly, clammy jungle we pass into a treeless, steamy plain, scorchingly hot. What contrasting shocks a day's travel provides. Sweltering, shivering; ascending, descending; mounting, dismounting; riding, walking, and even, I must not forget to add, falling. By way of demonstration, my mule steps in a hole. Head over tea kettles, I sail over the handlebars to land in the trail for my one and only of the entire trip. After riding horseback both on and off since early childhood, I'm still convinced nothing in all Nature (except possibly lightning, and I'm not sure of that) happens half as quickly as being thrown.

It's stuffy and hot as we are framed in by high mountains on both

sides. The path is almost lost in the thick six foot grass, but Tobias, knowing just the right spot along the trail, dives into a thicket to emerge later with four grapefruit, sweet as honey and ideal as thirst-quenchers.

10:45 a. m.

A chap on horseback en route to Potrero Grande from Las Cruces passes and guesses that we have about three and a half hours ahead of us before we reach Santa Clara. I'm mighty weary. The chances of reaching the frontier at Agua Buena today fade beyond the vanishing point.

11:10 a. m.

An almost imperceptible path leads off to the right where there lives a *viejito sin aun una gallina* (little old man without even a chicken), as rare here as an American suburbanite without a mortgage. Tobias says he's about an hour off the road and clears his trail only once a year, so we don't stop. With the prodigious vegetation here, a fair comparison would be with that of a resident of Montreal who shoveled his sidewalk of snow once a winter. I've worked in Montreal; I know.

Maybe it's my disillusion at learning of *el viejito's* inaccessibility, but anyhow I take another fall, not from the saddle, but in stumbling along the way, strewn as it is with rough stones and even rougher half-exposed roots.

11:23 a. m.

Now it's up to the mule to carry me for a while after a tough grind of thirty minutes unbroken walking. A river of sweat runs down my cheek, but the mule pays the sun little heed. He's obviously feeling fit as a fiddle, for he slyly nibbles here and there as we plug slowly along. I wish my spirits were equally buoyant. Why couldn't that old-man-without-even-a-chicken have been less anti-social, and settled athwart my route?

Dense growth on all sides. I fall again. Now for a change, it will be the trail and not I that's flat all the way to Platanillo. Notwithstanding the easier going, it should still require another two hours.

11:30 a. m.

Step across the smallest of streams, just a trickle of water. On the other shore, lo and behold, here's Platanillo, which turns out to be not a village, not even a hut, but merely a general location. No regrets. At least we are fifty minutes ahead of our guess-timates. By way of diversion, I celebrate by sitting down on a damp log with my feet resting

in the cool and oozy "river" bed and ruminate that there are yet two hours or more of trail before we hit Santa Clara.

Agua Buena, the Costa Rican Frontier Police Station, is about six hours distant, so there's not the ghost of a chance we'll reach it tonight, as Sanchez hopes. He even weakens on the trail between here and Santa Clara. "Maybe it isn't quite all flat; perhaps there will be oh, just a few *cuestas*." With excellent reason, I grow suspicious. Furthermore, "Pollyanna" fears rain.

11:40 a. m.

Six minutes rest.

11:50 a. m.

That breathing spell, brief as it was, proves providential. As we stumble along the rough fifteen inch trail, a snake appears six feet ahead. Though not long, it's most awfully wriggly. Being a coward, I'm scared stiff as a matter of principle. Were I not fortified by the short rest, or if I'd been a little closer, I'd probably have collapsed with fright.

Sanchez rushes up from behind and in spite of my repeated pleadings kills the poor thing, which like nearly every creature in the universe, except man, rarely attacks wantonly. It was trying its best to escape up the narrow trail. We were the intruders.

Though it turns out to be a deadly poisonous viper, taking its life upsets me and is the single truly unhappy incident of the nine day trip. Guess I'm nuts all right on the subject of needless cruelty to any animal. The natives, anyway, are positive I am.

Nervous after the only near miss to danger since leaving San Isidro, I remount. Putting my bare hands on the ground or even wearing a short-sleeved shirt is just plain stupid. I almost deserve to be "viper-ed." I've learned me a good, though almost tardy lesson.

11:55 a. m.

Here we have a jungle wilderness. My companion stops abruptly to point out where fifteen feet away a tiger attacked him seven years previous when as a *cartero* he'd been tramping along the trail. He'd dispatched it with a short knife, his only weapon.

Things are looking up, and so am I, from now on. Never a dull moment, eh, what?

12:45 p. m.

In a particularly damp spot, I see a gorgeous stand of liverwort, quite



different from and not to be confused with a liverwurst stand. It is a charming, little, fine-leafed, mossy creeper that I've tried so hard to woo in my own rock garden back in New Jersey.

*1:25 p. m.*

Good gosh. This is the forest primeval. Even Tobias is doubtful as to which way our trail leads. Ain't we two kiddies having real fun today?

*1:30 p. m.*

He guesses correctly. We push along to the left, out from under the dense trees, vines, ferns and what have you, to pass along a narrow, open ridge with a great deep, bowl-like depression of lush green. Apparently, folks live around here for to the left are more charred fields awaiting clearing and planting. As far as I can see, they never cultivate their crops.

Bananas thrive along our path.

Right here and now, it is sweltering.

*1:35 p. m.*

A pig and chickens along the trail are further proof we're approaching civilization. Now a shack looms up right ahead. It's the end of the line for today, Rancho Santa Clara.

Again, as upon arrival last night at Javilla, I'm too exhausted to do other than sit down in the lane for complete relaxation. It's downright silly to attempt to make the border before dark. Jungle night travel is flying in the face of Providence with a vengeance for reasons as numerous as they are obvious.

Later, still dog-tired, I wobble up the gradual rise to find at the top the two huts which make up Rancho Santa Clara. One's the kitchen, and the other, twenty-five feet distant, serves as sleeping quarters.

A sick father (Nicolas Justabino), his gentle, sweet-faced old wife, a young married daughter with two little girls (Cecelia and Estina), and a twenty year old brother comprise the family. They are first cousins of good Sanchez Justabino, the little man that wasn't there. Remember the old chap "without even a chicken" living way off our jungle trail that was slashed but once each year? Believe it was at El Garrote.

Following introductions, I call for a pail of water in which to stick my hot, tired feet. The mother sympathetically douses three gourds of cold water over my head as I sit on a narrow bench in her kitchen. Re-

freshed, I consume a *cafecito* (don't give me a demitasse, I'll just take a small cup of black coffee), a couple of bananas and four tangerines. Then I ungraciously fall fast asleep on the twelve inch, hard bench in the dead center of the dirt-floored kitchen. As the daughter busies herself about the primitive stove, the old mother sits a few feet away, precariously balanced on an even more primitive chair, a six inch log, whittled out to conform to one's, shall we say, anatomy. She drags solace from a ratty, hand-rolled seegar, black as night.

These folks (Chiriquí Indians of Panama, though we are still in southern Costa Rica) seem very fond of animals, for there is a basket full of kittens and many dogs about the shack. Their fondness for animals doesn't embrace *sabinos* or wild pigs. On the outer kitchen wall, there hang in two straight rows possibly a hundred bleached out jawbones. Skins of wild cats or *tigres* are all over the place as at Brother Arce's home where I stayed two nights ago in torrid Potrero Grande. In the corner stand an enormous hand-hewn wooden mortar and pestle for grinding beans and husking rice.

By the time I've finished my kitchen-bench snore, "Mrs. Chiriquí" has made up my bed in the communal dormitory across the yard, so I flop down on it for another hour.

I partially repay the family's hospitality by passing around thoroughly vile, but much appreciated, native cigarettes of which one or two crumpled packages remain. All take two apiece, mother stowing her extra fag up behind her right ear for a quiet after-supper puff. Oh yes, and big-hearted-like, I distribute largess in miniature, a five cent box of Sunkist Raisins, among the assembled multitude.

Social life in Santa Clara is not hectic other than conversationally. The visit of the old mailman is a rare treat. These *carteros* passing weekly from ranch to ranch, constitute a kind of local Walter Winchell. Loud and protracted gossip ensues from the moment of our arrival to the moment of our departure, it babbles on without surcease far, far into the night. By contrast Tennyson's brook was just an old stagnant puddle.

After shaving and the customary confession that I'm loco and have never eaten meat of any kind, I sit down to a supper of three fried eggs, a hill of boiled rice, a heap of fried bananas and a glass of coffee. Cups, other than dried gourds, are unknown. An uncooked banana serves as dessert. Though they offer me a glass of water and I'm perishing of thirst, I refuse. As we elders eat, Cecelia and Estina play on the dirt floor

with a spoon and bowl. The kids in the country have no toys as we know them, yet they're invariably cheerful.

We adjourn to the other shack, and I go to bed, though by no means to sleep. At this point, the one other family of Santa Clara shows up, a white hen and her brood who turn in for a good night's rest directly beneath my cot. I emphasized, did I not, the village night life is at low ebb in Rancho Santa Clara.

For a long, long time, "Popper" and Sanchez, in their emotional excitement concerning affairs of Canton Buenos Aires, to say nothing of the world in general, discuss politics well into the night. Unqualified linguistically to participate in their excited discussion concerning elections and local police, and soon finding sleep to be utterly out of the question, I concentrate on the lovely natural setting of Rancho Santa Clara. Perched precariously on its own little hill, the homestead faces no less than five distinct and very high green mountain ranges; all bathed in mist and golden sunset, they are beautiful beyond description. Later, just one big, bright evening star breaks through.

As I lie in my cot looking out of the little opening which would have been the front door, had there been any door, I see the young son silhouetted against the flames of the kitchen fire, laboriously pounding rice in that old wooden mortar. Who calls these folks lazy? By four-thirty, he is up again and very much on the job.

Even when the tiny oil lamp is blown out, and theoretically we're all asleep, there is a succession of coughing, spitting and belching leavened by snoring, for which good Tobias alone is responsible. His cot is jammed up against mine making what little remains of the night anything but restful.

Being unconventional to the extent of carrying no night-clothes to save saddlebag weight, yet conventional enough to assume that only we men would occupy the shack, I've gone to bed with nothing but the mosquito net between me and the outside world. Who defined pajamas as those things one rolls up and sticks under the pillow in case of fire? Having no pajamas within four thousand miles, I have been unable to take even this precaution. Therefore, when, to my amazement, the ladies of the menage come to spend the night in the same hut, I do some very, very agile maneuvering in spite of my poor, tired legs.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>   | <i>For the Trip</i>   |
|-------------|--|---|
| ROUTE:      | Rancho Santa Clara to<br>Agua Buena, Costa<br>Rica Frontier Sta-<br>tion                 | Laredo to Agua Buena  |
| VIA:        | Shank's mare, mule,<br>horse   | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car, oxcart, thumb,<br>jeep |
| MILES:      | 5  | 2,849   |
| ROAD HOURS: | 3½   | 301   |
| FARE:       | Guide, mule and<br>horse, \$10.00.<br>(Charge covers pre-<br>vious two days as<br>well.) | \$89.14   |

*The  
Thirtieth  
Day*

5:30 a. m.

La Señora, as sweet and kindly an old lady as I've ever met at home or abroad, serves breakfast of coffee and six *mandarinas* (tangerines) to which I add a few malted milk tablets. As a going away present, she gives me a half dozen lemons, as welcome as they are rare.

5:45 a. m.

After the customary hand-shaking all around—and with such a large family it is an exhausting formality—I mount the mule, and we're off for Agua Buena. Again they tell me there are no hills or rough going ahead, just *muy plano* (very level) riding for the next three hours. We amble along a slight rise of extremely rank, drippy growth through patches of bamboos and bananas in which birds are singing. All's well with the world for a change. Life seems worth living, temporarily at least. Tobias' bright bandana bulging from his back pocket, resembles an auto tail-light.

I carry recommendations to the Chief of the Costa Rican Border Patrol. His station and the corresponding one of the Panama Government are said to be connected with the first real road I shall have seen in a week. The Justabinos and even Tobias seem disconcertingly vague with respect to the journey beyond to El Volcan, Panama, where I'm finally to catch up with a public bus. The estimates vary slightly from

a few hours to two days, though I can expect more pueblos, more people, fresh *bestias* (saddle horses) and a far better roadway.

But why the devil did they say the five miles to Agua Buena were just one easy, level plain? Here we struggle again up and down one of those mean, twisty, ten inch narrow trails of which the bare, sheer sidebanks are head high. This is the kind of a trap on which that viper and I passed the time of day yesterday. To quote Nicolas Soto's original injunction, it's another case of "wide open eyes here."

With three tangerines inside and "a bluebird for happiness" in the form of another big, blue-black butterfly flitting ahead, I take the lead rope and precede the mule through soaking wet bushes.

6:20 a. m.

We tackle a new series of very, very steep erosion cuts where embankments are blanketed with moss and ferns. It is incredible, but now our trail is just eight inches wide. How in time can a mule walk such a tightrope? This place is known as the Alto de Java, and the trail resembles a dank, cool tunnel.

6:30 a. m.

Brother Mule and I tackle another ford with his feet in the stream and mine in the stirrups. I hang on to the cantle, later permitting my stiff legs to hang down for relaxation. At the next river, quite shallow but with rapids, we are somewhat distressed by the mule's refusal to drink. Hope he won't be sick, so far from his homeport of Potrero Grande.

6:37 a. m.

We are greeted with "*adios y felicidades*" ("farewell and good luck") as we pass by a small wooden frame house. Nicolas Justabino's fifty-year-old sister recognizes Tobias. "Won't you come in and have a *cafecito*?" I'm anxious to make time, so we press on. *Viva Costa Rica Libre* is crudely painted on the outside of the house. Extreme nationalism increases as we approach the frontier.

Why, what a crowd. Here comes another woman, wearing an immaculate white cotton dress. On her head she neatly balances both a jar and a gourd while in one hand is a machete and in the other a rope. She, too, enjoys a hand-twisted, corkscrew, ebony seegar.

6:40 a. m.

I lead the mule up yet another steep hill. Guess his state of health is normal and our fears groundless. Maybe he didn't care to drink, but

he eats like a hog from both sides of the trail. Or maybe he's just feeding a cold and starving a fever.

Our way leads out on a narrow, open ridge, only a scarce six feet wide. The land abruptly falls away to either side as much as one hundred and fifty feet. Now along a washed-out trail with exposed, gnarled, trippy roots. Up and down, up and down we climb. If this be "a smooth, comfortable, level route," I'll eat my helmet. How could my friends have been so cockeyed as to have reported the trail one easy to cover? To keep one alerted, an occasional tough vine guillotine sways just head-high. The path's muddy. I slip and finally take a tumble. It's all colorful enough. Gold, lemon-yellow and poisonous-looking fungi on half-rotten logs contrast with the crimson flowers of the stiff bird of paradise plants. The wet, slippery clay continues, aggravated by a succession of rough, narrow depressions champed up during the rainy season by the hoofs of innumerable pack animals.

7:07 *a. m.*

It's smoother, less rugged sailing now. We pass through a four rail gate, and I climb aboard the saddle as we approach a police outpost. No one's about. Beyond is a stretch of rough, coarse, wet weeds, fully four feet high.

Up in the sky soars a plane, the second in two days. In an hour of comfort they cover what requires nine days of anything but comfort for us four mules. I employ that last word with full knowledge and intent.

7:20 *a. m.*

A second house, another four rail fence, plenty of barbed wire, and two little girls chopping wood in a hot field. It's the second wood house in two long days travel. A woman who is doing up her hair pauses long enough to shake hands and gossip with Sanchez. A forty inch son, with a thirty inch axe, strolls by across our way.

More and more of those decorative bird of paradise flowers grow to either side of our path. Wish I could take some along home.

To reach Alto de las Cruces, we pass through the jungle again. The root-pitted, leafy trail, lighted occasionally by small patches of bright sunlight, leads among trees festooned sixty feet upwards with air plants and great rope-like, straggly Tarzan vines. Some stretch over a hundred feet in length. Never have I seen such a riot of every shade of green imaginable.

Like death and taxes, there's that goat-getting, never-ending buzz of insects.

Now out onto another open ridge. Deep glens to the right and left are lined with fern trees with eight and nine foot frond-spreads. There are also trees with gnarled, dead branches and trunks six feet at the base. Yellow or white butterflies flit about. Palmettos with shaggy moss appear as we go forever up and down, up and down. Trees stretch right up in the air as straight as a ramrod for a hundred and fifty feet. Smaller ones, without leaves, sport huge blossoms of exquisite pink, yellow or white.

Strangely enough, though I'm truly grateful, not one single bug bothers me the entire distance.

A strange variety of cactus, supple but thorned, appears for the first time as our trail ducks beneath a fallen tree. Next come small, holly-like bushes, reminiscent of the sand wastes of South Jersey.

8:00 a. m.

In spite of the rank vegetation Sanchez swears that *aquí no hay culebras* (there ain't no more snakes here), and I get down off the mule, taking the precaution of driving him ahead of me. If I weren't tired, I'd better appreciate this paradise of tropical flora. Here, for example, rises a ten foot stalk, bare of all leaves, at the top of which sways a solitary, brilliant, star-like blossom quite unlike anything I have ever seen.

8:10 a. m.

There are not many street signs hereabout, and even Tobias gets mixed up and starts down the wrong trail. We get back on the right path where there's an abundance of tiny, delightfully perky ferns.

Sanchez tells me again that *viboras terciopelos son todas mortales para hombres y caballos* (all of the type of viper he killed against my protests are deadly poisonous to both humans and horses). Hope his conscience twinges a bit, though I'm fearful it doesn't.

8:15 a. m.

Pass over the Quebrada de Copal through which trickles a nine inch stream just sufficient for me to dash some cool water over my face. More important, the mule finally deigns to drink, his first guzzle in a long time. Both the guide and I are considerably relieved. Dash my face again and again as it's so stimulating. Rinse my mouth but still don't quite dare to swallow.

The stiff climb up the far side of the *quebrada* makes me think of

diver's shoes for mine seem so very heavy. Guess I can't expect light-weight ballet slippers to insure snake protection. Lovely three-striped lichens, dark brown, light brown and white, flourish amidst all this dankness.

For such a decidedly snake-conscious person as I, there are just too many dry, twisted, dead branches on this trail. Against the damp, black humus some look decidedly much too reptilian.

*8:30 a. m.*

I mount for the last time—maybe. Gosh, I'm filthy. Same green shirt and khaki pants since Saturday, and now it's Friday. Almost seven days and just a single change of socks.

*8:48 a. m.*

No, that wasn't the last mount, as I had hoped. By golly, here's another ravine, this time Quebrada Agua Buena (Ravine of Good Water). At least its name is encouraging. Can we actually be approaching Agua Buena where I am to kiss Tobias Sanchez, the good-natured dun mule and the gentle, little one-eyed gray pack-mare good-bye?

I climb down out of the saddle and, though there's scant water in the gully, I rest my elbows right plumb on the bed of the stream in order to submerge my head up to my ears. Once more I resist the temptation to drink the ice cold water, merely daring to rinse out my mouth. Curses on that San José physician who cautioned against drinking even rapidly flowing water.

Again I must pay the piper for the dance. The temporary refreshment of a stream is inevitably followed by an exhausting scramble up the opposite bank, some requiring as much as a thirty minute steady climb. Now we are subjected once more to the intense sunlight which for some reason or other creates an unpleasant odor of scorched metal.

Another short drink from the thermos.

*9:00 a. m.*

We clamber to the top of a small rise and Sanchez, Allah be praised, points to the first modern building we've seen in a week, the headquarters of the Costa Rican Constabulary, that nestles down in a green valley a half mile distant to our right. Never before has a police station afforded such a thrill as this, our three days objective. After I've bathed, eaten and slept, I'll be eager to get some official data as to the kilometers to my final goal of El Volcan, Panama. Once there, I'm assured of locat-



ing a bus, car or truck for David, thirty-eight miles farther south in the direction of the Panama Canal.

Sensing an early parting, probably for all time, my trail companion and protector flatters me by requesting my name and address in the States. Maybe he's going to turn me in to the authorities for attempting (though I regret to say, unsuccessfully) to spare the life of that viper. To pronounce the "ph" in Stephens throws him for a momentary loop, and I have to clear that up before we proceed. How much more sensible is phonetic Spanish than our so difficult English. Upon my crude intimation that we shall probably never meet again, quick as a flash and quite as graciously, Tobias comes back with, "*Acaba la amistad? No, señor, no hasta se muera en cielo. En Costa Rica siempre tiene Vd. amigo en Tobias Sanchez.*" ("Cease our friendship? No sir, not until I am dead in heaven. In Costa Rica you will forever have a friend in Tobias Sanchez.") Honestly, can you picture an illiterate, underpaid guide, "mother" and protector of three days and nights, uttering such sentiments back home? If you can, you're decidedly a better drink than I am, Gordon Gin!

Tobias' parting words bring to mind a farewell speech by a Mexican to an American girl friend of mine whom he'd squired to a fiesta across the Texas border. "*Podria vivir todo el tiempo en la sombra de tus pestañas.*" ("May I live the remainder of my life in the shade of your eyelashes.") Sure, indict it as a typically Spanish exaggeration, but, thank you, I'll take it every crack out of the box in preference to our own vulgarity, "Okay, kiddo. I'll be seein' you."

And now, for the first time in seven days almost to the minute since leaving the Public Roads Administration fly-camp outside of San Isidro, I see a road, wide enough for wheeled vehicles. I celebrate by dunking my head in another mountain stream. Further refreshed by a strong breeze, I begin to feel as I imagine Columbus did when he sighted America, or Balboa the Pacific.

The natural setting is enchanting. Below lies a lush, green, bowl-shaped valley encircled by lovely green hills. There are only four major buildings in view, and even these are small. In the immediate foreground is a sawmill before which stands the first wheeled vehicle I've seen in seven days. A quarter mile beyond, we see the frontier guards' administration building and, what would be a couple of city blocks beyond that, two clean, neat houses. One belongs to Romero, a private rancher, and the other to the *Jefe de Resguardo*, the Chief of the Con-

stabulary, to whom I carry a cordial introductory letter. The sawmill turns out to be a rough, unpainted shed, but the three other buildings are clean and neat, of modern wood construction, and painted green with white trim.

In pleasing contrast to the rugged, stony terrain in back of us here we are in a most fertile countryside, watered by the Río Agua Buena. Crossing over a six foot stream, we pass through a barbed wire gate and scramble up the other side of the valley along an excellent ten foot road. Its firmly packed, comfortable sawdust surface is reminiscent of an armory tanbark riding ring back in my old National Guard days.

The going, or should I say coming, is made even more welcome by that stiff, cool breeze. It's a pretty fair elevation, and don't forget, down here in the tropics the temperature is much more affected by altitude or lack of it, than by latitude. So for the initial experience since starting out, I arrive in fine fettle, vertical and not horizontal, happy as the proverbial lark, and cool as the equally proverbial cucumber. Instead of flopping down breathless, hot, sweaty and too doggone tired to observe the amenities, I greet all hands cordially.

9:20 *a. m.*

We arrive at the sawmill all right, but our official entrance into Agua Buena is delayed another ten minutes. In our anxiety we start for headquarters the wrong way and cannot get through yet another barbed wire gate, but must retrace our steps up the hill to find a longer but sweeter way home.

9:30 *a. m.*

I dismount, and this is the last time, for it's only a five minute climb to the frontier station, a two-story building by the way, with broad, shaded verandas around three sides of both floors. In front stands a flag-pole with the official sign:

RESGUARDO

1936-1940

ADMINISTRACION CORTES

The station's name, Agua Buena (Good Water), augurs well. Even from a distance, we see the lovely little river and are assured of getting all the pure drinking water one could ever want, so I gulp down the last cup of warmish, unsweetened lemon water from the thermos, which,

incidentally, was made in the Argentine and bought in San José.

Nearing officialdom, and ever careless about such trivia, I begin to wonder if in all the strenuous struggles along the week's journey I've lost the precious passport. And, if I have, will the authorities cut off my head, throw it in my face and demand I retrace my definitely weary hundred odd miles? I'd rather be shot right now, back of the guard-house in the accepted revolutionary manner.

No, by golly, here it is. Learning the Chief is up at his own home another one hundred and fifty yards beyond the station, I forsake Sanchez and the two animals to make the distance in nothing flat, eager to learn authoritatively that all important mileage to El Volcan. Doing any of this section in nothing flat is to the point! In five days travel not a hundred consecutive yards have been level. It has been a case of one ravine after the other. The Constabulary Chief proves to be a splendid chap, embarrassingly hospitable. He speaks excellent English.

I pay off Sanchez, sweetened with an extra five *colones* tip. He and my two patient four-footed companions of many rough, hot miles strike back north for Potrero Grande. For their sakes, I wish that village were not so low and hot and so painfully far away. Seems like an inferno by contrast to this paradise.

Señor Ernesto Aroya, to whom I bring a letter of introduction from Chief of Police Garita in Buenos Aires, constitutes the last Costa Rican authority before crossing the line into Panama. About thirty, he's tall, good-looking, bronzed by much riding in the open sun. At one time he was a professor of algebra in Alajuela, the small town just beyond San José where Soto lives. By virtue of his position, he is thoroughly conversant with the lay of the land both north and south of the frontier.

Immediately upon my arrival, he dispatches a young boy post-haste to headquarters with a mattress, pillow, clean sheets, pillowcases, and orders to lug up my heavy saddlebags. While this is attended to, I'm ushered into the neatest home you'd ever care to see. Everything is spick and span, and there's comfortable furniture, factory-made for a change and not of home construction. As we sit before a big picture window looking out over the fertile green valley toward the equally rich, green hills, he pours me two long drinks of ice-cold water, clear as crystal. Indeed this *is* Agua Buena as promised by Tobias Sanchez.

We discuss the route to El Volcan, subject to revision by the Panama Constabulary, three miles south at Cañas Gordas. Aroya suggests the

route through Agua Buena, Cañas Gordas, Sereno, La Unión, and Candela (about six hours) and thence from Rabo de Gallo to El Volcan requiring another six hours.

Possibly under pressure it can be traversed in a single day, though it will be a constant ascent from Agua Buena's six hundred foot elevation to Candela's forty-five hundred and on beyond to El Volcan which is fully a mile high. This stretch, Aroya feels, should prove more populated, both with humans and available mules and horses.

Having traveled but a few hours today, I am eager to push on. The wash-up and the ample supply of safe drinking water encourage me. The ideal combination of a good, wide, level trail through this fertile country and a strong breeze urges me on but upon Aroya's insistence, I wisely defer setting off until early tomorrow.

I'm doubly glad. The maid serves an excellent meal. Two great glasses of ice-cold grapefruit juice, macaroni soup, beans, rice, fried bananas, fried eggs, tortillas no less than eight inches in diameter, sweet red peppers in olive oil, and, of course, coffee. After gorging I waddle downhill for a siesta of an hour or two in my new room, delightfully situated on the second floor of the Constabulary Headquarters and opening out on no less than two verandas.

Men below are repairing a stove. Sadistically, I contentedly doze off to the sweet music of the labor of others. Later I arise in the cool of the afternoon, wash, shave and have a manicure down by the river in the pasture. As instructed originally by Brundage back in Buenos Aires, I evict insects from under my skin and apply an antiseptic. Next I overhaul my *alforjas* (saddlebags), shake some Footease into my shoes and get the wife of one of the police to repair a rip in my khaki pants.

In this more temperate climate I toss all malaria and snake precautions to the winds. Off come the uncomfortable shoes. The citronella, bandages and a big, unused roll of adhesive I present to Señor Aroya, with the remaining lemons.

Returning for supper, I am introduced to his pretty young wife and six months old, blond-haired son, Carlos Enrique Aroya, while Margarita, the young nurse from Alajuela, draws up a comfortable rocker. We relax on their porch. It's Paradise. Between this home and the official headquarters, there lies a fine pasture where sleek cattle graze, which accounts for the milk so rich and plentiful at all mealtimes.

Plymouth Rocks, White Leghorns, turkeys and friendly dogs fill the yard. The dogs wag their tails furiously evidencing kindly treatment by

no means always the rule among Latins. Quite the reverse, from my own observations.

Today has been epochal. In eight days I've seen the first truck or auto, the first road, the first running water, the first safe water for drinking, and the first second floor bedroom.

For supper, there are beans, rice, macaroni, tortillas and real mustard, topped off with a custard dessert in rich caramel sauce.

A three-quarter moon rises over the hill as I say *buenas noches* and slowly stroll down to my "hotel" over a little rickety footbridge and pass one or two native straw-thatched shacks in which there's singing. Standing in the doorway, a woman with a four year old child beside her cheerfully calls out "*duerme bien*" ("sleep well"). Before retiring at about six-thirty, I strip to B.V.D.'s, light the old pipe, and tilt my chair back to enjoy the peaceful valley in the soft twilight glow. A good night's rest is assured.

|             | <i>For the Day</i>  | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                     |
|-------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | Agua Buena, Costa Rica Frontier Station to Cañas Gordas, Panama Frontier Station<br>Cañas Gordas to El Volcan, Panama<br>El Volcan to David, Panama | Laredo to David, Panama   |                                     |
| VIA:        | Private truck, 4 miles<br>Mule, 16 miles<br>Taxi, 38 miles<br>Shank's mare, 17 miles  | Public bus, truck, horse, station wagon, taxi, shank's mare, mule, car, oxcart, thumb, jeep | <i>The<br/>Thirty-first<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 75  | 2,924   |                                     |
| ROAD HOURS: | 13  | 314   |                                     |
| FARE:       | Mule and guide, \$20.00<br>Taxi, 12.00  | \$121.14  |                                     |
|             | —————<br>\$32.00  |   |                                     |

5:00 a. m.

Arise and bathe in the Río Agua Buena. Return to my clean, airy

bedroom to pack the saddlebags. A portrait of Costa Rica's president, Teodoro Picado, is the room's sole decoration.

5:30 a. m.

As I walk up the pasture hill for my last visit with the *Familia Aroya*, I'm amused by the potential breakfasts growing along the winding path. In a five minute stroll I pass a typical American menu of oranges and lemons for fruit juice, coffee, and sugar cane. Oh, and I 'most forgot, a few steps beyond are quadrupedal creameries in the form of sleek, fat cattle. Should one be hungrier than usual, bipedal turkey and hen egg factories strut about the house yard just "laying for you."

In Aroya's dining room another huge spread awaits me. Everything is meticulously clean. More grapefruit juice, oatmeal served with hot milk and sugar, fried eggs, coffee, tortilla and honey.

The Chief strolls down with me to pick up the sawmill truck which is to run us four miles to the corresponding police station on the Panama side of the line. Aroya, who graciously will make the trip with me, for no reason but extreme courtesy, will have to walk back alone. He flatly refuses any money either for meals or for lodging. By the way, his wife has boiled three eggs for me to take along on the trip. These are to prove lifesavers later on.

I finally prevail upon him to accept a farewell remembrance of ten *colones* for tiny, six month old Ernesto's bank account and a five *colones* gift to the servants, all of whom have been so kindly and so helpful.

The boys are not quite ready to start, so we all pitch in and help load freshly sawn planks. Then off we go, a half dozen of us aboard. How strange is the sensation of riding something other than a mule or a horse or shank's mare.

First we pass through burnt fields where men are planting corn. No plowing, no pulling out the charred stumps, and later, not even any cultivation. It's so utterly primitive. A pointed stick jammed in the ground, a few kernels of corn dropped in the hole and just let her grow. It's hot in this open pocket with the sun beating down. Men work, stripped down to the waist. Here's a pleasant change as we enter a heavily-shaded pine forest through which the sawdust roadway leads much like Lakewood's Cathedral of the Pines. Pinela, from which the Chiriquí Indians concoct a powerful drink, alternates with crimson and green prickly century plants. Chiriquí Volcano, immense and rugged, looms up ahead. It seems near, but its close appearance is deceptive as I

shall learn later when it takes us hours upon hours of stiff riding to arrive at its base.

Aroya asks if I've seen any of the old Indian *huacas*, the graveyards of ancient times, which, because the Spanish Conquistadores invariably ravished them for loot, never had any surface markings. Years and years of heavy rains have caused the surfaces to sink somewhat over the stone-lined graves, so that a practiced eye has slight difficulty in locating them.

Fifteen minutes along the road and we break out from the pine woods to a pleasant hilltop, bare of trees. On it stands the gray, weathered wood frontier station with its pole from which flutters the cheerful red, white and blue twin-starred flag of the Sovereign Republic of Panama.

Aroya introduces me to the *Jefe* de Cañas Gordas, Departamento de David, the most efficient and courteous Eugenio Sacucedio. He, too, is about thirty, trim and militarily snappy. A gold badge glitters authoritatively from his jacket. Yes, the passport is in order. I breathe freely again. He'll be glad to assist in every way, but the devil of it is that horses are almost impossible to obtain. He summons one of his troop, and Policeman No. 1175 appears in the doorway. He's a big fellow and almost fills it. He snaps his heels in the best accepted manner and joins in the conference.

All agree to the wisdom of Aroya's original routing via Sereno, a police outpost which they calculate will require two and one half hours to reach. Thence via Rabo de Gallo (I love that name, Tail of the Rooster) we shall make our way toward El Volcan, an additional five and one-half hours, making eight in all. This is just three hours less than we'd figured in Agua Buena. However, it's a bit disconcerting for it's after eight now, no animals have been found, and after reaching Volcan, I must scare up some kind of transportation for the last thirty-eight miles to David.

All agree on still another point, this time in our favor. The chances are excellent for a *bonita luz de la luna*, a road well lighted by an almost full moon, which will facilitate matters greatly.

While Policeman No. 1175 goes off in search of equine transportation, the chief (after padlocking his own quarters) takes me for a stroll through his garden of *chayote*, a small squash-like vegetable, *yuccas* whose immense tubers resemble potatoes, and avocados. Expressing interest in sugar, I'm taken over the hill to the cane patch where he cuts down a stalk and neatly whittles the outer bark from a fifteen inch sec-

tion. It's the universal chewing gum of all sugar-growing countries. Adults, as well as kids, can be seen strolling along the trails and roads, chawing for dear life on cane sections up to a yard in length. It's too durned sweet for me. When my host isn't looking, I heave what's left over the hill.

8:50 a. m.

We are back at the station but a few minutes when another guard enters, similarly snaps his heels and is presented to me as Pedro Peralta, *Sargento de Policia Numero 1285*. As the Chief puts it, "He talks hard but is a good man." This is very reassuring, as it develops later that he is elected the captain of my soul and body for the longest day's stint since leaving San Isidro.

Peralta personally owns a fine, sturdy mule which I'm to ride and a trim little gray mare which he will use. For twenty dollars American, he'll supply both animals and make the arduous two or three day journey up to El Volcan and back. And it is up every step of the way.

Adios to good Aroya who, like Tobias Sanchez before him, reminds me I shall always have a close friend in Costa Rica and starts the lonely four mile walk home to Agua Buena. What a gracious host to me, a complete stranger and a *gringo* to boot.

8:55 a. m.

We're off. If the guards have calculated correctly, it will be seven o'clock and dark before we reach our goal.

Good gosh, here is an eight foot ant hill and another one of those fifty foot ant parades. Yes, again each insect is laboring and struggling along with that big chunk of yellow-green leaf many, many times its size.

Sergeant Peralta points to the south where old Chiriquí Volcano rears its head. It looks quite near, but actually, it is hours distant. Peralta cautions against optimism. His one obsession is fear that we'll not get across the Chiriquí River Gorge before darkness settles over the trail. By far the steepest of any gorge in the last hundred miles, its current rushes along the one hundred and fifty foot ford we must navigate.

No one at old Cañas Gordas speaks English, not even the *Jefe*. The Sergeant proves no exception in this respect though he is a most delightful and sociable companion. He wants to know what seasons we have up north. Down here people have scant knowledge of the climatic conditions existing beyond a radius of a very few miles.



He's the snappiest fellow I've contacted in ages and is very good-looking with his deeply tanned skin and jet black hair. His uniform of khaki is neatly pressed, set off by well polished black shoes and smart puttees. Carrying no machete, only a revolver, my companion rides as superbly as the boys in the old Tenth Cavalry Troop from Fort Ethan Allen with whom I maneuvered thirty years ago. A slouch campaign hat of felt (quite the exception here), his blue and white striped blanket roll, the oilskin raincoat strapped to the pommel, and the spirited gray horse he mounts, all make a picture I'll not soon forget. He always rides ahead. As we ascend our first steep hill, he instructs me to hold tightly to the mule's mane, not too easy an assignment if you have an intimate knowledge of how exceedingly short the average mule's mane is.

9:45 a. m.

It is almost an hour since we left Cañas Gordas. Down along the jungle trail come our first people of the day. It's a pathetic group, a little family moving its meager possessions to some new location. Leading the parade is a woman of forty, decidedly slight but nevertheless balancing an eight foot bench on her head. Next is a tiny tot with a huge bowl containing two potato-like yucca tubers. The rear guard is an eight year old boy struggling along beneath a heavy table. They're not just going across the street either. It seems miles from anywhere.

Sergeant Peralta is feeling great. He doesn't have to say so, for it's evident in every motion as he ambles easily on ahead of me. He twirls his lead rope about in a style suggestive of Will Rogers. He snatches at the leaves of low hanging branches, flipping some off with his crop. He's just brimming over. Well, so he should with two such fine animals, a swell day, a glorious country and a well marked trail. With each ascent it becomes cooler and pleasanter. The twenty dollars American he'll receive at the end of the rainbow ain't just hay in this economically poor country, but it's worth it to me, over and over again.

10:40 a. m.

We cross a cattle and pig ranch owned by a Panamanian, and twenty minutes later see a tiny hut. There's not a living soul anywhere. Next is a deserted airfield, now nothing but a few acres of solid ferns. Right ahead, perched on a slight hill and shorn of trees, stands the Police Outpost, a small, pretty much weather-beaten, two-story building. All by its lonesome, this structure constitutes the town of Sereno. A hut or two

with the typical straw roof and bamboo, windowless sidewall, peek out from behind this official station. As a dramatic backdrop, off in the distance rises a gigantic mountain range with rough peaks silhouetted against the so very blue sky.

It's eleven twenty-five as we dismount. My mule drinks from a wheelbarrow in which rainwater has collected. We drink from less unconventional containers but with no less relish than Mr. Long Ears.

A five minute breather and off we go. Much of the trail parallels the international boundary. One minute we're riding in Costa Rica, the next in Panama, and so it goes for miles and miles, precisely as Aroya had prophesied.

Here come three small horses. One carries a boy balancing a baby between him and the pommel. A large native lady holding aloft a brilliant parasol rides the second, and a young man is astride the third. A little black dog to the rear completes the cavalcade which proceeds single file in the true Indian fashion because of the narrow trail.

I decide to walk a while, but the sergeant insists we push along faster. We must cross the Chiriquí Gorge before the sun goes down.

*11:35 a. m.*

At the next fork, a path leads off to the left to La Unión, but we bear right in the direction, we hope (there are no signs of any kind and all trails look distressingly similar to a greenhorn like me), of Rabo de Gallo, nine miles beyond.

The population's picking up. Here's a man, mounted of course. As is the custom, he stops, leans forward from his saddle and shakes hands with both of us.

Passing through a self-closing field gate, we ascend a series of great, rolling hills, framed in turn by no less than four separate mountain ranges precisely parallel. The first three are clearly defined, but the ridge of the farthest is completely lost in clouds. It's overcast for a change. Peralta looks for rain as an exceptionally strong, cold wind blows up.

*11:40 a. m.*

We cross the swift Río de Candela over a twenty-five foot wooden bridge. Some of these bridges are treacherous looking when seeing them for the first time. They are often crudely thrown together with rough, partially rotted logs which leave many holes large enough to snap an animal's leg.

Strange how vastly different our two animals react. The high-strung mare is invariably hesitant, nervous and scared to the extent of having to be strongly urged to go over. My philosophic mule stops at the near side, lowers his head, painstakingly takes observations and then without hesitation walks deliberately across the bridge completely unconcerned.

On the far side of the river, we run across two or three fellow police. A little gossiping is not only permissible but to me quite a welcome respite for my leg muscles. We've been pushing along pretty steadily, almost always uphill, as we have nearly a mile in elevation to gain before we finish tonight.

12:10 p. m.

Pass a *pueblito*, a tiny nameless village of only three straw shacks. It is quite a hot, dusty stretch before we can cross the Río Busquito in which a woman stands beneath an awning, washing clothes. This stream, though twenty-five feet wide, is but fifteen inches deep.

12:43 p. m.

We pass another river, even smaller, for in the dry season most self-respecting streams modestly become nothing but stretches of dry, round stones. There's a rickety wooden approach which again disturbs the mare but not the mule. I wish that rain would come. Instead, the sun beats down as we ride the narrow, unshaded trail. Grass ten feet high lines the path on both sides and shuts off all the breeze. It is so hot I again sense that depressing, breath-taking smell of scorched metal. Whatever it may be, and I've noticed it before, the sensation is stifling and decidedly unpleasant.

12:50 p. m.

A house, three or four shacks and a grove of bananas momentarily take our minds off the hot dusty trail.

Butterflies and a scarlet tanager rise from an area of great, green elephant's ears set off by an occasional bird of paradise blossom.

1:10 p. m.

Two houses, two shacks, and two men with a white horse. We lean over to shake hands with both men but not the white horse. For all the world, it's like grabbing for the brass ring at a merry-go-round.

1:20 p. m.

At least the way, if hot, is not monotonous. A house, seven horses,

red plants and tall, spiky pampas grass afford new points of interest. Here's a ford at which another woman stands washing dishes, despite the fact that she is almost surrounded by pigs. The girl sports gold earrings and a necklace. Obviously, she's a friend of the Sergeant so we pass the time of day. On Peralta's assurance that the water is all right, I bravely take a drink, upstream from those pigs.

A bamboo-railed, narrow log serves as a bridge for those few who venture forth afoot in this predominantly saddle-horse-conscious country. Mounted, we wade the ford and pass on up the other side through a grove of graceful, pale green, willowy bamboos to enter a very quiet, gloriously beautiful, cool glen. Enormous tree ferns add to the welcome shade. It's just past high noon, and it can be hot in the tropics right about this time of day. In eight days, I've learned that, if nothing else.

*1:50 p. m.*

A winding woodland path, leafy and cool, carries us up quite a rise from that last little river, revealing another lovely panorama of dramatic hill country. Though I have no reason to suspect it so soon, perhaps we're getting nearer to that Chiriquí River I've heard so much about.

Isolated, thatched huts appear occasionally, but for the most part they are very, very far off our road, and there is never anyone in them.

The trail weaves along a steep drop, with only an eighteen inch clearance, reminding me of the sixteen hours I spent muleback in the Grand Canyon going down to the banks of the Colorado. It was at least seventeen years ago, but I vividly remember how petrified I was the entire trip fearing I'd fall overboard at any and every turn.

*2:15 p. m.*

We see a couple of gullies. They're not large enough to be called ravines, but since one has a bit of water left in it, we stop for a brief rest. Again my helmet serves as cup and washbasin. Peralta believes we should make the Chiriquí by three-thirty.

*2:50 p. m.*

He guesses wrongly by a half hour, but finally both dismount for the steepest descent of the entire hundred miles, the seven hundred and fifty foot drop to the Chiriquí which we can hear but not see, somewhere below. Slipping, sliding, stumbling, I lead the mule down the winding, narrow path, rough with nasty little loose stones.

There is an excellent chance of falling. I bang my knees on a log.

Maybe I was a little previous in giving Aroya all that adhesive tape. At precisely three, we start to cross or rather splash up through the rough waters of the Chiriquí. We go some two hundred feet before we can find any place to climb out on the far side. A two hundred and fifty foot sheer cliff faces us. It's the swiftest river I've negotiated. Even the mule has great difficulty in finding footholds along the dangerous river bottom completely carpeted with submerged, slippery round rocks. What the Chiriquí lacks in size (it's only thirty or forty feet wide), it makes up in its ornery, treacherous rapids.

3:23 p. m.

Clambering up the far bank, we've earned a rest and a bite. It's more than nine hours since I've eaten anything. Aggravated by six or seven hours of rough mountain riding, my stomach thinks my throat has been cut. Our frugal lunch consists of those three hardboiled eggs which I share with Peralta, while he in turn shares his hunk of dark brown, very coarse and very sweet sugar with me.

Peralta guesses we are halfway to El Volcan. I consider him unduly pessimistic as that will mean a twelve or thirteen hour total, as against the estimated nine. He tosses me a bone of questionable comfort by observing that after the next two hours steady uphill grind to Arelle, we should have an almost entirely level road to El Volcan.

It gets darker as rain once more threatens. Blackbirds, with tails as long as their bodies, dart about among huge ferns. Farther along the way is a large tree, covered from top to bottom with few leaves, but with a waterfall of lavender, wistaria-like blossoms.

Rain falls as we get into the two mackintoshes the sergeant has thoughtfully brought along, strapped to his pommel.

4:15 p. m.

For the next half hour, we plod along, sometimes riding, sometimes walking, observing a few scattered cabins far off to right and left. I still cannot understand why almost no houses are built beside the trail.

4:50 p. m.

Even Peralta loses his way, though for just a brief period. I dismount for the hundredth time, at least so it seems to me. Now we're off on the right trail again with Peralta's promise that nothing lies ahead but *muy chiquitos montes*, that is, very, very small mountains. If he'd only call them hills, I'd have more courage. We've been steadily ascending

mountains for eight hours, up, up, up, with rarely more than an eighth-mile straightaway.

Man bites dog, or rather a Panama trail version of the expression, as this time I step on the mule's heels. In my anxiety to get to El Volcan before dark, I'm driving him before me. No hard feelings. It's generally the other way about, and anyway, my desire to save him carrying my weight is the sole reason I'm not dozing up in the saddle. I think he fully understands.

5:15 p. m.

As more horsemen pass, we hear Indians shouting far off down along the mountains. Just why they do I can't think, nor will my guide tell me. I recall, though, that "Shorty" Lewis, the San José engineer, told me of a similar experience as he rode through similarly remote Panama country. He called it Indian "radio." It seems the shouts were signals down the trail that strangers were approaching.

In the shadowy twilight, crimson bird of paradise flowers are sharply silhouetted.

5:25 p. m.

Here's a quite substantial, small wooden cottage. Unlike its predecessors, it stands hospitably right alongside the road. A flower garden blooms invitingly at the entrance gate, and I accept the "invitation," eagerly passing 'round to the back door, as my companion says it is owned by a *compatriota* or fellow-American.

A kindly, elderly lady greets me with a glass of ice cold water which I drink while enjoying a closer view of her so typically American flower garden. Easter lilies, crimson ramblers, amaryllis, phlox, hibiscus and I don't know how many other varieties make me even more homesick for the "Briar Patch," five or six thousand miles up north. This is the home of the W. F. Houx family out of California decades ago.

5:30 p. m.

My hostess reports that after about ten minutes ride we shall cross the Volcan River. From there it should be but a mile and a half to town.

Mounting, we hurry on. It's getting dark. As we pass up the road, two horsemen say Volcan is one hour's ride. Even at that, we should arrive by seven instead of midnight.

In the failing light, great, long, white Angel Trumpet tree flowers stand out like ghosts. By legend, they are somewhat mysterious for if

one breathes of them too deeply, a sound sleep comes on. I'm so dog-tired now, though, that I'm not going to require any botanical sedative tonight.

A two foot stone monument bearing hieroglyphics, a rare Indian antiquity, stands unguarded and unmolested to the left of our trail. What a museum piece!

5:45 *p. m.*

A miscellaneous jumble of boys, horses and a pack mule hurry by in the opposite direction just as we cross the Río Barillo. An almost full moon shines down on us. How early and how quickly darkness falls here. The mule takes a great draught from the wide, cool rapids, preparatory to climbing what he and I both fervently hope to be the last ravine of a most ravine-full day.

Reaching the top, we encounter other burnt fields, made all the more eerie by the paradox of that great, fat silver moon well up over a hill to the right. To the left, which I am sure is the east, there still remains a bright sunset. Are we by error headed back north? Heaven forbid.

Regardless of whether we are on the correct road or not, this is indeed a fairyland. Among the pines huge fireflies float lazily about, while in the deep recesses of the boughs evening birds sing. There's a sawmill in the vicinity, so our hoofbeats, muffled by sawdust surfacing, don't break in on the lovely choir of birds, insects and tree toads.

Above the dark, black-green, uppermost boughs of this pine forest, the moon and a myriad of extra brilliant stars filter through to illuminate the first wagon tracks I've seen in nine days except for the short stretch between the two Frontier Stations.

6:00 *p. m.*

I dismount, just for the sheer joy of walking in the magic moonlight along the soft carpet of sawdust and fragrant pine needles. Partially it's the natural setting, and partially the tremendous relief at having finally come to the end of a strenuous, but oh, such an exciting days experience.

The moon shines over my left shoulder for luck, just as it should. Though I have no penny in my pocket, I am by the sheerest coincidence carrying along five tiny céntimos, its Costa Rican equivalent, so I guess under the abnormal geographical conditions that exist, the combination charm may work anyway. It has already, for how very few mortals can

ever enjoy such a marvelous trip? It's just one of the thousand reasons why I am the most fortunate soul in all the world.

Unnoticed in the starlight and shielded by the good little dun mule, I fall to my knees and thank God for these many blessings, which are and always have been without number.

7:00 p. m.

We do make it by seven right on the button. We bypass to the far side of the shabby but so, so welcome settlement of El Volcan which consists of maybe fifty houses, three or four stores, and even a dancing pavilion. This last is brilliantly lighted. A native orchestra of five pieces gives out with weird music that suggests Hawaii more than Latin America. Perhaps a dozen couples are dancing.

7:05 p. m.

Barely missing decapitation by riding under two treacherous neck-high wires strung across our path, we dismount at the door of the miniature regional police shack. On the wall is a sign reading "*Duerme con las ventanas abiertas*" (Sleep with the windows open). This is a physically impossible injunction at Santa Clara and Javilla where there are no windows at all. It's also a decidedly different arrangement from that practiced in parts of the Virgin Islands where I lived for a while. There, many natives not only put up solid shutters and closed the doors of their ten by ten huts all night, but compounded a felony by stuffing keyholes and cracks with paper to keep out the mugajumbees or evil spirits. Despite being so shut in, a family of six or eight people might sleep in a single room.

The sergeant unsaddles both mule and mare and leads them to a field in the rear of the station for a well deserved rest before their night meal.

He and I saunter down to the nearest store. I treat to Coca Colas for Peralta and grain for both our animals, an unusual supper, since from cradle to grave they ordinarily subsist on little but grazing. Next I buy two cans of California preserved peaches and cherries for my guide to take back to his family in Cañas Gordas.

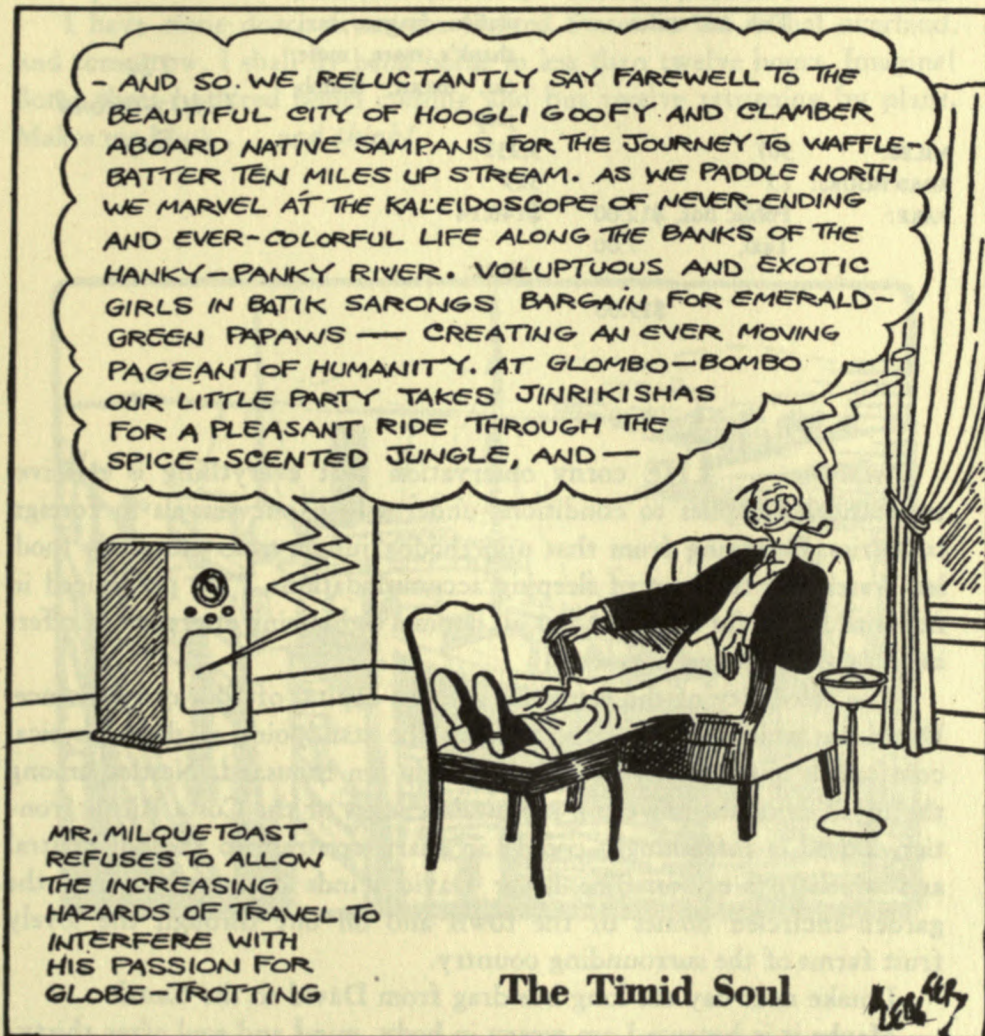
For two hours I wander up and down the main street of El Volcan seeking a stray car, bus, or truck that may be making a late night trip to David, thirty-eight miles south on a hard-surface, all-weather road. Regrettably, the public *camioneta* left at six. That would have cost but a dollar and a half. The long ride has twisted my bean, I guess, but there's a supremely comfortable modern hotel awaiting me in David,



and I haven't had a hot bath in nine days. Consequently, I fall victim to a swindler who charges twelve dollars for the hour run via Concepción, the only sizeable town on the way.

It's worth it. I get out at the luxurious Hotel Nacional, built only last year, to enjoy the indescribable bliss of a shower, a Simmons mattress, immaculate bed linen, electric lights and an ample supply of safe ice cold water in clean glasses.

I'm most awfully happy with a contentment exceeded only by my sleepiness. It's just past midnight, Costa Rica time (eleven-thirty in Panama), and I've been on the go nineteen hours.



## Ditch in Extremus and "The Zone"

|             | <i>For the Day</i>                       | <i>For the Trip</i>   |                                      |
|-------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| ROUTE:      | David to Panama City,<br>Panama Canal    | Laredo to Panama City,<br>Panama Canal  |                                      |
| VIA:        | Public bus, 200 miles<br>Taxi, 107 miles | Public bus, truck, horse,<br>station wagon, taxi,<br>shank's mare, mule,<br>car, oxcart, thumb,<br>jeep | <i>The<br/>Thirty-second<br/>Day</i> |
| MILES:      | 307                                      | 3,231   |                                      |
| ROAD HOURS: | 15                                       | 329   |                                      |
| FARE:       | Public bus, \$12.00<br>Taxi, 7.00        | \$140.14  |                                      |
|             | —————<br>\$19.00                         |   |                                      |

THE corny observation that everything is relative, emphatically applies to conditions under which one travels in foreign countries. Emerging from that unorthodox jungle trek with little food, less water and the least of sleeping accommodations, I am prejudiced in my enthusiasm for David. After all, from a sightseeing approach, it offers only a cathedral and a market.

The third city of the Republic and the capital of Chiriquí Province, David has much to commend it from the standpoint of sheer physical comfort in spite of its population of only ten thousand. Nestled among the foothills of the towering mountain ranges of the Costa Rican frontier, David is refreshingly coolish in sharp contrast to the hot central and southern sections. The River David winds its course among the garden-encircled homes of the town and on out through the lovely fruit farms of the surrounding country.

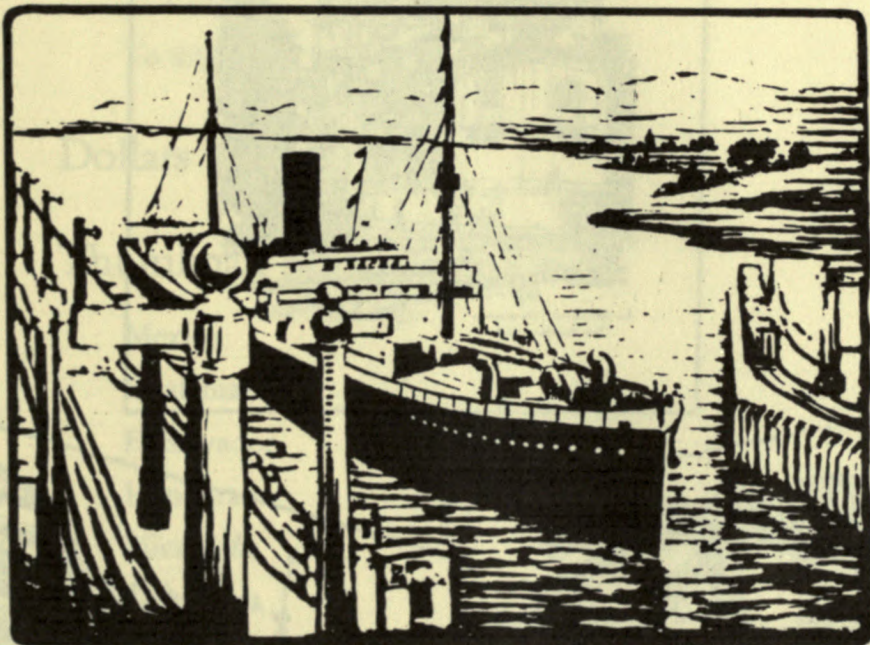
I make next day the long bus drag from David to the Canal.

Maybe it is because I am weary in body, mind and soul after thirty-

one days of strenuous travel; maybe it is because I have just traversed the majestic mountains and the jungles of the Chiriquí, but I confess this final stretch to be a dull, disappointing anticlimax to an otherwise amazing and most enjoyable thirty-three hundred mile travel experience. For the most part, the country proves flat, the weather is hot, and there are no towns in the three hundred and seven miles down from David to Panama worthy of any special note. True to form, the native bus breaks down after two hundred miles.

As impatient as all gringo travelers to get to my destination, in this instance the Panama Canal itself, I am again victimized by a private taxi operator for the balance of the way.

I have come down from the United States to the Canal overland, and tomorrow, I shall fly back home in less than twelve hours. Imagine! Some three hundred hours coming and but twelve returning by plane. Makes me blink . . . and *think!*





Cathedral of Old Panama.  
Panama Viejo, La Catedral.



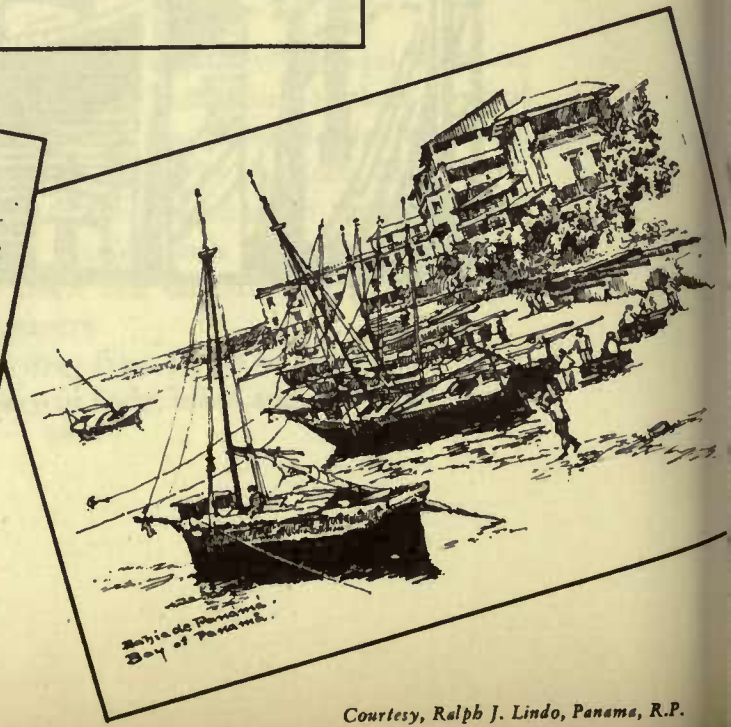
RURAL PANAMA



La Catedral, Panamá.  
The Cathedral.

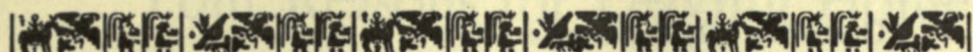


Taboga, R.P.



Bahía de Panamá.  
Bay of Panamá.

PART THREE



*Your Proposed Trip*

Your Reasons for Leaving Home

Thomas-Stephens Mexican "Expedition"—1934

Crossing the Border

To the Border and Back

Dollars and Days

Thumbnail Sketches

Mexico

Guatemala

El Salvador

Honduras

Nicaragua

Costa Rica

Panama

Panama Canal Zone

## Road Conditions and Available Transportation

Laredo to Mexico City

Mexico City to Oaxaca

Oaxaca to Guatemala City

Guatemala City to Managua

(San Salvador to San Lorenzo, Honduras)

Managua to San José

San José to David

David to the Panama Canal



## Your Reasons for Leaving Home

WHEN PLANNING foreign travel, a fairly precise objective is your best assurance of success. It was Kemmerer, was it not, who said a problem clearly stated was a problem half solved? Have some sound reason for leaving home, some clean-cut goal. Think the itinerary through thoroughly. That of itself should be half the fun. But don't be overambitious with your blueprint. Plan the improbable if you must, but leave the impossible for next year. Nor be too optimistic. The Mexicans, who take more time than we and think clearly, remind us it is quite as essential to learn to fall as to learn to ride. As with games, to win or to lose is not all-important. Just figuring out some fairly definite plan with a nice little goal tied to its tail and then striving for it affords nearly as much joy as the journey itself.

Were it not so, how sparsely populated the golf courses would be. Legion is the number of duffers who habitually tee off with par in their minds only to return with murder in their eyes and cards in the high nineties hidden in their hind pockets.

Plan where you're going and yet more important, why you're going. You can't complain of lack of choice. Public buses, trains and planes have woven a veritable web over a wide expanse of Spanish America. The question of why you go is entirely too personal to permit of intimate discussion here. Health, sport, study, sightseeing, and even just plain hell-raising are but a few obvious leads. Nor should we overlook the subtle yet vastly more exciting game of hide and seek with your creditors or the little wife's attorney.

For my part, choosing an objective south of the border was simple. Fascinated since childhood by Spanish America, I had made my initial trip to the Caribbean in 1910. The advent of the Pan American Highway intensified this interest and has continued to do so ever since.

In 1934, one year before the Laredo/Mexico City stretch officially opened, four of us motored from New Jersey to Puebla, eighty-four miles south of Mexico City. The Mexican consul in New York had cautioned (and I recall his precise phraseology) "that an impenetrable fog

settles over these mountains every night of the year." Yet we made it and the almost seven thousand mile excursion proved highly successful.

My wife and I had as fellow passengers the priceless ingredient of any successful trip, perfect traveling companions in the fine young English couple that accompanied us. It was pioneer motoring with the bark on all right, all right, for as yet there was no road. Thousands of peon laborers, stripped to the waist, sweated under the tropical sun, armed with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows, to abet steam shovels and bulldozers to bring into being that first complete all-weather seven hundred fifty-seven mile strip from Texas to Mexico City.

From start to finish there occurred a succession of surprises. At the border we discovered the right of way was too narrow to permit continuing with our four bunk trailer. That caudal appendage was put on ice in Laredo pending our return. The second night out we proved the accuracy of the Mexican consul's warning as to "impenetrable fog settling over these mountains every night of the year." It did just that, effecting such a delightful combination with mud ruts on the ten foot right of way that we mired to the hubs outside of Tamazunchale. There we stuck until morning when the car was extricated with the help of thirty Indians and an Allis Chalmers tractor. During that night, and it seemed an extraordinarily long one, pigs ran in and out from under the car while drunken Otomí Indians flopped about just beyond our windows.

That narrow ten foot ribbon then masquerading as a highway would have been alarming enough on a level, straight road, but we had chosen as our big bog a mountainous section of serpentine roadway with sheer drops of eight hundred or nine hundred feet off the side. Had we known of this beforehand, I, for one, would never have gone as I become dizzy even standing on a kitchen table. Ignorance rather than courage won us the reputation of being one of the first fifty cars to make that Laredo/Mexico City run.

We pushed on after breakfasting in a Road Construction Camp cookshack, presided over by a good-natured Chinese chef. Later we passed one of the first cars we had seen in five hundred miles. Naturally, it just had to be at the road's highest and most precipitous spot between Tamazunchale and Jacala. Doubt this, if you must, but it's gospel truth for I have a photo to prove it. (It must be a good show; the billboards all say so.) The passageway was so narrow and the cliff so steep that our two cars passed only by bending back the license plates a scant inch.



Like Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them. Definitely, Class III for me. Half of the time I was so scared I wouldn't even remain in the car, much less drive. That was left entirely to my good neighbor, one of the most steady, brilliant drivers I've ever seen.

Huge boulders littered the highway almost to the extent of a complete barricade. I was forever jumping out, running ahead and helping the laborers heave the rocks out of our way. I was not being bolder than the others, but was actuated solely by abject fear that the car would catapult over the steep mountainside.

Rivers added to the thrill for in those first years there were no bridges whatsoever, merely primitive hand-poled ferries.

Yet the highway provided ample compensations. Even the laborers, who received but a peso (then thirty-six cents) a day, were picturesque. Invariably dressed in white cotton pants, blouses when the sun wasn't too hot, huge sombreros and coarse sandals, three thousand of them camped with their families in a most informal, nomadic sort of way, right along the road.

Five out of every seven nights were tranquil enough, but Saturdays and Sundays were always messed up with brawls, stabbings and kindred amenities that grew out of the week's pay-off aggravated by no place to go and nothing to do. It was life in the raw, particularly in the vicinity of the tiny mile-high mountain town of Jacala.

English was unknown. So for the most part were Americans, to say nothing of high American prices. At Tamazunchale, just north of Jacala, we paid thirty-six cents for a day's lodging and three meals. Times have changed, so don't let that low figure of '34 put any crazy notions in your head.

A young Mexican schoolmaster invited us to a dance one night, warning of a sign on the wall which, freely translated, read: "Gentlemen will kindly discard their cigarettes and cigar butts with care as many of the ladies are dancing in their bare feet." The apprehension was fully justified. Many of the Otomí belles danced sans shoes, sans stockings, sans even sandals.

A multiple disappointment dogged our "tire-tracks" all the way down through this lonely, remote section. We'd been thrilled by romantic tales of darned good-looking Mexican desperadoes dramatically snatching the wives of intrepid tourists. But nothing happened. As a result, our wives were crestfallen. Had the bandits known how charming were

our wives, they'd have been equally crestfallen. Were I a good-natured liar I'd say, in an attempt to be funny, that we two husbands were even more crestfallen at missing the opportunity to do Mexico's hot spots as wild bachelors.

Mexico City proved clean, quiet, cool, safe, hospitable to an alarming degree—precisely as most northerners would ignorantly expect a tropical city not to be. Our only emotional upset occurred one evening when, upon leaving a small Mexican restaurant, we noticed a huge glass bowl chock-full of what to all intents and purposes were luscious, crisp, French fried potatoes. My friend's wife was tempted, then yielded and waxed lavish in her praise of these newly discovered tidbits. What were they? Though the official interpreter for our quartette, I couldn't understand when the proprietor patiently repeated over and over again the Spanish name. Disgusted with my ignorance and insistent upon learning how to re-order, our courageous lady proceeded out into the street waving the last half-consumed delicacy and accosting every passerby with the one Spanish phrase she'd learned: "*Cómo se llama esta?*" ("What do you call this?") Finally, a good-looking but somewhat embarrassed young Mexican tactfully led me aside to clear the mystery. She'd been munching four inch French fried caterpillars—the fat juicy species which thrives at the base of cactus plants.

Oh, yes, there was another upset. This, too, was of a linguistic turn. Again as sole "master" of Spanish, I introduced our group to an attractive young Mexican girl whom I had just met for the first time. To break the ice and start the conversational ball rolling, I asked our new friend if she spoke any English, explaining that my three companions were limited to "What do you call that?" Why, yes, she knew just two words. My curiosity aroused (and that's where I stepped on an Emily Post banana peel), I insisted she tell what she'd mastered. Without a split second's hesitancy she popped out with "good night" and "water-closet." Momentarily shocked, I later regained enough wind to spurt back in my most elegant Castilian: "Well, sister, as long as you had to confine your English to but a couple of phrases, I award you the chinchilla pipe cleaners for perfection in basic selectivity, if nothing else." Merely another evidence of the realistic approach to life below the border.

I append the log of that memorable excursion. Luckily for you readers, it all happened fourteen years ago. I can pester you with no other notes.

THOMAS-STEPHENS MEXICAN "EXPEDITION"—1934

|                     |  |                       |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|
| DRAMATIS PERSONAE   | Fly guard—Marjorie Thomas  | Pilot—Alice Stephens  |
|                     | Engineer—Leslie Thomas   | Purser—Roger Stephens |
| TIME:               | 34 days, March 31st, 1934 to May 3rd, 1934 inclusive.  |                       |
| ITINERARY (STATES): | UNITED STATES  | Alabama               |
|                     | New Jersey   | Mississippi           |
|                     | Pennsylvania   | Louisiana             |
|                     | Maryland   | Texas                 |
|                     | Delaware   | MEXICO                |
|                     | D. of Columbia   | Nuevo Leon            |
|                     | Virginia   | Tamaulipas            |
|                     | North Carolina   | San Luis Potosí       |
|                     | South Carolina   | Hidalgo               |
|                     | Georgia  | Mexico (State)        |
|                     |  | Mexico (Fed. Dist.)   |
|                     |  | Puebla                |
|                     |  | UNITED STATES         |
|                     |  | Texas                 |
|                     |  | Arkansas              |
|                     |  | Tennessee             |
|                     |  | West Virginia         |
|                     |  | Virginia              |
|                     |  | D. of Columbia        |
|                     |  | Maryland              |
|                     |  | Delaware              |
|                     |  | Pennsylvania          |
|                     |  | New Jersey            |
| MILEAGE:            | Total: 6,671 miles (1,759 miles in Mexico)   |                       |
|                     | Daily average (total elapsed time)   | 196.2 miles           |
|                     | *Westfield to Mexico City (via Atlanta)  | 3,379 miles           |
|                     | Westfield to Mexican Border  | 2,622 miles           |
|                     | EXPENSES   |                       |
| PRELIMINARY:        | Trailer License and Tires  | \$22.30               |
|                     | Automobile Tires   | 55.21                 |
|                     | Original Food Purchases  | 60.53                 |
|                     |  | \$138.04              |
| AUTOMOBILE:         | Gasoline—653 gallons @ .221  | \$144.32              |
|                     | Oil—63.5 quarts @ .235   | 14.92                 |
|                     | San Antonio Tire   | 11.53                 |
|                     | Repairs, Greasing, etc.  | 67.75                 |
|                     |  | 238.52                |
| MEALS:              | Dinner at restaurants averaged .52 per person.   |                       |
|                     | Breakfast and luncheon in trailer averaged .23 per meal per person   |                       |
|                     |  | 121.52                |
| LODGING:            | Lived in trailer to and from border with three stops at roadside camps. In Mexico, lodging averaged about .48 per person per day |                       |
|                     |  | 12.54                 |
| TOLLS:              | Bridges in United States   | \$ 3.00               |
|                     | Ferries in Mexico (6)  | 1.05                  |
|                     |  | 4.05                  |
|                     |  | \$514.67              |
|                     | Cost per day per person  | \$3.79                |
|                     | Cost per person for the entire 6,671-mile, 34-day trip   | \$128.92              |

Wanderlust is a vile disease. Mexicanitis is one of the most virulent types I know. Since that 1934 safari, my wife and I have been all too willing victims.

It wasn't long thereafter that we made the trip to Mexico City, but by train. Physically more comfortable, yet not one-tenth as exciting,

\*The "expedition" started at Westfield, New Jersey, twenty-five miles south-west of New York City.

colorful or enjoyable, it was far removed from my basic idea to "do the Highway." I just couldn't get the bug out of my bonnet; sooner or later I just HAD to go Down That Pan American Highway.

No section of our universe is richer in less materialistic and more aesthetic values than Latin America. These finer intangibles are charmingly described by H. M. Tomlinson in his delightful *The Sea and the Jungle*\* with whose permission I am happy to quote this gem:

I myself learned that the treasures found in travel, the chance rewards of travel which make it worthwhile, cannot be accounted for beforehand, and seldom are matters a listener would care to hear about afterward; for they have no substance. They are no matter. They are untranslatable from their time and place; and like the man who unwittingly lies down to sleep on the tumulus where the little people dance on midsummer night, and dreams that in the place where man has never been his pockets were filled with fairy gold, waking to find pebbles there instead, so the traveler cannot prove the dreams he had, showing us only pebbles when he tries. Such fair things cannot be taken from the magic moment. They are but filmy, high in the ceiling of your thoughts for so brief a while, rosy and sunlit by the chance of the light, transitory, melting as you watch.

\* Published by E. P. Dutton & Co. in the United States.



## Crossing the Border

HERE'S where you must change your money and should change your frame of mind. Be prepared to find both people and customs vastly different from those in the States, sometimes irritatingly so. The solution? Merely bear in mind that *you* are the foreigner, the stranger within the gates. Refrain from criticism as you would in the home of a neighbor back in your own town.

The formalities of entry into and departure from Mexico are most simple. All you need is a tourist card which can be obtained from your nearest Mexican Consul by mail, or if you wish, right at the frontier. It'll be valid for six months. What more could one ask? Kids under sixteen may be included on the card of their parents. Mexican customs officials, ever courteous, examine and stamp your card and baggage and cheerfully welcome you to their marvelous country.

You may leave Mexico either by the port of entry or, to tell the truth, any other port that may better suit your fancy. Your tourist card, however, must be returned for cancellation as you cross back into the United States.

Another nice little courtesy, the border (at least at Laredo) is open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

### TO THE BORDER AND BACK

You must consider the time required between your home city and the Mexican border. I've covered it by car, by train, by plane and by hitch-hiking. Choose your own.

As a rough yardstick and by no means a precise one, the fare from New York to Laredo by bus costs about \$35.00, taking three days; by rail, it costs about \$60.00 and takes three days. By air, it costs about \$109.00 and requires ten hours. To be sure, bus and rail schedules require day and night travel. But don't get scared at the prospect. You may, without extra charge, stop off over night at any or all of a dozen colorful cities, such as, Washington, Atlanta, New Orleans or San Antonio.

Daily airplane service makes the return trip from Panama to the States (Miami) in five and three-quarter hours for \$120.00. Steamers take about five days and cost somewhere around \$140.00.

You'll hear much loose talk about bottlenecks and the consequent improbability of getting back home in a hurry. Don't take the matter too seriously either. Time before last when I went through Central America, the war was on and all hands said I'd never get a plane north till kingdom come. Maybe I was just plain lucky but here's precisely what happened. At nine a. m. (without previous reservation or priority of any character), I stepped up to the airline ticket window and inquired facetiously if anybody with a booked passage for Miami had that morning considerably busted a leg so that I might avail myself of the space. By golly, some good soul had apparently done just that, for the agent assured me a seat on the 3:25 flight. In less than twelve hours I was back in the States. Almost invariably, "love will find a way," yes, even with airline bottlenecks. Don't give up too easily or believe half you hear.



## Dollars and Days

REVERTING to an earlier chapter, the cost will, in the last analysis, "depend entirely upon yourself, madam," with one exception, that of transportation. What you eat and where you sleep are up to you. Though seven days without food make one weak, hunger strikers have frequently subsisted for extended periods on air and water. The average peon spends less than two bits daily for his *cafecito*, tortillas and frijoles. The tropical combination of balmy night air, indulgent policemen and bench-filled plazas in every hamlet makes for economical lodging if you avoid the rainy season.

However, unless you share with me a love of bumming rides, you're up against tangible outlays involved in getting there and coming back. So much for the financial picture in this instance, and it figures about one hundred dollars for transportation over three thousand miles through no less than seven colorful countries.

Now we're bang up against that all-important element of time. Honestly, is it so all-fired, all-important after all? "Time was made for slaves" and theoretically at least, slavery was abolished back in the early 1860's.

Many suffer distorted perspective with regard to a few extra days. 'Tis ever so with us Americans. Why don't we subscribe to the too often maligned *mañana* habit as a fair exchange for our national fetish of "hurry, hurry, hurry"? If you're going to make the trip at all, admit that in all likelihood it will be the one and only adventure of its kind and spend an extra week or so. The good die young and who can tell, you may drop dead any day now. So prepare for Operation Siesta recalling that:

"While we live, let's live in clover;

For when we're dead, we're dead all over!"

The following schedule has been prepared with minima in mind. To this must be added, of course, several days leeway for making con-

nections plus such extra time as you may elect to spend sightseeing in various towns Down That Pan American Highway.

THE PRESENT DOLLARS AND DAYS PICTURE

|            |   |            |          |
|------------|---|------------|----------|
| Afoot      | Laredo, Texas, to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico<br>via the International Bridge..... | 5 minutes  | \$ .05   |
| Public Bus | Nuevo Laredo to Mexico City (2nd Class).....                                | 1½ days    | 6.12     |
| " "        | Mexico City to Oaxaca.....  | 1 day      | 4.16     |
| " "        | Oaxaca to Tehuantepec.....  | 1 day      | 4.00     |
| " "        | Tehuantepec to Juchitan.....  | 2 hours    | .40      |
| Railroad   | Juchitan to Tapachula.....  | 2 days     | 2.92     |
| Public Bus | Tapachula to Quezaltenango, Guatemala.....                                  | 1 day      | 5.00     |
| " "        | Quezaltenango to Guatemala City.....  | 1 day      | 5.00     |
| " "        | Guatemala City to San Salvador, El Salvador.....                            | 1 day      | 5.00     |
| " "        | San Salvador to Managua, Nicaragua.....                                     | 2 days     | 12.00    |
| Plane      | Managua to San José, Costa Rica.....  | 70 minutes | 19.00    |
| Public Bus | San José to San Isidro del General.....                                     | 1 day      | 5.00     |
| " "        | Return from San Isidro to San José.....                                     | 1 day      | 5.00     |
| Plane      | San José to David, Panama.....  | 85 minutes | 17.00    |
| Public Bus | David to the Panama Canal.....  | 1 day      | 10.00    |
|            | Minimum elapsed travel time.....approx.                                     | 13 days    | \$100.65 |

For your proposed trip, I urge three deviations from my own thirty-two day trek. To conserve time and to eliminate the few really ornery sections, it is respectfully recommended:

*That in Mexico* you eliminate entirely the Tehuantepec/Comitan section as presently no public bus makes the run beyond Trinitaria that lies fifty miles from the Guatemala line. Yes, you can drive your own car through to Comitan but it's impossible to go beyond either to Tapachula or on to Guatemala. No wheeled vehicle can get to Tapachula nor is it likely that one can for two to three years. Go by train from Juchitan to Tapachula and eliminate another bug, the tough sixty-five mile hike over the Guatemalan Mayan Highlands.

*That in Nicaragua* you take a plane from Managua to San José because there is no bus service from Rivas, Nicaragua, to La Cruz, Costa Rica. This will cost you \$19.00 and will take seventy minutes. It's too bad this messy little stretch of only thirty-seven miles gums things up. It's the only gap in public bus service from Tapachula, Mexico, to San Isidro del General, Costa Rica, a distance of twelve hundred miles through Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

*That in Costa Rica* you return from San Isidro del General to San



José and fly from there to David, Panama. This will cost \$17.00 and take eighty-five minutes. Better still, save money and gain adventure. Catch a local plane from San Isidro to La Cuesta, Costa Rica, then walk three or four miles via a comfortably wide and flat country road across the Panamanian border to Progreso. From there two trains run each day to David.

Transportation cost me \$140.14 from Texas to the Canal; yours can be made for just about \$100.00! The Pan American Highway is never static.

Every day in every way it's getting better. From a construction angle there's something doing all the time. The sun never sets but what some part of some section hasn't been improved. Local and express bus services keep apace. Your adventure already promises far easier navigation than I experienced some months back.



# Thumbnail Sketches

## MEXICO

Non-aboriginal Mexico dates back to 1519 when doughty Cortés arrived from Spain with less than five hundred foot soldiers and twenty horses, that daring nucleus which in time was ruthlessly to conquer half a continent. Deriving its name from *Mecia* by which the Aztecs were known, this neighbor separated from us by only the narrow Rio Grande enjoys a culture antedating by centuries that of our own Pilgrims.

Though its coastlines total nearly six thousand miles (sixteen hundred on the Atlantic and another forty-two hundred on the Pacific and Lower California Gulf), few seaports afford adequate wharfage facilities for ocean liners. Similarly, though innumerable rivers flow within the borders of Mexico, not more than a half dozen permit navigation by other than canoes. This applies even to the Rio Grande, for in the dry season few sections of its one thousand mile course accommodate any but the light draft native boats.

The terrain, like ancient Gaul, is divided into three parts. There are the low coastal plains, then the great central and northern plateaus rising from three thousand to eight thousand feet, and finally the huge Sierra Madre Mountains which rise two miles in some places and form a backdrop for the plateaus. Remote Indian settlements are found in these ranges even beyond the ten thousand foot timber line.

Though fabulously rich in mineral deposits, Mexico is, as everyone knows, predominantly agricultural. Seventy-five percent of its population cultivate thirty million acres. Harvests are as diversified as the erratic altitudes themselves, and it is claimed Mexico grows a wider variety of products than any territory of equal area in the entire world. Corn is the leading crop and is grown on about one-fourth of the acreage. *Frijoles* (beans) and *garbanzos* (chick peas) are extensively cultivated. Cotton occupies approximately seven hundred thousand acres. Within the last few years Mexico has become one of the world's leading banana

exporters. Wheat is grown on one million, three hundred thousand acres. Chicle, coffee, cocoa, vegetables and fruit are also cultivated extensively.

Twenty-eight states, three territories, and a federal district corresponding to our District of Columbia form the governmental setup closely resembling our own. Ten percent of its population are of European blood, mostly Spanish, and thirty percent are of pure Indian extraction. No less than fifty separate and distinct tribes and dialects are officially recognized. The remaining sixty percent are known as *mestizos* or "of mixed origin."

Mexico is essentially a land of dramatic contrasts. It has:

*Climates* that vary from the heat of the steamy, swampy jungles of the coastal plains to the cold, thin, dry air of the perpetually snow-capped volcanic peaks of Orizaba, "Popo" and the "Sleeping Lady."

*Transportation* from oxcarts and burros, facetiously known as Mexican motorcycles, to lightning-like planes of the latest models.

*Architecture* running the whole constructional range from jungle palm-thatched huts to more ultramodernistic edifices than I've ever laid eyes upon in the States.

*Social Customs* from the primitive, naive ways of four hundred years ago to the superficial sophistication of Mexico City's swanky night clubs.

*Economic Strata* representative of the most extreme opposites. On one hand are millions of penniless (or rather centavo-less) peons precariously existing on a meager unbalanced diet of beans, rice and tortillas as against a mere handful of absentee landowners and industrialists leading luxurious lives in the nation's capital and principal cities. Other than in Mexico City there are but few corresponding to our middle class.

*Roads* from almost impassable jungle paths and oxcart trails, hub deep in mud during the four months of the rainy season, to all-weather asphalt, tree bordered and well lighted.

*Education.* In large metropolitan centers are some of the most élite cultured individuals found anywhere in this world of ours, many being graduates of the most famous universities of Europe. Yet within virtually a stone's throw, there stand in sharp and tragic contrast untold millions unable to read or write the simplest phrase. Some tribes have never had so much as the beginnings of a written language.

But out of this otherwise depressing illiterate mess, there has within the past decade appeared a cloud with a silver lining that is an inspiration

to challenge one's imagination. Mexico, more than any country on earth, excepting Russia, has waged an unremitting campaign against illiteracy. The responsibility for public education is shared by the Federal Government and the states. The former controls all schools of the Federal District and supports a number of vocational and secondary schools in the states, in addition to thirteen thousand, seven hundred rural schools, seven hundred primary schools, thirty resident schools for Indians and several farm and training schools for rural teachers. This is indeed a sharp contrast to the time of old Porfirio Diaz when reading and writing were luxuries for the wealthy. Literacy has recently risen to fifty-five percent, thanks largely to a national movement "*Uno Enseña al Otro*" ("One Teaches Another"). Every literate Mexican is supposed to teach at least one illiterate adult fellow citizen. Fernandez, my friend in Mexico City, has already four intellectual scalps dangling from his pedagogical belt, yet he's no schoolteacher. Quite to the contrary, he's a tremendously active business executive with scant time to spare on civic uplift. Mexicans take this campaign very much to heart.

One evening at Tapachula, in the southern state of Chiapas, I visited the town lockup. There I found a class of six to eight adult "cops" belatedly learning their a b c's. Just outside of Oaxaca was the tiny village of Etila which reveled in the educational glory of being the first community in the entire republic to report one hundred percent literacy. In this national urge toward better education, some villages were offering bonuses of corn or beans for learning to read and write. All over Mexico, effective brightly colored posters spread the propaganda of this movement, which in its religious fervor, reminds me of what my brother had witnessed in Russia shortly after the revolution. There in Moscow he was thrilled by groups of enthusiastic school kids parading down the streets with banners reading "Down with Illiteracy." This they did with the same exuberance of spirit as our college youth rave over a football victory by dear old What-Have-You College.

*Medical Practice* from the witch doctors of remote tribes to skilled physicians operating in the most modern of progressive hospitals. For ages formal medical knowledge was limited to those in the larger cities. Midwives or herb doctors ministered to the country peons, and Mexico's death rate was one of the highest in the world.

In 1936, Mexico's Health Department embarked upon a plan of rural medicine which revolutionized her medical practice. Pre-graduate medicos were sent into rural sections instead of serving internships in

## MEXICAN LITERACY GAINS

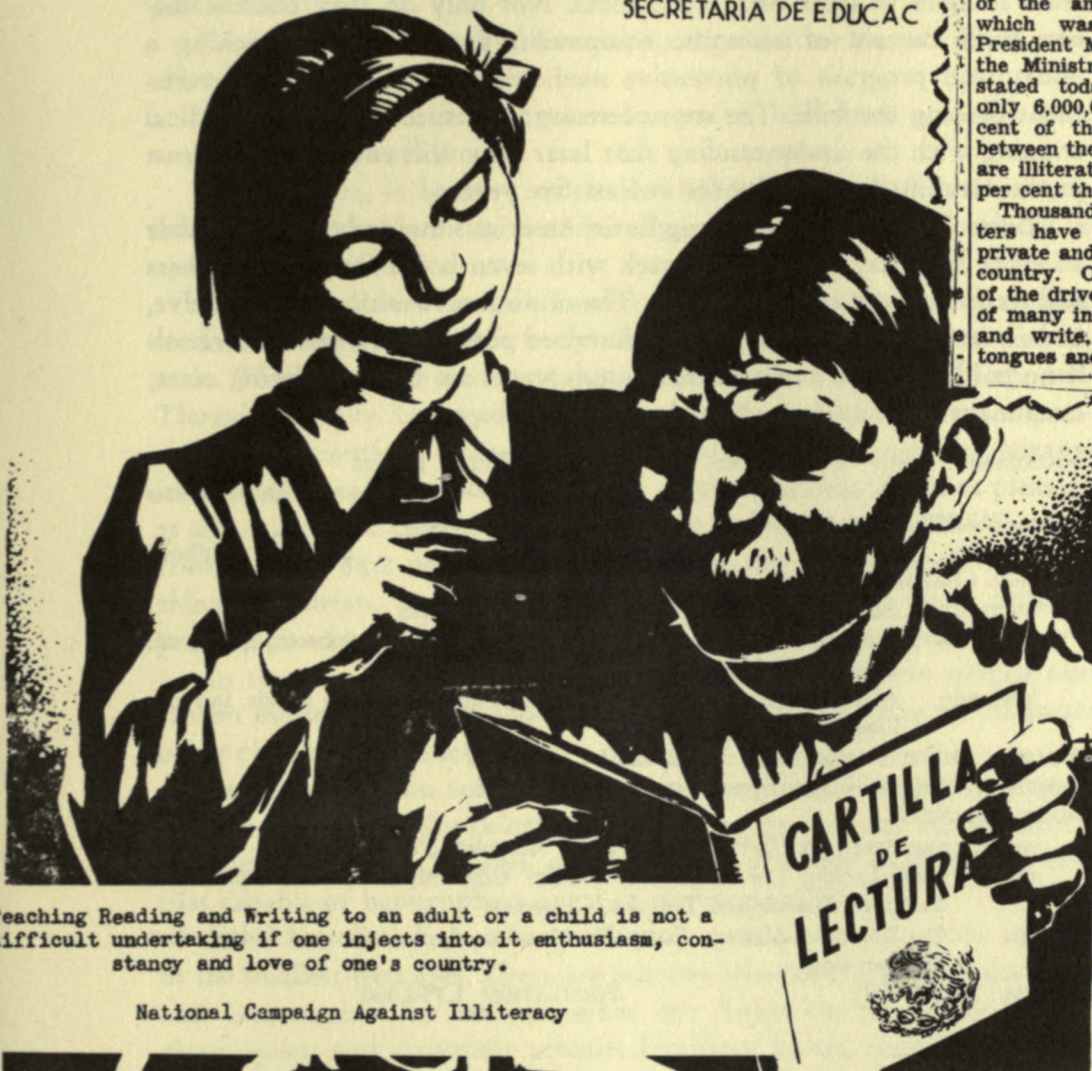
1,000,000 Learn to Read and Write in Three-Year Campaign

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

MEXICO CITY, Aug. 21 — One million more Mexicans can read and write on the third anniversary of the anti-illiteracy campaign, which was started by former President Manuel Avila Camacho, the Ministry of Public Education stated today. This means that only 6,000,000 persons, or 30 per cent of the country's population between the ages of 6 and 40 years, are illiterate, as compared with 35 per cent three years ago.

Thousands of anti-illiteracy centers have been established with private and official funds over the country. One interesting feature of the drive has been the teaching of many indigenous tribes to read and write, first in their native tongues and later in Spanish.

SECRETARIA DE EDUCACION



Teaching Reading and Writing to an adult or a child is not a difficult undertaking if one injects into it enthusiasm, constancy and love of one's country.

National Campaign Against Illiteracy

**ENSEÑAR A LEER Y A ESCRIBIR  
A UN ADULTO O A UN NIÑO  
NO ES EMPRESA DIFÍCIL  
SI SE PONE EN ELLO ENTUSIASMO  
CONSTANCIA Y AMOR A LA PATRIA  
CAMPAÑA NACIONAL CONTRA EL ANALFABETISMO**



Guatemala is the Egypt of America because of her monuments of a past civilization.

Guatemala is the Land of Eternal Spring with her remarkably agreeable climate.

Guatemala has a contemporaneous native life more colorful than anywhere in the world today.

Furthermore, it boasts a more diversified fauna and flora than any other area of similar size. Incidentally, the whole blamed country is about the size of Ohio.

Even though no National Tourist Committee ever comes into court with clean hands, I concede every claim this one advances about Guatemala. This country is a tourist's heaven on earth, if ever there were one. Though officially Guatemala is in the tropics, travelers rarely experience the discomforts commonly associated with hot countries because it is a seasonless land with one month of the year just about as pleasant as any other. The capital's mean temperature varies throughout the year from 61.2 to 68.2 degrees. Actually, due to the high altitude, it's anything but mean, particularly for us northerners who upon occasion prefer a bit of cool, fresh air to leaven our journeys in the South.

In the mountainous sections about Quezaltenango, I've darned near frozen motoring in the windswept pinewood forests, some of the passes being close to two miles high.

Guatemala's main roads are good and far-flung, the scenery superb and the natives vividly colorful, far more so than in any other Central American republic. Villages overflow with exciting hand-woven textiles capable of bankrupting any but the most adamant.

It's a tiny country at best, the most precious things often coming in the smallest packages. There are but two sizeable cities. Quezaltenango and Guatemala City are just what one hopes for in vagabonding—clean, quiet, and extremely artistic. Excellent hotels, reasonably priced, are available augmented by the most charming of economical and informal family pensions.

Guatemala is virtually free from crime, probably exceeded in this only by Iceland. A probity law requires that anyone taking public office must make an inventory at the beginning and end of his term, and if there be any discrepancy between salary and assets, a severe penalty is imposed.

Don't by-pass Guatemala, the land of the quetzal, the marimba and of high, cool mountain peaks framing the bluest of lakes. See it soon,

right away quick, even if you have to slap a second mortgage on the old farm to make an immediate trip possible. Yes, even if the mortgage has to be foreclosed, the sacrifice will be amply justified. Extravagances in this direction will never be regretted.

**BOUNDARIES:** north—Mexico east—Honduras and Atlantic Ocean  
south—Pacific and El Salvador west—Pacific Ocean and Mexico

**AREA:** about 45,000 square miles, slightly less than New York State

**POPULATION:** about 3,300,000 **GOVERNMENT:** republic **RELIGION:** Catholic

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

lowland: hot, fertile jungle along Pacific (cotton, sugar)  
undeveloped jungle at Atlantic (chicle, wood)  
highland: interior up to 8,000 feet (coffee, beans, sheep)  
mountain: Sierra Madre range with twenty-seven volcanoes

**PRINCIPAL IMPORTS:** beef, textiles, petroleum, motor vehicles

**PRINCIPAL EXPORTS:** coffee, sugar, bananas, timber, chicle

**TRANSPORTATION:**

roads: Pan American Highway, W-E 300 miles, all-weather  
4,000 miles other roads between main cities

bus: Service between capital and main points

sea: United Fruit Company, between U.S. and Puerto Barrios

rail: International Railways of Central America between Atlantic and Pacific,  
Mexican Border and Capital

air: Pan American Airways, Guatemalan Airlines

**CAPITAL:** Guatemala City

**POPULATION:** 165,000

## EL SALVADOR

Conquered by the Spanish under Pedro de Alvarado in 1524, El Salvador, like Mexico, is a country of extremes:

It is the smallest in Central America, yet the most densely populated.

It's the only country between Panama and the States that doesn't commercially grow bananas, and it alone has no Atlantic coastline.

It produces more coffee than any country in the Western Hemisphere, except Brazil and Colombia. At one time, coffee made up ninety percent of the country's exports.

It's the least colonial of the Central American republics, but paradoxically, its history has been one of the most turbulent.

It probably has more volcanoes to the square inch than any of its sister republics. Happily they are far more picturesque than dangerous. Called the "Lighthouse of the Pacific," three times each hour of the day and night Mount Izalco emits flashes of flame visible for miles at sea



and this has been going on for centuries. Two mountain ranges with a succession of peaks a mile and a half high run the full length of this country.

El Salvador rightfully boasts one of the most complete rail and highway systems of Central America despite its disproportionately small area. Inland transportation facilities supplemented by Pacific deep water ports are responsible for much of the nation's progressive development.

El Salvador is one of the most modern countries in all Middle America.

During the two months harvest, all hands turn to coffee picking. It's that nation's big economic backlog, and with coffee, "if 'twere done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly." Tide, time and maturing coffee beans wait for no man.

By all means visit a coffee finca and a conditioning plant. You'll be more than welcome.

BOUNDARIES: Northwest—Guatemala  
South—Pacific Ocean

Northeast—Honduras

AREA: 14,000 square miles, about size of Maryland

POPULATION: 1,700,000

GOVERNMENT: republic

RELIGION: Catholic

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

mountains: two chains, volcanic, Izalco most important

highland: fertile mountain valleys

waters: navigable rivers, Lake Guija, Lake Ilopango

climate: rainy season or winter between May and December

PRINCIPAL IMPORTS: construction materials, chemicals, textiles

PRINCIPAL EXPORTS: coffee (80%), balsam, tobacco, indigo, henequen, sugar

TRANSPORTATION:

roads: 1600 miles, connecting all towns, Pan American Highway almost all surfaced, bus service

rail: 310 miles, International Railway of Central America E-W  
Salvador Railway Company, between Pacific and capital

air: Pan American Airways, TACA airways, Transportes Aéreos Salvadoreños

CAPITAL: San Salvador

POPULATION: 140,000

## HONDURAS

While undoubtedly the least known of the Central American Republics, Honduras fascinates me by virtue of its very isolation. It should appeal to others similarly inclined toward "uncharted seas." Here we have forty-five thousand square miles of jumbled up mountains, rushing rivers, and hot coastal banana plains, largely inaccessible except via

horse or mule or afoot. Don't expect too much in the way of tourist comforts more than a stone's throw from its charming little capital, Tegucigalpa.

Because of the tough terrain, few railroads scar the face of Honduras. Most of these skirt along the coast, their efforts confined principally to lugging bananas from the jungle banana plantations to the steamer wharves.

About bus traffic, again the less said the better, unless you are disposed to Rough it. (The capital "R" is for emphasis.) On the other hand, if you hanker after the unusual in primitive travel, you'll find later in the book a recipe for a San Salvador/Tegucigalpa jaunt that will blow your hat into the river (or rather the Gulf of Fonseca) as well as shake out most of your teeth.

What she lacks in rails and camiones, Honduras more than compensates for in planes. Here, in a country no larger than the state of Mississippi, lie seventy or eighty airfields with daily services literally all over the map. The prices are most reasonable. Honduras is the birthplace of that excellent and now far-flung TACA Air Service. Take time out some day, curl up in front of the open fire, and read some of the hectic historical background of this colorful enterprise. Verily, in this instance, truth is stranger than fiction.

Almost half the Hondurans are illiterate. There is scant industrialized activity as we know it aside from a few large, highly-centralized coastal operations in bananas and some mining in the interior.

Like greased lightning, the Pan American Highway snips off one corner of the Republic. Along the ninety-odd miles of this Honduran section there is not too much of an exciting nature other than the gloriously beautiful Gulf of Fonseca. Viewed from the Continental Divide, the sunsets over its islands of Amapala and Tigre well repay one's visit.

In common with most other truly fine things in life, Tegucigalpa is hard to reach. It's the single capital not touched by the Highway from Texas to Buenos Aires. But if you're even half a good sport, after having come thus far, don't pass up the rugged six or eight hour motor detour up from Jicaro Galan. I found few more fascinating cities all down along the line than Tegucigalpa. Perched on its three thousand foot plateau, this city is cool and clean and quaint. And, oddly enough, most excellent modern hotel accommodations are available.



has proven pretty volcanic politically as well as geographically. Nearly all of the European Colonizing Empires and even our own United States have from time to time erupted emotionally due to the intriguing inter-ocean canal possibilities which Lake Nicaragua presents.

Since earliest history explosions in Nicaragua have not always been confined to the volcanoes. Only within the last few decades has this heroic country emerged from four centuries of travail, including in its national repertoire far more than its share, first of conquistadores and buccaneers and then a sanguinary icing of revolutions, fires and earthquakes. Freed from Spain in 1821, it became a part of the great Mexican Empire under Iturbide. Two years later it joined the Central American Federation. In 1838 it became an independent republic.

If literature a la Richard Harding Davis appeals, read up on the hair-raising exploits of your fellow-countryman, the Frankenstein filibuster William Walker. Back in the 1850's he contributed liberally to the gaiety of the situation by organizing an "American Phalanx" of fifty-seven roughnecks and eventually landed himself in the Presidential chair. This he accomplished by the not uncommon expedient of playing both political and military ends against the middle. He even bucked old Commodore Vanderbilt who in those days was operating a combination of paddle ferry-boats and overland horse-drawn coaches across the east/west (Lake Nicaragua) route for the benefit of California's Gold Rushers.

Though Nicaragua skirts the Caribbean for three hundred miles and the Pacific for two hundred miles, seven-eighths of its people live in the narrow inland western section.

Nicaraguans (familarly dubbed "Nicas") are largely agricultural. Years ago, bananas and, strange though it seems for the tropics, wheat, were major crops. But them days is gone forever. Abandoned groves along the coast and deserted grist mills in the interior are the present (dis)order of the day.

On the other hand, gold production has progressed rapidly. Back in 1930 this precious metal represented but five percent of the total exports. Today it's over sixty percent, surpassing even coffee.

There is some industrial activity but not overly much. What there is lies principally in cement, tiles and matches. Great stretches of valuable lumber abound, but largely unavailable for commerce due to a sorry lack of roads.

Against this paucity of big time, go-getter commercial activity, be



There are few large cities. One might almost say none other than the capital itself, but San José adequately compensates with its million dollar National Theater, 1,000 bed hospital, parks, orchid gardens, modern hotels, magnificent airfield, churches, museums, libraries and heaven only knows how many other attractions. And all this in the ideal all-year climate of perpetual spring.

But let Claudia Lars, a Salvadorean at that, tell you of Costa Rica's glories:

"Costa Rica is like a picture out of a fairy tale, something almost incredible in these times of breathless worry. Where is there another landscape with these tints and shades like a water-color? The little streams gush out like a benediction of the earth, and the valleys rise slowly until they become peaks and mountains.

"San José is a delightful city. Her delicate houses do not sit mundanely on the ground as do ordinary houses. They are perched slightly above the ground to escape the tumultuous assaults of the heavy rains and this gives the city a fragile air. 'City of cardboard and lace' as one well-known writer has said, and this it really is, for anyone who sees it clearly. It is also clean as a porcelain cup, neat as a good housewife and always gay.

"Costa Rica is famous for her beautiful women; beauty that comes from northern Spain. For this reason the eyes have tints rare in the tropics, and blond tresses are as commonly encountered as pure white skin.

"The people have a unique manner of speech which leads one to believe that we are being caressed by their talk. The '*momentico*' makes something fugitive and full of enchantment out of time, and all the '*ticos*' that issue from their lips linger in our ears like notes of affection. This manner of speech is the reason Costa Ricans are known in Central America as 'Ticos.'

"San José is connected by magnificent roads with three cities of importance: Cartago, of vigorous and stimulating climate; Heredia, of the famous teachers' school; Alajuela, warm vacation spot.

"Costa Rican history, rural and vague in colonial times, and even in the first years of independence, acquires importance when the tiny republic begins to realize great democratic ideals. Now its pages reveal inspiring episodes which surprise the whole world, and Costa Rica has taken a high place in the American Community."

BOUNDARIES: north—Nicaragua east—Panama and Atlantic Ocean  
 south—Pacific west—Pacific

AREA: 23,000 square miles, about the size of West Virginia

POPULATION: 672,000 GOVERNMENT: republic RELIGION: Catholic

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

mountains: three volcanic ranges, 12,000 foot heights reached  
 highlands: Central Plateau, fertile, contains  $\frac{2}{3}$  of all people  
 lowlands: Atlantic coast (cacao, some bananas)  
 Pacific coast (bananas, cattle, timber, rubber)

PRINCIPAL IMPORTS: construction materials, paper, flour, petroleum, chemicals

PRINCIPAL EXPORTS: coffee, bananas, lumber, minerals, cacao, hides

TRANSPORTATION:

roads: 1800 miles, mostly all paved, Pan American Highway (not completed)

rail: Costa Rican railway (Puerto Limón to Alajuela)  
 Costa Rican Pacific Railway (San José to Puntarenas)  
 two United Fruit Co. rails along Atlantic

air: Pan American Airways, TACA and local companies

CAPITAL: San José POPULATION: 68,000

## PANAMA

Here's an outstanding geographical example of a tail wagging a dog. Due to the almost continuous klieg light publicity focused upon the Canal itself since its opening thirty-five years ago, many overlook the country of Panama. This Sovereign Republic, a narrow neck of "s" shaped land stretching about five hundred miles in an easterly/westerly direction, has a vital geographical responsibility weighing down its unhappy shoulders. Panama, single-handed, holds together the North and South American continents.

From the standpoint of our Pan American Highway, it is navigable over all-weather, hard surfaced roads from El Volcan, a hard day's horseback ride south of the Costa Rican boundary to Chepo, thirty-eight miles south of Panama City. This is a matter of three hundred and eighty-three miles, nothing to be sneezed at! Yes, to Chepo, but thus far and no farther. To date, but one intrepid soul, my most excellent friend Richard Tewksbury, has ever traveled the completely desolate two hundred or so miles of trackless marshes, mountains and rivers leading down into northern Colombia. How this young, unarmed explorer accomplished this (without benefit of map, guide or even a vestige of previous tropical jungle travel) baffles me. What is even more amazing is Tewksbury's self-effacing modesty with regard to such an interna-

tionally famous feat. Actually, I boast more in claiming "Dick" as an intimate personal friend than "Dick" does in speaking of the fine job he did. He made this government-authenticated trip all by his lonesome in the face of the strongest protestations by the Washington and Panama authorities who had excellent reason to know the great dangers to be reckoned with in regard to traditionally hostile natives, wild animals, poisonous snakes, malaria and dysentery and an unspeakably treacherous terrain.

Like Mexico at the other end of the Highway, Panama is essentially a land of vivid contrasts. There is sophisticated night life in the Zone's cosmopolite cities, yet the San Blas Indians still practice their almost pre-archaic ways in the extreme southeastern section. There are the sweltering, sweaty, drippy jungles of the South and the cold, wind-swept plateaus of the northern Chiriquís. Bare mountain peaks form the backdrop for a hundred palm fringed ocean beaches, stretching hundreds of miles along both Atlantic and Pacific.

In such a diversified country one can satisfy literally hundreds of tourist inclinations.

Pan American paradoxes are two cents a bushel. As evidence and as a most fitting conclusion, here's a corker:

"Panama makes me woozy, for the sun rises over the Pacific and sets over the Atlantic, and the east end of the Canal is further west than the west end is. It flows both ways from the middle and sometimes the Pacific end is higher than the Atlantic end and sometimes it's lower. The summertime is winter. Bananas grow upside down and melons grow on trees. The whole place is cockeyed."

BOUNDARIES: north—Caribbean  
south—Pacific

west—Costa Rica  
east—Colombia

AREA: 32,383 square miles about the size of Maine

POPULATION: 567,000

GOVERNMENT: republic

RELIGION: Catholic

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

mountains: two ridges in interior of land

lowlands: undeveloped jungle and prairie land along Atlantic and Pacific, dense vegetation, bananas, cacao, coffee, rice

water: many streams

PRINCIPAL IMPORTS: gasoline, wheat, flour, perfumes, cosmetics, machinery

PRINCIPAL EXPORTS: bananas, cocoa, beans, gold, coconuts

TRANSPORTATION:

roads: all towns connected southwest of Canal, some poorly made

rail: Panama Railroad, 48 miles between Colon, Panama City, US owned, Ferrocarril Nacional (David-Boquete-Puerto Armuelles)



air: Pan American Airways, Gelabert Airlines for charter service  
Panama City—David—Puerto Armuelles  
sea: coastal navigation  
trail: many saddle trails inland

CAPITAL: Panama City

POPULATION: 111,893

## DITCH IN EXTREMUS AND "THE ZONE"

The Republic of Panama is bisected by a fifty mile belt-like strip of land known as The Zone. This runs the entire length of the Canal from Atlantic to Pacific, extending five miles to either side of the great waterway. Though insignificant in area, this section with its Eastern Hemispheric counterpart, The Suez, constitute the two outstanding crossroads of the world.

Contrary to common opinion, the Panama Canal's course is north and south rather than east and west, creating at certain points the geographical paradox of the sun appearing to rise in the Pacific and set in the Atlantic.

The Zone's four principal cities, two at each terminal, are the most cosmopolitan and most polyglot of the entire universe. According to legend, even the Scotch settled here after Patterson, founder of the Bank of England, stated that "he who controls the Panama Canal holds the keys of the world." By virtue of its strategic position, the Zone's history has been sanguinary in the extreme. Aborigines of the poison arrow, intrepid European explorers, conquistadores as ruthless as they were brave, British buccaneers (both Drake and Morgan, included for good measure), California Gold Rushers of the late forties, French canal constructors of Suez fame, Panamanian revolutionaries, American high-flight medical authorities and Army engineers, are but few of the innumerable kaleidoscopic figures that from time to time strode across its exotic and, for many years, disease and snake-infested stage.

Here are some high points in its chronology:

1513

Balboa discovered the Pacific after a twenty-eight day tortuous tramp over the fifty mile span, averaging but little more than two miles a day against hostile Indians, plagues, venomous reptiles and insects. Subsequently, he was to be rewarded for this gallantry by losing his

head at the hands of a rival on the trumped-up charge of attempted revolution.

Not so many decades thereafter, Panama became the leading center of international trade for the Western Hemisphere. Spain shortsightedly confined the lucrative business of her colonies to herself. Each year she dispatched to the annual Fair of Puerto Bello great fleets of merchantmen amply protected by heavily armed galleons. Thence the valuable cargoes were transported by muleback over the treacherous yet famous Cruces Gold Trail to the Pacific for transshipment by water throughout Latin America.

1821

Panama declared her independence from Spain, voluntarily becoming part of Colombia, then known as Gran Colombia. For eighty-two years thereafter, however, until 1903, there were innumerable abortive revolutions working toward secession from the larger country.

1856

The first railroad was completed. This exploit proved phenomenally profitable. Charging no less than fifty cents per mile for passengers and comparably exorbitant rates for freight, it cleared some ten million dollars in ten years on a capital investment of only eight million dollars. Its coffers were increased fabulously by the California Gold Rushers.

1878-1889

During these eleven years, a French company under the direction of Count Ferdinand de Lesseps expended four hundred million dollars in an ineffectual attempt to build a canal across the Isthmus. Following this colossal failure, Panama (still a part of Colombia) sought a purchaser, fearful that some other nation in successful rivalry might construct a similar waterway through Nicaragua, a project seriously under consideration by certain promoters of our own country.

1903

Panama declared its independence of Colombia and, for an outright ten million dollars and subsequent annual payments of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, ceded full sovereign rights to the United States.

1904

The United States purchased the equity of the defunct French company for forty million dollars, one tenth of what the poor souls

had sunk in it, and commenced first a comprehensive medical cleanup under Dr. William Gorgas and then actual construction operations under General Goethals of the Army Engineer Corps.

1914

The Canal was opened after we had expended another four hundred million dollars. Added to the investment by the French, this rounded out the sizeable total to something over three-quarters of a billion dollars, but it has repaid this country a thousandfold, intangibly as a vital point of defense in event of war and as a commercial advantage of inestimable importance. For example, it reduced by eight thousand miles the distance a steamer travels in going from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast as contrasted with the old roundabout route through the Straits of Magellan at the extreme southern tip of the South American continent.

1919

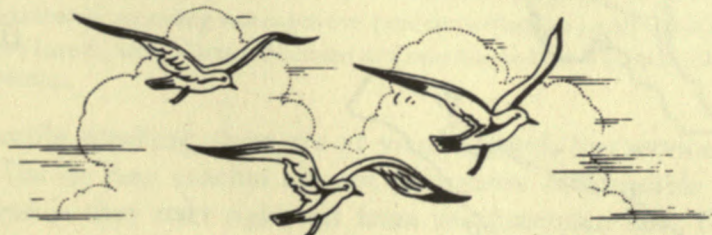
We belatedly paid Colombia a conscience balm of twenty-five million dollars against her rather unorthodox losses of 1903.

1942

The first cement highway was completed from coast to coast. Presently, we can make the trip by auto, by train, by steamer, or by plane.

Though extremely limited in size, the Zone offers all manner of exciting inducements to tourists with the delightful corollaries of most excellent hotels, plus a climate which though admittedly hot in midday is always cool evenings. The average daily temperatures are 86 degrees in the daytime and 74 at night. Down there, they never experience the sustained extremely high temperatures frequently endured in our own middle-central sections. The rainy season lasts from May 1st to December 15th.

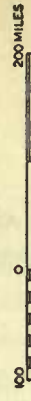
Much of the life in the Zone is so shot through with Government as to have been epitomized by some wag as "deadly Utopian, bogged down in paternalistic red tape and copies in quadruplicate."



U N I T E D S T A T E S

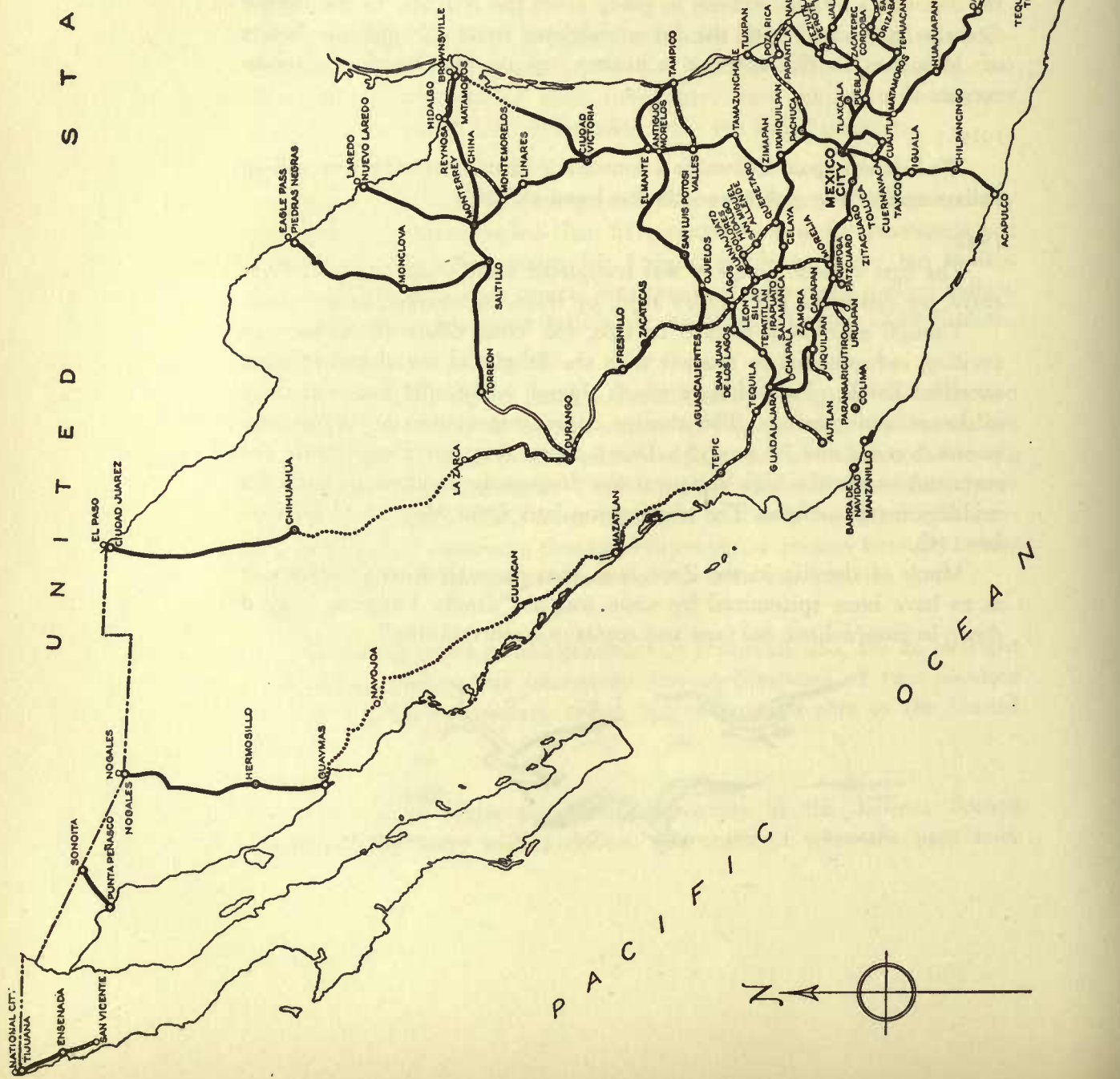
# PRINCIPAL HIGHWAYS OF MEXICO

- Paved road
- - - All weather road
- Dry weather road
- ..... Projected road

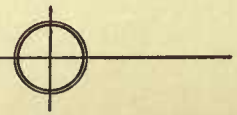


TRAVEL DIVISION OF THE PAN AMERICAN UNION  
1947

G U L F O F M E X I C O



P A C I F I C O C E A N



G U A T E M A L A

NATIONAL CITY TIJUANA

As of October 1st, 1948, an all-weather highway extends from Laredo, Texas, even beyond Comitan, to within 50 miles of the Mexican/Guatemalan frontier.

## Road Conditions and Available Transportation

AND the last shall be first.

At least the back of your stomach will subscribe to the vital importance of road conditions. Whether you "bus" it or drive your own jalopy, this is of paramount importance.

Let's for the nonce forget all about dollars and cents and days and hours and imagine that we are starting out together from Laredo to do the Highway by public conveyance. Obviously any private car can readily negotiate all roads served by public auto buses.

### LAREDO TO MEXICO CITY

The entire distance is excellently paved with an all-weather surface that permits making the run without discomfort every day of the year. The scenery is as superb as can be found anywhere, affording an intriguing variety of deserts, jungles and majestic mountain ranges. Elevations range from sea level to over seven thousand feet.

This section is indeed a bus traveler's paradise. The Chamber of Commerce at Laredo, Texas, will gladly give you up-to-the-minute data with respect both to rates and schedules. Here is my latest information from Laredo, Texas, as of July, 1948:

"The Transportes del Norte is the only Mexican line that takes on its passengers from Laredo, Texas, at the Greyhound Bus Station, and the one way fare is \$12.94. They do not quote round trip. From the folder of the Rápidos which only operates from the Mexican side they only quote one way fare as \$64.20 pesos or \$13.35 U.S."

For information regarding less expensive (and somewhat less comfortable) bus services from Nuevo Laredo, write Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Nuevo Laredo, Nuevo Laredo, Tamps., Mexico.

Generally speaking, there are at your disposal, bus services of three classes. The de luxe coaches are not only more comfortable but more convenient as they start right out from the American side. These buses

# ~ PRINCIPAL BUS ROUTES IN MEXICO ~



**PLANO ESQUEMATICO DE LAS PRINCIPALES CARRETERAS DE MEXICO**

**EXPLICACION**

- PETROLIZADAS O CEMENTADAS
- TRANSITABLES EN TODO TIEMPO
- TRANSITABLES EN TIEMPO DE SECAS
- ..... EN CONSTRUCCION

LAS CIFRAS GRANDES INDICAN EL KILOMETRAJE A LA Cd. DE MEXICO  
 LAS CIFRAS CHICAS INDICAN LAS DISTANCIAS DE UN PUNTO A OTRO

(Este plano no está a escala)

# LINEAS INTERNACIONALES

## Transportes del Norte

### SERVICIO DE PRIMERA

## Servicios Unidos Autobuses Blanco Flecha Roja

Ruta: MEXICO - ZIMAPAN - C. VALLES - C. MANTE - C. VICTORIA - LINARES  
MONTERREY - N. LAREDO.

| SALIDAS—Léase hacia abajo |         |         |         |         |      | 31                 | LLEGADAS—Léase hacia arriba |         |         |         |         | TARIFA |       |       |        |       |       |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| Dia-rio                   | Dia-rio | Dia-rio | Dia-rio | Dia-rio | Km.  |                    | Dia-rio                     | Dia-rio | Dia-rio | Dia-rio | Dia-rio | V.S.   | V.S.  | V.S.  | V.S.   | V.S.  |       |
| 5 00                      | 11 00   | 14 00   | 21 00   | 24 00   | 0    | \$ MEXICO          | Li                          | 10 00   | 13 00   | 17 00   | 23 00   | 5 00   | 30.00 | 30.00 | \$1.85 | 17.65 | 24.00 |
| 7 10                      | 13 10   | 16 10   | 23 10   | 2 10    | 119  | \$ Aotopan         | \$                          | 7 50    | 10 50   | 14 40   | 20 40   | 2 40   | 3.00  | 27.00 | 8.85   | 14.70 | 22.70 |
| 8 10                      | 14 10   | 17 10   | 24 10   | 3 10    | 159  | \$ Ixmiquilpan     | \$                          | 6 40    | 10 00   | 13 30   | 20 10   | 1 45   | 4.00  | 26.60 | 7.85   | 13.70 | 20.80 |
| 8 10                      | 14 20   | 16 40   | 24 00   | 2 50    |      | \$ Ixmiquilpan     | \$                          | 6 40    | 10 00   | 13 30   | 20 10   | 1 45   | 4.00  | 26.60 | 7.85   | 13.70 | 20.80 |
| 8 40                      | 14 50   | 17 10   | 0 30    | 3 20    | 176  | \$ Taxquillo       | \$                          | 6 10    | 9 30    | 13 00   | 19 40   | 1 15   | 4.55  | 26.05 | 7.30   | 13.15 | 20.25 |
| 8 40                      | 14 50   | 17 10   | 1 20    | 3 20    |      | \$ Taxquillo       | \$                          | 6 10    | 9 30    | 13 00   | 19 40   | 1 15   | 4.55  | 26.05 | 7.30   | 13.15 | 20.25 |
| 9 30                      | 15 40   | 18 00   | 1 20    | 4 10    | 206  | \$ ZIMAPAN         | \$                          | 5 20    | 8 40    | 12 20   | 18 50   | 0 35   | 5.15  | 25.45 | 6.70   | 12.50 | 19.65 |
| 9 40                      | 15 50   | 18 10   | 1 30    | 4 20    |      | \$ ZIMAPAN         | \$                          | 5 15    | 8 10    | 12 15   | 18 40   | 0 30   | 5.15  | 25.45 | 6.70   | 12.50 | 19.65 |
| 11 25                     | 17 35   | 19 55   | 3 15    | 6 05    | 272  | \$ Jacala          | \$                          | 3 20    | 6 25    | 10 30   | 16 55   | 22 40  | 6.80  | 23.60 | 6.05   | 10.85 | 18.00 |
| 11 30                     | 17 40   | 20 25   | 3 15    | 6 10    |      | \$ Jacala          | \$                          | 3 20    | 6 10    | 10 20   | 16 55   | 22 35  | 6.80  | 23.60 | 6.05   | 10.85 | 18.00 |
| 13 15                     | 19 25   | 22 10   | 5 00    | 7 55    | 339  | \$ Chapulhuacán    | \$                          | 1 25    | 4 15    | 8 40    | 15 10   | 20 50  | 8.50  | 22.10 | 6.35   | 9.20  | 16.30 |
| 13 45                     | 19 25   | 22 10   | 5 00    | 7 55    |      | \$ Chapulhuacán    | \$                          | 1 25    | 4 15    | 8 40    | 15 10   | 20 50  | 8.50  | 22.10 | 6.35   | 9.20  | 16.30 |
| 14 30                     | 20 25   | 22 55   | 2 45    | 8 40    | 367  | \$ Tamazunchale    | \$                          | 0 30    | 3 20    | 7 50    | 14 20   | 20 00  | 9.20  | 21.40 | 2.85   | 8.60  | 15.60 |
| 14 40                     | 20 50   | 23 05   | 5 55    | 9 00    |      | \$ Tamazunchale    | \$                          | 0 20    | 3 10    | 7 30    | 13 50   | 19 40  | 9.20  | 21.40 | 2.85   | 8.60  | 15.60 |
| 15 40                     | 21 50   | 0 05    | 6 55    | 10 00   | 409  | \$ Huichihuallán   | \$                          | 23 20   | 2 10    | 6 40    | 12 50   | 18 40  | 10.25 | 20.35 | 1.80   | 7.45  | 14.55 |
| 15 40                     | 21 50   | 0 05    | 6 55    | 10 00   |      | \$ Huichihuallán   | \$                          | 23 20   | 2 10    | 6 40    | 12 50   | 18 40  | 10.25 | 20.35 | 1.80   | 7.45  | 14.55 |
| 16 30                     | 22 40   | 1 05    | 7 55    | 11 00   | 473  | \$ C. VALLES       | \$                          | 22 30   | 1 20    | 5 40    | 12 00   | 17 40  | 11.95 | 18.75 | 30.00  | 6.85  | 12.95 |
| 16 40                     | 22 50   | 1 20    | 8 25    | 11 20   |      | \$ C. VALLES       | \$                          | 22 00   | 1 10    | 5 25    | 11 45   | 17 25  | 11.95 | 18.75 | 30.00  | 6.85  | 12.95 |
| 17 50                     | 23 50   | 2 30    | 9 35    | 12 30   | 542  | \$ Antigua Morelos | \$                          | 22 10   | 0 20    | 4 25    | 10 45   | 16 20  | 13.55 | 17.05 | 1.75   | 4.10  | 11.25 |
| 17 50                     | 23 50   | 2 30    | 9 35    | 12 30   |      | \$ Antigua Morelos | \$                          | 21 10   | 0 20    | 4 25    | 10 45   | 16 20  | 13.55 | 17.05 | 1.75   | 4.10  | 11.25 |
| 18 30                     | 0 40    | 3 15    | 10 20   | 13 15   | 571  | \$ C. Mante        | \$                          | 20 30   | 23 20   | 3 40    | 10 00   | 15 35  | 14.30 | 16.30 | 2.45   | 3.40  | 10.50 |
| 18 45                     | 0 55    | 3 30    | 10 35   | 13 43   |      | \$ C. Mante        | \$                          | 21 20   | 15 23   | 3 30    | 9 30    | 15 05  | 14.30 | 16.30 | 2.45   | 3.40  | 10.50 |
| 21 15                     | 3 25    | 6 00    | 12 55   | 16 15   | 706  | \$ C. VICTORIA     | \$                          | 17 45   | 20 40   | 1 00    | 7 00    | 12 35  | 17.65 | 12.05 | 6.85   | 30.00 | 7.15  |
| 21 45                     | 3 40    | 6 30    | 13 25   | 16 20   |      | \$ C. VICTORIA     | \$                          | 17 30   | 20 10   | 0 50    | 5 20    | 12 25  | 17.65 | 12.05 | 6.85   | 30.00 | 7.15  |
| 0 15                      | 6 10    | 9 00    | 15 55   | 19 00   | 862  | \$ Linares         | \$                          | 15 15   | 17 30   | 22 10   | 2 45    | 9 50   | 21.55 | 9.05  | 9.75   | 3.90  | 3.25  |
| 0 25                      | 6 20    | 9 15    | 16 05   | 19 15   |      | \$ Linares         | \$                          | 14 30   | 17 30   | 22 00   | 2 30    | 9 50   | 21.55 | 9.05  | 9.75   | 3.90  | 3.25  |
| 1 25                      | 7 20    | 10 15   | 17 05   | 20 00   | 917  | \$ Montemorelos    | \$                          | 13 30   | 16 30   | 21 00   | 1 30    | 6 50   | 22.85 | 7.75  | 11.05  | 6.20  | 1.95  |
| 1 25                      | 7 40    | 10 40   | 17 05   | 20 00   |      | \$ Montemorelos    | \$                          | 13 30   | 16 30   | 20 30   | 1 30    | 6 30   | 22.85 | 7.75  | 11.05  | 6.20  | 1.95  |
| 2 50                      | 9 10    | 12 00   | 19 00   | 22 05   | 991  | \$ MONTERREY       | \$                          | 12 00   | 15 00   | 19 00   | 1 00    | 7 00   | 24.80 | 6.80  | 12.95  | 7.15  | 30.00 |
| 3 00                      | 9 30    | 13 00   | 20 00   | 22 50   |      | \$ MONTERREY       | \$                          | 11 30   | 14 40   | 18 30   | 1 10    | 6 30   | 24.80 | 6.80  | 12.95  | 7.15  | 30.00 |
| 4 40                      | 11 10   | 14 40   | 22 40   | 0 10    | 1095 | \$ Sabinas         | \$                          | 9 50    | 13 00   | 16 50   | 23 10   | 4 50   | 27.40 | 3.20  | 15.85  | 9.75  | 2.60  |
| 4 50                      | 11 20   | 14 50   | 21 50   | 0 10    |      | \$ Sabinas         | \$                          | 9 45    | 12 30   | 16 45   | 22 45   | 4 45   | 27.40 | 3.20  | 15.85  | 9.75  | 2.60  |
| 7 30                      | 14 05   | 17 30   | 0 30    | 2 55    | 1228 | \$ N. LAREDO       | \$                          | 7 00    | 10 00   | 14 00   | 20 00   | 2 00   | 30.60 | 30.00 | 18.75  | 12.95 | 6.80  |

### Ruta: MEXICO - G. VICTORIA - MONTERREY - SALTILLO TORREON NUEVO - LAREDO - SAN ANTONIO, TEX.

| SALIDAS:                    |          |          |          |          |          |      | 25                 | LLEGADAS:                  |          |          |       |       |  |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------|--------------------|----------------------------|----------|----------|-------|-------|--|
| Léase hacia abajo—Read down |          |          |          |          |          |      |                    | Léase hacia arriba—Read up |          |          |       |       |  |
| Dia. Dly                    | Dia. Dly | Dia. Dly | Dia. Dly | Dia. Dly | Dia. Dly | Km.  | Dia. Dly           | Dia. Dly                   | Dia. Dly | Dia. Dly |       |       |  |
|                             |          | 16.00    | 12.00    | 20.00    | 8.00     | 0    | \$ MEXICO          | Li                         | 18.30    | 5.30     | 13.30 | 20.45 |  |
|                             |          | 18.00    | 14.00    | 22.00    | 10.00    | 120  | \$ Aotopan         | \$                         | 16.15    | 3.15     | 11.10 | 18.30 |  |
|                             |          | 18.10    | 14.30    | 22.30    | 10.10    |      | \$ Aotopan         | \$                         | 16.05    | 3.05     | 11.00 | 18.15 |  |
|                             |          | 19.50    | 16.10    | 24.00    | 11.50    | 206  | \$ Zimapan         | \$                         | 14.10    | 1.20     | 9.15  | 16.30 |  |
|                             |          | 20.00    | 16.20    | 0.10     | 12.00    |      | \$ Zimapan         | \$                         | 14.00    | 1.10     | 9.05  | 16.20 |  |
|                             |          | 21.50    | 18.10    | 2.00     | 13.50    | 272  | \$ Jacala          | \$                         | 12.00    | 23.10    | 7.05  | 14.20 |  |
|                             |          | 22.20    | 18.30    | 2.15     | 14.20    |      | \$ Jacala          | \$                         | 11.30    | 22.50    | 6.35  | 13.50 |  |
|                             |          | 0.05     | 20.15    | 4.00     | 16.05    | 339  | \$ Chapulhuacán    | \$                         | 9.40     | 21.00    | 4.45  | 12.00 |  |
|                             |          | 0.15     | 20.25    | 4.10     | 16.15    |      | \$ Chapulhuacán    | \$                         | 9.30     | 20.45    | 4.35  | 11.50 |  |
|                             |          | 1.05     | 21.10    | 5.00     | 17.05    | 367  | \$ Tamazunchale    | \$                         | 8.35     | 19.50    | 3.40  | 10.55 |  |
|                             |          | 1.15     | 21.20    | 5.10     | 17.15    |      | \$ Tamazunchale    | \$                         | 8.25     | 19.40    | 3.30  | 10.45 |  |
|                             |          | 3.10     | 23.15    | 7.10     | 19.10    | 475  | \$ C. VALLES       | \$                         | 6.30     | 17.50    | 1.40  | 8.50  |  |
|                             |          | 4.03     | 24.00    | 8.00     | 20.00    |      | \$ C. VALLES       | \$                         | 5.40     | 17.20    | 1.05  | 7.50  |  |
|                             |          | 5.50     | 1.50     | 9.50     | 21.50    | 571  | \$ C. Mante        | \$                         | 3.50     | 15.30    | 23.15 | 6.00  |  |
|                             |          | 6.00     | 2.00     | 10.00    | 22.00    |      | \$ C. Mante        | \$                         | 3.40     | 15.20    | 23.00 | 5.45  |  |
|                             |          | 8.20     | 4.20     | 12.20    | 0.20     | 706  | \$ C. VICTORIA     | \$                         | 1.20     | 13.00    | 20.40 | 3.25  |  |
|                             |          | 8.40     | 4.40     | 12.50    | 0.40     |      | \$ C. VICTORIA     | \$                         | 1.00     | 12.30    | 20.10 | 3.15  |  |
|                             |          | 11.00    | 7.00     | 15.10    | 3.00     | 862  | \$ Linares         | \$                         | 22.30    | 10.00    | 17.50 | 0.25  |  |
|                             |          | 11.15    | 7.15     | 15.25    | 3.15     |      | \$ Linares         | \$                         | 22.10    | 9.40     | 17.30 | 0.05  |  |
|                             |          | 13.40    | 9.40     | 17.45    | 5.40     | 994  | \$ MONTERREY       | \$                         | 19.40    | 7.10     | 15.00 | 21.45 |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 18.10    | 6.10     |      | \$ MONTERREY       | \$                         | 19.00    | 6.20     |       |       |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 19.50    | 7.50     | 1095 | \$ Sabinas         | \$                         | 17.10    | 4.10     |       |       |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 20.00    | 8.00     |      | \$ Sabinas         | \$                         | 17.00    | 4.00     |       |       |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 22.00    | 10.00    | 1228 | \$ N. LAREDO       | \$                         | 15.00    | 2.00     |       |       |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 22.15    | 10.15    |      | \$ N. LAREDO       | \$                         | 15.00    | 2.00     |       |       |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 23.15    | 11.15    | 10   | \$ LAREDO, TEX. G. | \$                         | 13.30    | 24.00    |       |       |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 2.00     | 12.01    | 235  | \$ LAREDO, TEX. G. | \$                         | 11.15    | 23.45    |       |       |  |
|                             |          |          |          | 6.15     | 16.15    |      | \$ SAN ANTONIO G.  | \$                         | 7.00     | 19.30    |       |       |  |
|                             |          | 14.10    | 10.10    |          |          | 994  | \$ MONTERREY       | \$                         |          |          | 14.00 | 21.10 |  |
|                             |          | 15.50    | 11.50    |          |          | 1082 | \$ Saltillo        | \$                         |          |          | 12.40 | 19.25 |  |
|                             |          | 16.05    | 12.05    |          |          |      | \$ Saltillo        | \$                         |          |          | 12.25 | 19.10 |  |
|                             |          |          |          |          |          |      | \$ Paila           | \$                         |          |          |       |       |  |
|                             |          | 20.10    | 16.10    |          |          | 1311 | \$ San Pedro       | \$                         |          |          | 8.20  | 15.20 |  |
|                             |          | 20.20    | 16.20    |          |          |      | \$ San Pedro       | \$                         |          |          | 8.10  | 15.10 |  |
|                             |          | 21.30    | 17.30    |          |          | 1380 | \$ TORREON         | \$                         |          |          | 7.00  | 14.00 |  |

compare favorably with our own Greyhounds. Native second class buses are a few dollars cheaper. They leave from Nuevo Laredo on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande which necessitates hiring an expensive taxi or lugging your baggage afoot over the International Bridge. There is a special five or seven passenger service called "Rápidos" making Mexico City in less time at about the same price or a little more than the first class buses. Though the fast buses go through in about thirty hours, take four days to do this glorious "scenic railway." Average only about seven or eight hours daily, stopping off at Monterrey, Ciudad Victoria, Tamazunchale and Zimapan. Each town is colorful and each affords comfortable overnight accommodations. Stop at Valles, too.

Excellent food and safe, bottled water are to be had all along the line.

You will end up in Mexico City, one of the pleasantest cities of the Western Hemisphere. It is a mile and a half high and is circled by towering, snowcapped mountains which make a light blanket most welcome every night of the year.

#### MEXICO CITY TO OAXACA

The road from Mexico City to Oaxaca is an all-weather highway. The surface is not quite as smooth as the Laredo/Mexico City leg, but it is passable without difficulty during all seasons.

A new bus service has recently been inaugurated running directly from Mexico City to Oaxaca in twelve hours. The nigger in the woodpile is that it operates only at night, leaving the capital at eight in the evening.\* This is expedient for commercial travelers, but the scenery (much of it mountainous) is far too glorious for sightseers to miss.

The country from Mexico City to Puebla is nothing short of superb. Your road threads through mountain passes flanked by pine woods. The succession of thrilling views you get of Popocatepetl and The Sleeping Lady are of themselves worth the price of admission.

So enjoy a daytime de luxe bus from Mexico City to Puebla for the three and a half hour run. A bus leaves every thirty minutes or so which means that you don't have to stew and fret about making just the right connections.

Puebla warrants at least an overnight stay. In addition to much local color, you'll find fine hotel accommodations and very appetizing meals

\*A new schedule indicates additional service. Leaves Mexico City, 6:00 a. m.—arrives Oaxaca, 6.00 p. m.



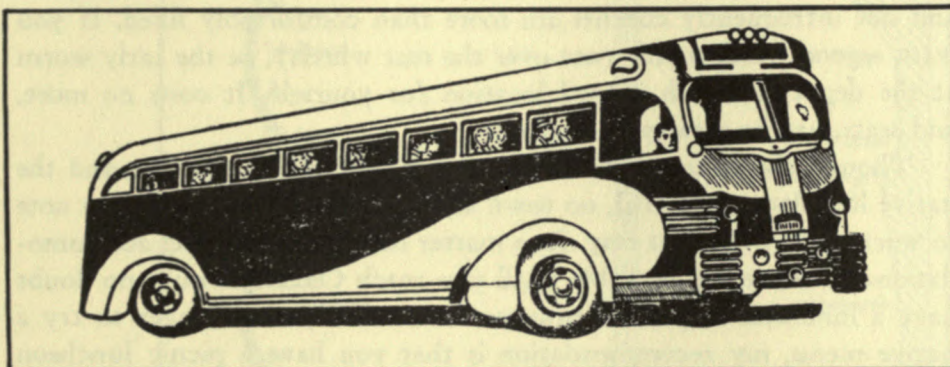
## SERVICIOS UNIDOS DE AUTOS PULLMAN

### Estrella Roja y Círculos de Oro

TERMINALES: México Academia 36 Tels.12-01-00 Mex-36-01-00 Puebla, 5 Norte 203. Tel.34-94  
Oaxaca, Trujano 1 C. Tel. 354 Eric. 27

Ruta: MEXICO - PUEBLA - MATAMOROS - HUAJUAPAN DE LEON - OAXACA

| SALIDAS              |       |       |       | K.    | 131       | LLEGADAS             |       |       |       | TARIFA |       |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| SERVICIO DE 1ª CLASE |       |       |       |       |           | SERVICIO DE 1ª CLASE |       |       |       | V. S.  | V. S. |
| 19.00                | 16.30 | 6.00  | 0     | 0     | \$ MEXICO | LI                   | 18.15 | 4.30  | 7.60  |        |       |
| 22.00                | 19.30 | 8.45  | 135   | 135   | \$ PUEBLA | \$                   | 15.30 | 1.00  | 4.15  |        |       |
| 17.00                | 22.15 | 19.45 | 15.00 | 6.00  | \$ PUEBLA | LI                   | 13.15 | 15.30 | 16.00 | 1.00   | 4.15  |
| 17.45                | 22.45 | 20.15 | 15.45 | 9.45  | 6.45      | LI                   | 12.30 | 14.45 | 15.15 | 0.15   | 3.30  |
| 18.45                | 23.30 | 21.00 | 16.45 | 10.30 | 7.45      | LI                   | 11.45 | 13.30 | 14.15 | 23.15  | 2.30  |
| 20.40                | 1.00  | 22.30 | 18.45 | 12.00 | 9.55      | LI                   | 10.00 | 12.00 | 13.15 | 22.45  | 1.00  |
|                      | 1.00  | 22.45 | 19.00 | 12.00 | 10.00     | LI                   | 9.45  | 12.00 | 13.00 | 22.45  | 1.00  |
|                      | 2.30  | 0.15  | 20.15 | 13.70 | 11.15     | LI                   | 8.00  | 10.30 | 11.45 | 21.15  | 23.30 |
|                      | 2.30  | 0.15  |       | 13.30 | 11.30     | \$                   | 10.30 | 11.30 | 21.00 | 23.30  |       |
|                      | 3.30  | 1.15  |       | 14.30 | 12.30     |                      |       | 9.30  | 10.30 | 20.00  | 22.30 |
|                      | 4.30  | 2.15  |       | 15.30 | 13.30     |                      |       | 8.30  | 10.00 | 19.00  | 21.30 |
|                      | 4.30  | 2.15  |       | 15.30 | 3.45      |                      |       | 8.15  | 9.15  | 18.45  | 21.15 |
|                      | 7.00  | 4.30  |       | 18.00 | 16.15     | LI                   | 6.00  | 7.00  | 16.30 | 19.00  |       |
|                      |       |       |       | 15.81 |           |                      |       |       |       |        |       |



## Líneas Unidas del Sur Flecha Roja

TERMINALES: Puebla - Av. 4 Pte. 314. Tel. 38-86 - Oaxaca Plaza Principal.

Ruta: PUEBLA - MATAMOROS - HUAJUAPAN DE LEON - OAXACA

| SALIDAS - Léase hacia abajo |       |      |      | Km.  | 132  | LLEGADAS - Léase hacia arriba |      |      |     |              |    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-----------------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------------------------------|------|------|-----|--------------|----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| SERVICIO DE 2ª CLASE        |       |      |      |      |      | SERVICIO DE 2ª CLASE          |      |      |     |              |    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 2100                        | 1900  | 1700 | 1500 | 1300 | 1100 | 1000                          | 8 30 | 5 00 | 0   | \$ PUEBLA    | LI | 9 45 | 1215 | 1530 | 1700 | 2000 | 2200 | 2400 | 5 00 | 7 00 |
| 2155                        | 1955  | 1 55 | 1555 | 1400 | 1155 | 1055                          | 9 25 | 5 55 | 35  | Atlixco      |    | 8 45 | 1115 | 1430 | 1600 | 1900 | 2100 | 2300 | 4 00 | 6 00 |
| 2250                        | 2050  | 1850 | 1650 | 1445 | 1250 | 1150                          | 1020 | 6 50 | 75  | LI Matamoros | \$ | 8 00 | 1030 | 1330 | 1500 | 1800 | 2000 | 2200 | 3 00 | 5 00 |
| 2300                        | 2100  | 1900 | 1700 | 1500 | 1300 | 1200                          | 1030 | 7 00 | 75  | LI Matamoros | LI | 8 00 | 9 20 | 1315 | 1445 | 1745 | 1945 | 2145 | 2 45 | 4 45 |
| 0 15                        | 2215  | 2015 | 1815 | 1600 | 1315 | 1315                          | 1145 | 8 15 | 122 | Tehuizingo   |    | 7 00 | 9 20 | 1230 | 1330 | 1630 | 1830 | 2030 | 1 30 | 3 30 |
| 0 20                        | 2220  | 2030 | 1830 | 1630 | 1430 | 1330                          | 1200 | 8 30 | 141 | Las Peñas    |    | 6 30 | 8 50 |      | 1300 |      |      |      |      |      |
| 1 15                        | 2315  | 2130 | 1915 | 1700 | 1515 | 1415                          | 1245 | 9 15 | 141 | LI ACATLAN   | \$ | 6 00 | 8 20 | 1130 | 1230 | 1530 | 1645 | 1930 | 0 30 | 2 30 |
| 1 30                        | 2 430 |      | 1930 |      | 1530 | 1430                          | 1300 | 9 30 | 164 | \$ ACATLAN   | LI | 8 00 | 1115 | 1215 | 1515 | 1640 | 1915 | 0 15 | 2 15 |      |
| 2 15                        | 0 15  |      | 2015 |      | 1615 | 1520                          | 1345 | 1015 | 187 | Petualcingo  |    | 7 20 | 1040 | 1140 | 1440 | 15 0 | 1840 | 2340 | 1 40 |      |
| 3 30                        | 1 30  |      | 2130 |      | 1730 | 1630                          | 1500 | 1130 | 229 | LI HUAJUAPAN | \$ | 6 00 | 9 30 | 1030 | 1330 | 1515 | 1730 | 2230 | 0 30 |      |
| 3 45                        | 1 45  |      | 2145 |      | 1745 |                               | 1515 | 1145 | 229 | \$ HUAJUAPAN | LI |      |      | 1015 | 1355 | 1405 | 1715 | 2215 | 0 15 |      |
| 5 00                        | 3 00  |      | 2255 |      | 1900 |                               | 1625 | 1255 | 286 | Tamazulapa   |    |      |      | 9 00 | 1200 | 1400 | 1600 | 2100 | 2300 |      |
| 9 20                        | 3 20  |      | 2300 |      | 1920 |                               | 1650 | 1300 | 294 | Tejupan      |    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 6 30                        | 4 20  |      | 0 20 |      | 2020 |                               | 1750 | 1420 | 340 | Nochistlán   |    |      |      | 7 30 | 1030 | 1230 | 1430 | 1930 | 2120 |      |
| 7 20                        | 6 20  |      | 0 40 |      | 2230 |                               | 1950 | 1620 | 427 | Etla         |    |      |      | 5 40 | 8 40 | 1040 | 1240 | 1740 | 1940 |      |
| 9 00                        | 7 00  |      | 3 00 |      | 2300 |                               | 2030 | 1700 | 447 | LI OAXACA    | \$ |      |      | 5 00 | 8 00 | 1000 | 1200 | 1700 | 1900 |      |

immaculately served beneath Puebla's distinctive *portales* facing the main plaza. If time permits, here's just the place to while away those few extra days at your disposal. The plaza alone will provide all manner of interest. My wife and I were once fortunate enough to arrive in Puebla on a fiesta night. As part of the fun, the natives were selling brightly dyed eggshells from which the gooey insides had been considerably blown. The shells were later filled with perfume, plain water, or ink! Your selection depended upon your potential target. If it was the gal friend at whom you were to toss it, it would contain perfume. If it was your rival, it would be chock-full of ink!

Relaxed at Puebla, you're ready for the early bus to Oaxaca. This is less traveled, but by no means less colorful, country. The buses are more primitive and equipped with unbelievably hard seats. Be sure to make your reservations ahead of time. Bus travel is popular with the natives, and not infrequently coaches are more than comfortably filled. If you want a good window seat (not over the rear wheels), be the early worm at the depot and grab a good location for yourself. It costs no more, and seats may be arranged in advance.

Though the countryside itself is mountainous and exciting and the native life always colorful, no town along the route is of sufficient note to warrant an overnight stay. As a matter of fact, no sleeping accommodations of merit are available until you reach Oaxaca. You'll no doubt have a luncheon stop at Huajuapán but unless you are eager to try a native menu, my recommendation is that you have a picnic luncheon prepared at Puebla before you leave. Most hotels will gladly take care of this if you considerably make arrangements the night before.

### OAXACA TO GUATEMALA CITY (The Valley of Decision)

FOR "SOFTIES"—via Ixtepec and Tapachula

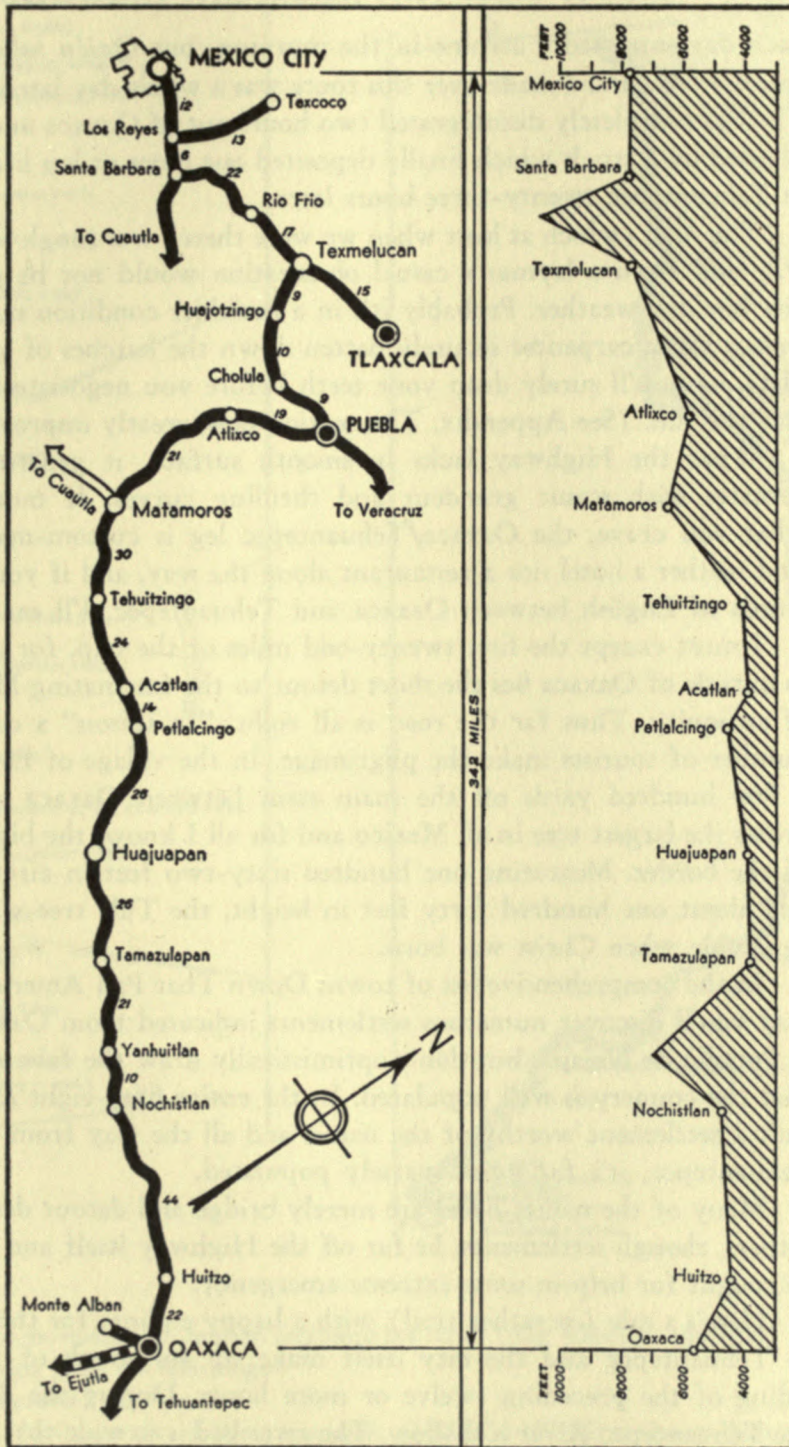
FOR "TOUGHIES"—via Tuxtla Gutierrez and Huehuetenango (alternate—via Comalapa and Motozintla)

FOR "HALF AN' HALFS"—via Suchiate and Ayutla

FOR "SOFTIES"

Via Ixtepec and Tapachula

I suggest that you take the primitive hard-seated bus that theoretically makes the Oaxaca/Tehuantepec stretch in twelve hours. It starts out



each day supposedly at nine in the morning, but *Quién sabe?* The last run my wife and I made over this route was a whole day late in starting. The bus completely disintegrated two hours out of Oaxaca and was supplanted by a truck which finally deposited our more or less lifeless forms in Tehuantepec twenty-three hours later.

The road (which at least when we were there) was rough most of the way and from a layman's casual observation would not be passable in any but dry weather. Probably it's in a healthier condition now. If not, have a tooth carpenter securely batten down the hatches of your upper plate, or you'll surely drop your teeth before you negotiate more than half the run. (See Appendix. This section now greatly improved.)

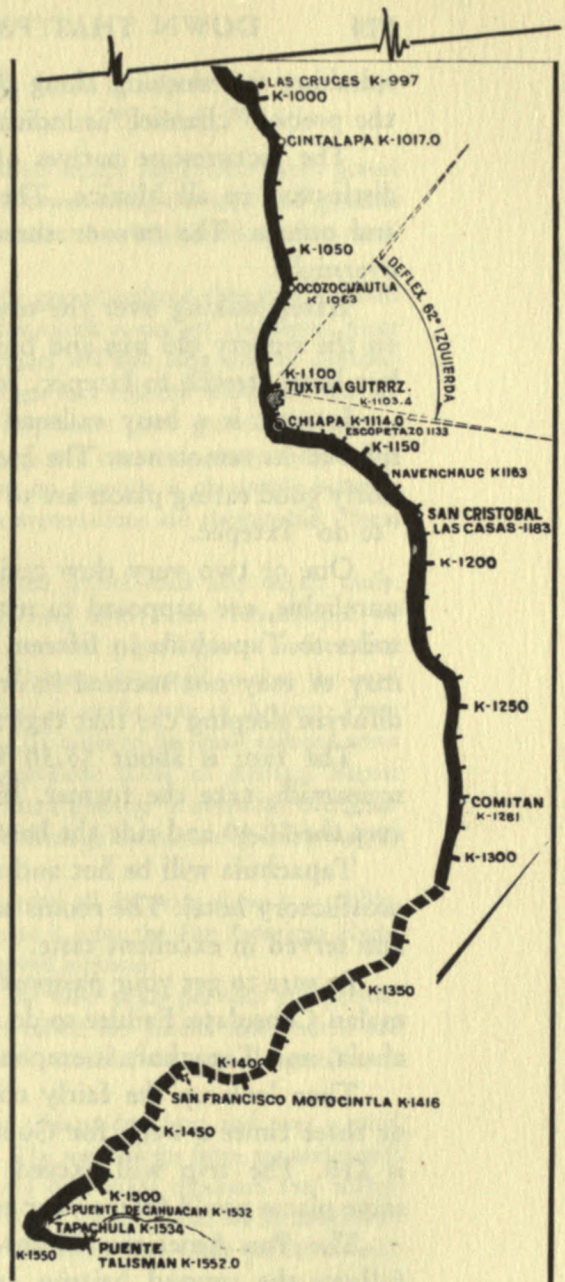
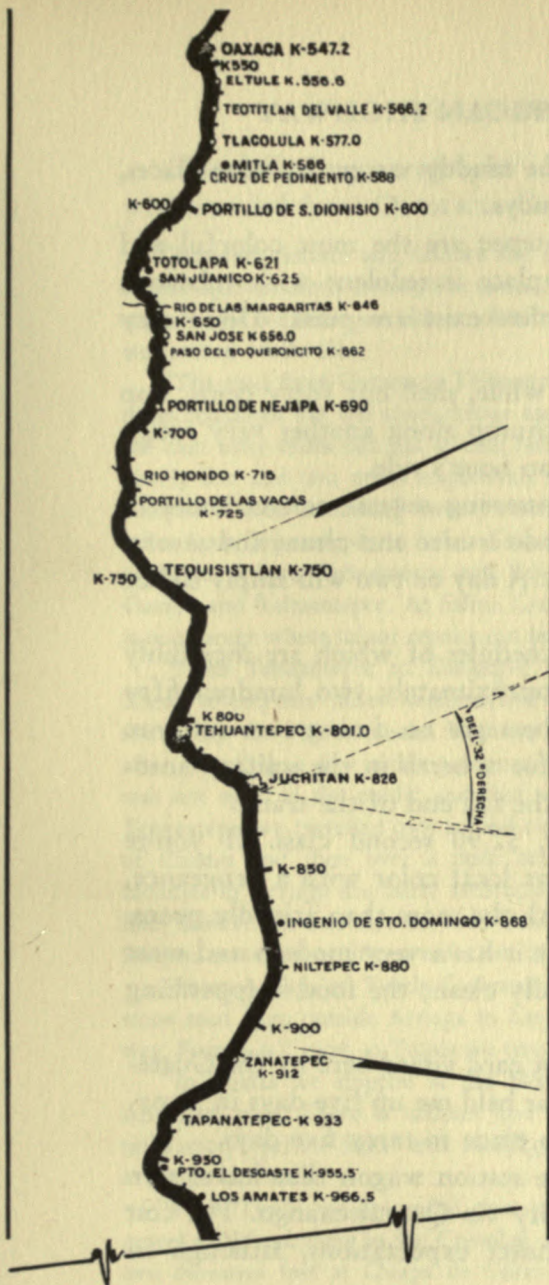
What the Highway lacks in smooth surface, it generously compensates with scenic grandeur and thrilling curves. If mountains be what you crave, the Oaxaca/Tehuantepec leg is custom-made. You'll find neither a hotel nor a restaurant along the way, and if you hear two words of English between Oaxaca and Tehuantepec, I'll eat 'em both.

I must except the first twenty-odd miles of the trip, for an hour or so outside of Oaxaca lies the short detour to the fascinating Mitla Ruins of antiquity. Thus far the road is all right. "In season" a considerable number of tourists make the pilgrimage. In the village of El Tule, just a few hundred yards off the main stem between Oaxaca and Mitla, grows the largest tree in all Mexico and for all I know, the biggest south of the border. Measuring one hundred sixty-two feet in circumference and about one hundred forty feet in height, the Tule tree was old and venerable when Christ was born.

In the comprehensive list of towns Down That Pan American Highway you'll discover numerous settlements indicated from Oaxaca as far as Portillo de Nejapa, but don't optimistically draw the false conclusion that the country is well populated. In the entire fifty-eight miles, there isn't a settlement worthy of the name, and all the way from Nejapa to Tehuantepec, it's far more sparsely populated.

Many of the names listed are merely bridge and detour designations. Others, though settlements, lie far off the Highway itself and need only be sought for help in some extreme emergency.

Here's a tale (or rather trail) with a happy ending, for the approach to Tehuantepec and the city itself make up for much of the rough riding of the preceding twelve or more hours. During the dry season, the Tehuantepec River is shallow. The river bed is so wide that for about one hundred yards en route from Oaxaca your bus becomes amphibious,



For up-to-the-minute information regarding bus travel (time schedules and fares) in southern Mexico, write the following—

*Between Oaxaca and Tehuantepec*

La Cooperativa de Autotransportes OAXACA-ISTMO in Oaxaca, Mexico.

*Between Tehuantepec and Tuxtla Gutierrez*

Transportes "Diego de Mazariegos" in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico.

*Between Tuxtla Gutierrez and Comitan*

Soc. Cooperativa de Transportes "Tuxtla Gutierrez",  
S.C.L. in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico.

splashing and sloshing along through the muddy water. In some places, the precise "channel" is indicated by buoys.

The picturesque natives of Tehuantepec are the most colorful and distinctive in all Mexico. The market place is redolent with tuberoses and onions. The two or three hotels that exist are punk. Don't stay overnight.

After looking over the town for a while, shell out forty cents, hop on the rickety old bus and bump and thump along another very rough but short stretch to Ixtepec. It's about an hour's ride.

Ixtepec is a busy railroad town possessing several conveniences in spite of its remoteness. The Hotel Resgado is nice and clean, and several fairly good eating places are to be found. A day or two will amply suffice "to do" Ixtepec.

One or two very slow trains, the schedules of which are incredibly unreliable, are supposed to make the approximately two hundred fifty miles to Tapachula in fifteen hours. There are no dining cars and you may or may not succeed in arranging for a berth in the solitary ante-diluvian sleeping car that tags along at the tail end of the train.

The fare is about \$5.30 first class, \$2.90 second class. If you're squeamish, take the former. If you want local color with a vengeance, save the \$2.40 and ride the hard seats with the more than friendly peons.

Tapachula will be hot and dusty, but it has a very modern and most satisfactory hotel. The rooms are unusually clean; the food is appetizing and served in excellent taste.

Be sure to get your passport or tourist card visaed here by the Guatemalan Consulate. Failure to do so one year held me up five days in Tapachula, and Tapachula is emphatically no place to tarry five days.

Then look up the fairly comfortable station wagon that leaves two or three times a week for Guatemala City via Quezaltenango. The cost is \$10. The trip will exceed your fondest expectations, although in some places you'll freeze your ears off.

The Pan American Highway, more crooked than a ram's horn, follows the myriad hairpin curves of the ten thousand foot Mayan passes in the vicinity of Quezaltenango. The road is all-weather the entire distance and is quite smooth most of the way.

You will reach Quezaltenango in about six hours and spend part of the night there. I say "part of the night" because the station wagon continues on again from Quezaltenango about three-thirty in the morning to arrive in Guatemala City just after midday.

The following paragraphs are excerpts from a report by two men who traveled from Oaxaca to Guatemala City in April of 1946:

"Between Atlixco and Oaxaca the road was paved except for a satisfactory gravel stretch approximately twenty-five miles long. Several towns along the road had gasoline stations, but we were not able to obtain gasoline at other than black market prices until we reached Nochistlán.

"The road from Oaxaca to Tehuantepec is largely gravel surfaced. The first hundred miles contained but one short detour around a bridge which is not yet completed. Over the next forty miles one has to take many short detours and two long ones of approximately five and two miles respectively around bridges and culverts which are not yet completed. The remaining twenty miles to Tehuantepec are good gravel. The twenty miles from Tehuantepec to Salina Cruz are very rough and extremely dusty. Gasoline is available in both Tehuantepec and Salina Cruz, but no gasoline is obtainable between Oaxaca and Tehuantepec. At Salina Cruz, hotel accommodations are abominable. There is one garage where minor repairs can be made.

"From Tehuantepec to Zanatepec we encountered gravel road and oxcart trails. These seventy-one miles required five hours of driving time. From Tehuantepec we started up the Pan American Highway to Las Cruces over a good gravel surface, but after travelling a few miles, workmen along the Highway informed us that the road was not open to the public and that we would have to go by way of Arriaga. From Tepanatepec we travelled over a good oxcart trail for six miles to the small railroad town of Chiatas and then over a poor oxcart trail twenty-one miles to Arriaga. Repair facilities in Arriaga are fairly satisfactory, and sufficient gasoline is available. No gasoline, however, is available between Tehuantepec and Arriaga unless one goes by way of Ixtepec, some ten or fifteen miles out of the way.

"From Arriaga to Tuxtla Gutierrez the road is good all the way; there is a cobblestone road from outside Arriaga to Las Cruces, where it joins the Pan American Highway. From Las Cruces to Tuxtla we travelled over paved highway.

"In Tuxtla we stopped at the Hotel Brindis for nine pesos per day per person, American plan. There is another and newer hotel called the Jardín. Both hotels are satisfactory; private baths and fairly good food are available. Also ample gasoline is available in Tuxtla.

"From Tuxtla we proceeded over paved road to Chiapa de Corzo and over a good gravel road from there to San Cristobal de las Casas. The road climbs from approximately two thousand feet at Chiapa de Corzo to something over eight thousand feet within approximately twenty-six miles before reaching Las Casas. In Las Casas we secured hotel accommodations for nine pesos per day per person, American plan. Only public showers and toilets were available.

"From Las Casas we proceeded over a fair dirt road through beautiful, cool, wooded country to Comitán, which required five hours to travel these sixty-three miles. At Comitán we obtained lodging and food at the Hotel Central for six pesos per person per day, American plan.

"Upon leaving Comitán, the first thirty miles to Sachana were comparatively easy and the last five or six miles to the frontier were over a very bad ox trail. This trail descended considerably from Sachana to the frontier, and there were many large rocks

in the way. It was only with considerable difficulty that we could ease the car off and around the obstacles. It took us four and one half hours to travel the thirty-six miles from Comitán to the frontier. At the border both Mexican and Guatemalan officials were very cooperative and while they sympathized with our desire to drive through to Guatemala City they were quite emphatic that such a trip was impossible by passenger vehicle. They soon convinced us that this was so by pointing out the two trails leading out of Gracias a Dios, one by way of Jacaltenango and the other by way of Barillas. According to the officials, two jeeps had made the trip from Huehuetenango to Gracias a Dios over these two aforementioned trails. The jeep that had come by way of Jacaltenango had been carried by one hundred Indians in shifts of twenty-five Indians each. The other had made the trip under its own power but was a wreck by the time it had arrived at Gracias a Dios. This jeep had required four days to cover sixty-eight kilometers from Barillas to Gracias a Dios. The Guatemalan border officials further stated that if we could reach Barillas we would have little trouble in driving the rest of the way to Huehuetenango and then to Guatemala City. In order to further convince ourselves of the alleged impossibility of travelling from Gracias a Dios to Barillas, we hired horses and rode twenty-five kilometers into Guatemala and over the trail successfully maneuvered by the Guatemalan engineer in his jeep."

FOR "TOUGHIES"  
via Tuxtla Gutierrez and Huehuetenango

For specific directions on "how to play this game" refer back to the chapter relating to my actual trip. The fifth to the eighth days cover the motorable section from Tehuantepec to Comitán de las Flores. The ninth to the fourteenth days take you on foot through the Mayan Highlands to Paquix. From Paquix a short taxi ride will bring you to Huehuetenango and a much, much longer bus run will land you in Guatemala City.

Here are excerpts from a most informative letter received June 26th, 1948 from my extremely gracious and cooperative friend, Señor Filemón Zurita Vásquez of Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico. He is Chief of the entire most southerly division of the National Mexican Highway System.

The road is now paved from Mexico to a point 150 kms. beyond Oaxaca. Oil surface is being laid from Tehuantepec to Oaxaca; and between Tehuantepec and the Ostuta River paving will be finished this year.

On the section from Oaxaca to Tehuantepec, there are still only two permanent bridges to be built, but there are two temporary bridges at these crossings.

Between Tehuantepec and the Ostuta River all permanent bridges are already finished. From the Ostuta River (the beginning of the Tuxtla Gutierrez Division) to Tuxtla, there remain only two permanent bridges to be erected, but the temporary bridges are in good condition. Between the Ostuta River and Las Cruces, a distance of 90 kms., the road is being paved, and we expect to have it finished early in October.



Between Tuxtla Gutierrez and San Cristobal Las Casas, 83 kms. have temporary surfacing with sub-base of selected material. From Las Casas to Comitán there is a 100 km. long section surfaced, all-weather road.

From Comitán to the Guatemala frontier (Ejido de El Ocotal) the distance is 100 kms., of which 30 are already built, 18 with final cross section and first class pavement, the rest with lower standards and 7 meters minimum width.

At the end of the cut you can already see the Mexico-Guatemala frontier, and with a little more work we shall reach the connecting point for the Cristobal Colon Highway from Mexico and the Franklin D. Roosevelt from Central America.

Although it rains heavily now, the cars of the National Highway Department and of the Contracting Co. can reach the end of construction. There is a passenger bus that travels during the dry season between Comitán and Trinitaria, but within a month the 5 masonry structures will be completed as well as the temporary surfacing, and passenger traffic will be resumed then. This bus covers the 18 kms. in 30 minutes, and the fare is 80 cents Mexican money.

In the spring of 1946 much of this section was under construction. From Tehuantepec to Tuxtla Gutierrez Mrs. Stephens courageously traveled by government gasoline truck, saddle horses up to their bellies in blasted rock and the final stretch in a truck loaded with road workers. This latter truck was chaperoned by a soldier fully armed with a rifle, pistol and knife to preserve decorum. In one place the Highway was so narrow, several laborers jumped off the car, supporting it by their arms to keep it from pitching down a five hundred foot precipice. Poor dear, she was black and blue as a result of the trip. Not enough that she repeatedly bumped her head against the roof of the truck cab, she continuously jounced against an oversized revolver our undersized road engineer and guide insisted upon wearing at his side. The ordeal lasted from seven in the morning to seven at night, excessively strenuous every kilometer Down That Pan American Highway.

#### ALTERNATE FOR "TOUGHIES"

##### Via Comitán, Comalapa, Motozintla, and Tapachula

A strange bit of improbable, if not impossible country lies between Comitán de las Flores and Tapachula. Originally, it was intended that the Pan American Highway would follow this route, but the terrain is terrific, so much so that even now no wheeled vehicles can make it. The trip takes five days on horseback. A Tapachula friend told me with a straight face that one gorge trail is so steep and the ledge so narrow that horns are hung at the beginning and end of the trail in order that

a horseman may signal his coming, since two cannot pass. The theoretical inference is that should such a tragic meeting occur, one or the other rider must jump out of the window and turn to the left!

All of this brings to mind a weird yarn spun by a guide of our own Grand Canyon. If you've been out there, you'll recall that in the dead center of the mile-deep, mile-wide canyon stands a gigantic rock formation. This, my mentor advised, was erroneously dubbed "The Battleship." Actually, he said, the massive pile had been erected in memory of a remarkable equine belonging to a Captain Yancy.

Seems this horse was a jumper of considerable prowess, that while still in his prime, thought nothing at all of leaping the mile gap over the Canyon. It is reluctantly admitted, however, that in his more mature years, age played hob with the muscles of his hind legs. Notwithstanding, Captain Yancy, prompted by a heavy wager, attempted the leap once too often. His mount, spurred by a good hard dash to the rim, got off to a flying start, but before negotiating more than half the distance he weakened. Halfway over, more intelligent than game, this fine old horse, realizing his inadequacies, veered completely around in mid-air and returned to the roof of his father, on the very rim from which he'd taken off.

The cowboy was right. Captain Yancy's horse deserved this monumental recognition.

I'm a long way getting to the point. It's this. For safety's sake, if you essay to make the Comitán/Tapachula section over the breathtaking passes of the Sierra Madre Range, take along a horse from Arizona.

To conclude on a more serious note, trail data on this rugged section is most meager. Every little bit helps though, and I feel no embarrassment in adding this oddment, discovered among some old papers. At least it covers about two-thirds of the distance from Comitán to Tapachula.

| Name of Location       | Kilometers | Elevation  |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Tapachula              | 0          | 163 meters |
| Colonia (El Chaparrón) |            | 266        |
| Paso Rio Coatan        | 10.3       | 310        |
| Colonia San Dimas      | 13.5       | 510        |
| Finca San Luis Nejapa  | 16.5       | 460        |
| Finca Chapultepec      | 18         | 390        |
| Finca Quién Sabe?      | 21         | 573        |

| Name of Location       | Kilometers | Elevation  |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Finca Lagunas          | 25         | 522 meters |
| Finca Independencia    | 28         | 533        |
| Colonia El Ejido       | 29.5       | 540        |
| Colonia El Toril       | 30.2       | 527        |
| Finca Escocia          | 38         | 312        |
| Finca Santa Rita       | 40         | 401        |
| Finca Nueva Alemania   | 41.5       | 478        |
| Finca Argovia          | 47         | 528        |
| Finca Marivillas       | 48         | 575        |
| Finca Genova           | 52         | 805        |
| Finca Hamburgo         | 55         | 971        |
| Ejido El Naranjo       | 63.5       | 1385       |
| Puerto El Boqueron     | 78         | 2040       |
| Toquian de Berriozabal | 83.5       | 1743       |
| Rio Itzumu             | 86.9       | 1544       |
| Puerto de la Pena      | 98.7       | 2069       |
| Colonia Buenos Aires   | 103        | ....       |
| Motozintla             | 110        | 1100       |
| Mazapa                 | 125        | ....       |

FOR "HALF AND HALF'S"  
Via Suchiate and Ayutla

Should you be a bit too sane to essay the "toughies' tour" and yet insane enough to pass up the slightly strenuous Tapachula/Guatemala City station wagon alternate with its admittedly freakish hours of departure and hairpin curves through the magnificent Mayan Highlands, here's a third way into Guatemala from Mexico.

Don't get off the Ixtepec train at Tapachula. Stay on for about thirteen miles farther until you cross the International frontier at the Suchiate River. On the Guatemala side you'll find the small town of Ayutla. I've stayed overnight there, but so have mosquitoes. And accommodations for lodging and meals are most unsatisfactory.

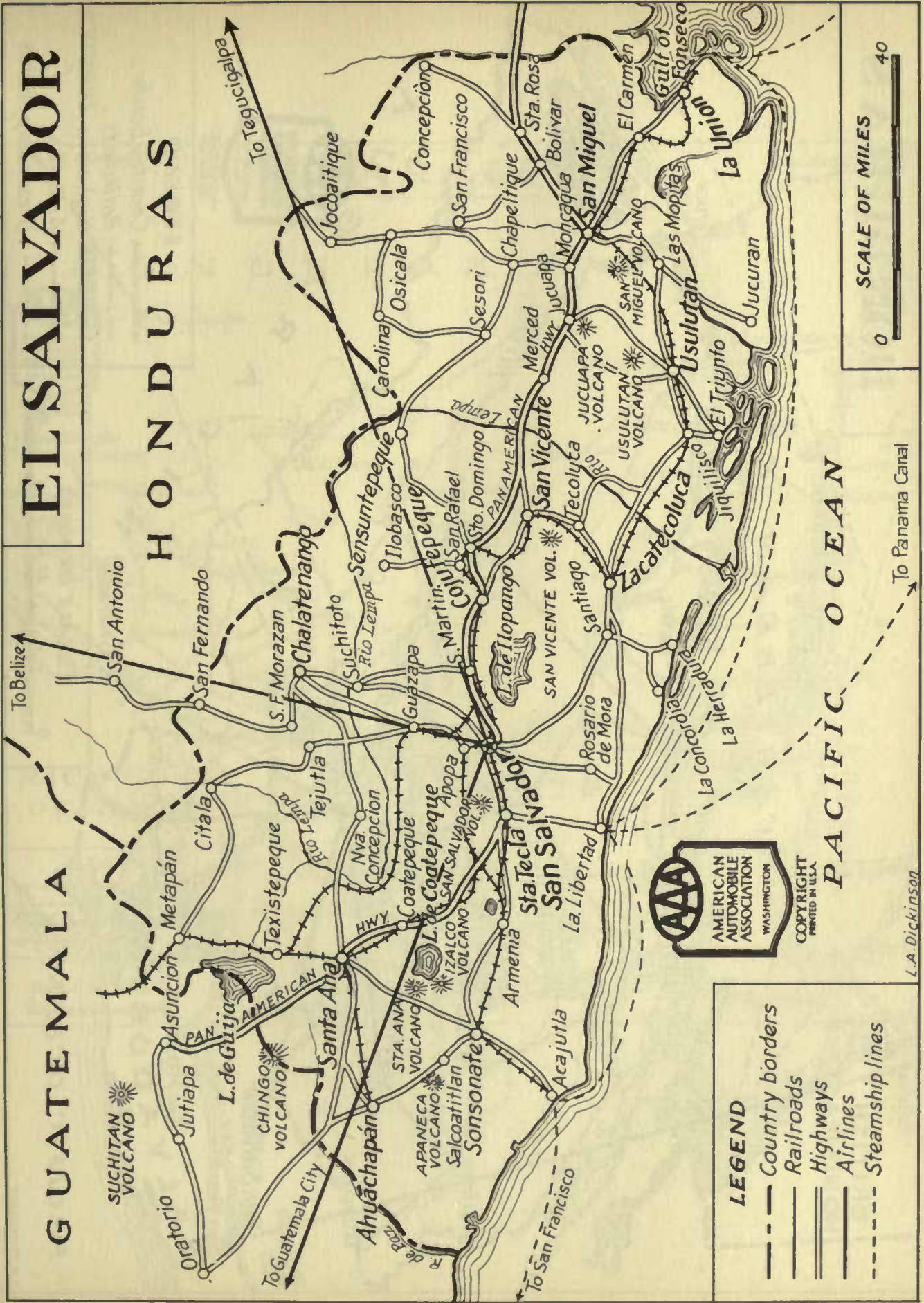
From Ayutla a very clean, very punctual narrow gauge railroad makes the one hundred seventy-seven mile run to the capital, Guatemala City, starting at 6:28 a. m. and arriving at 3:40 p. m. Fare—\$2.65



# EL SALVADOR

## HONDURAS

## GUATEMALA



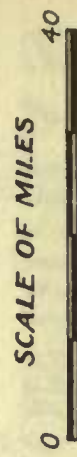
**LEGEND**

- Country borders
- Railroads
- == Highways
- Airlines
- - - - Steamship lines



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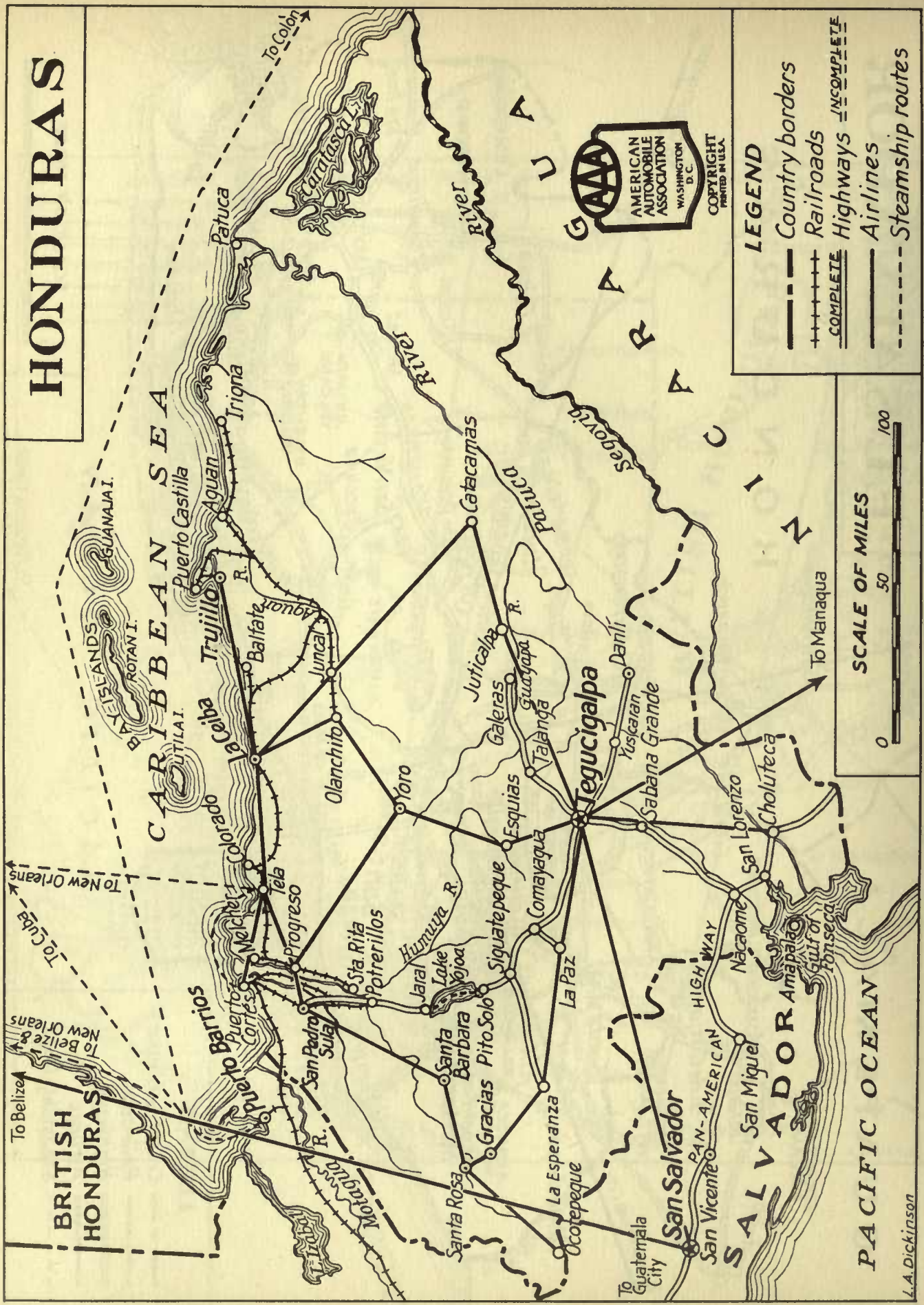
## PACIFIC OCEAN



To Panama Canal

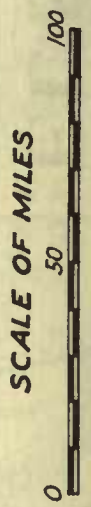
L.A. Dickinson

# HONDURAS



## LEGEND

- Country borders
- +— Railroads
- +— COMPLETE Highways ~~INCOMPLETE~~
- Airlines
- - - Steamship routes



BRITISH HONDURAS

PACIFIC OCEAN

# NICARAGUA

## HONDURAS



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### LEGEND

- Country borders
- Railroads
- COMPLETE Highways INCOMPLETE
- Airlines
- Steamship routes

SCALE OF MILES  
0 50

L.A. Dickinson

## COSTA RICA

CARIBBEAN SEA

To San Pedro

Tegucigalpa

Gracias a Dios

To San Salvador

Nacaome

GULF OF FONSECA

Ocotral

Pueblo Nuevo

Jinotega

Matazalpa

Esteli

Somotillo

El Sauce

Dario

Chinandega

Leon

Momotombo

Momotombo Vol.

Managua

Oboaco

Tipitapa

Masaya

Granada

Juigalpa

Acoyapa

Diriamba

Jinotepe

Rivas

San Jorge

San Juan del Sur

San Miguelito

Fuerte San Carlos

San Jacinto

Bluefields

Rama

Siquia R.

Las Perlas

GRANDE RIVER

Prinzapolca R.

Babana R.

Cuculata R.

Bonanza

Puerto Cabezas

Marata

Wounta

Prinzapolca

To New Orleans

San Juan del Norte (Greytown)

To Limon

To San Jose

San Juan R.

## GUATEMALA CITY TO MANAGUA

Three or four buses regularly cover the first one hundred sixty-five mile stretch from Guatemala City to San Salvador. But every one I could ferret out started at some such ungodly hour as three-thirty or four in the morning. Better write Lima Hermanos in Guatemala City or correspond with the American Consulate for further information. "Lima" not only seems the best known bus line in these here parts, but it is also headquarters for data on the longer run through to Managua, Nicaragua, and up to Tapachula, Mexico.

These buses run Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays every week of the year, leaving Guatemala City very early in the morning. The tariff is \$5.00 for what I vaguely recall was about a ten hour journey to San Salvador.

I wish I could give you similarly precise data bearing upon the service from San Salvador to Managua, Nicaragua, but to quote from Lima Hermanos' last advice, buses do not yet make the trip regularly. Bus travelers over this section of the Pan American Highway are still few and far between. When, as and if enough people collect to fill a car, they make a special trip. It takes about two days and costs in the neighborhood of \$12.00. All schedules and tariffs are of the haziest in this land of maybe's and mañana's; so don't start without first inquiring for up-to-the-minute information either from consulates or bus agents.

It's at an unbelievably insignificant, hot crossroads settlement of a half dozen shacks with the deceptively grandiloquent monicker of Júcaro Galan that you turn off the main stem if the detour to Tegucigalpa seems desirable.

Of course, you'll want to learn about the countryside itself. Here are factual reports from three friends who definitely know about that of which they write. One is a long-time resident of Guatemala; the second is a resident of Honduras, and the third lives in Nicaragua.

## GUATEMALA

"The highway between Guatemala City and El Salvador/Guatemala frontier is one hundred and sixty-eight kilometers. It is all-weather road and passable at any time. I came over last week after quite heavy rains and drove from the frontier to my office in three hours and forty minutes. The country is quite rugged rising to about six thousand three hundred feet in the first eighteen kilometers from Guatemala City. Thence it drops to about two thousand four hundred feet at kilometer sixty-six. From there it rises again to



about four thousand three hundred feet in kilometer eighty-eight, at the city of San José de Acatempa. Thence it drops to about two thousand eight hundred feet at kilometer one hundred and eighteen, at the city of Jutiapa and thence to the frontier where it is about two thousand feet. All this Guatemala section is mountainous, and with the exception of the two ranges, the country is generally rolling and hilly. A good portion, at least as far as kilometer seventy-five, is excellent agricultural country and quite fertile. The next fifty kilometers to kilometer one hundred and twenty-five are mountainous with some forests, but mostly rocky and arid. From kilometer one hundred and twenty-five to the border is a quite good agricultural and dairy district.

"From the Guatemala/Salvador border to the city of San Salvador ninety-seven kilometers, the highway is all asphalt pavement and runs through a hilly but very rich section of El Salvador. For a distance of one hundred and thirty-seven kilometers from the city of San Salvador to the city of San Miguel, the highway is paved with asphalt and goes through a hilly but well cultivated and prosperous section. At kilometer ninety the road passes over the Cuscatlan Bridge, a one thousand three hundred and fifty foot suspension span which is probably the longest on the west coast of America, south of San Diego.

"From San Miguel one hundred and thirty-seven, the highway goes through a rather level section with some hills to the port of La Union on the Gulf of Fonseca which is one of the best, if not the best harbor on the Pacific coast of Latin America. This section is fully graded and is now in process of being paved with asphalt. Three bridges are nearing completion. This will complete the structures. The asphalt work is now in kilometer one hundred and fifty-five. Union is at kilometer one hundred and eighty-four.

"From kilometer one hundred and seventy-seven which is seven kilometers before entering La Union, the highway turns north and goes through a flat slightly rolling territory to the International Bridge at kilometer two hundred and eleven, the El Salvador/Honduras border over the Goascoran River. This section is not paved but fully graded and practically all structures are completed. Two small bridges are now nearing completion. We have not started asphaltting this section as yet but it is passable at any time and within a year should be completely paved. This section has considerable agricultural development and will probably be developed more now that they have good access. These sections between San Miguel, La Union and Goascoran are less than two hundred feet above sea level with the single exception of El Gavilan which is the highest point and it is not more than eight hundred feet above sea level. From Union to Goascoran the elevation is less than one hundred feet.

"A résumé of distance, Guatemala City to El Salvador border is one hundred and sixty-eight kilometers of rolling country quite scenic and fertile. The road is not paved but good and is easily traveled in any season of the year. The El Salvador border to San Miguel in El Salvador is two hundred and thirty-four kilometers of excellent asphalt paved highway which can be traveled at any time of the year at speeds up to forty-five miles an hour. From San Miguel to Goascoran on Honduras border, the road is still under construction but passable at all seasons and nearing completion. The total distance from Guatemala City to the Honduras Border is four hundred and seventy-six kilometers or two hundred and ninety-eight miles.

"Another route from San Miguel to Goascoran is the U.S.E.D. Pioneer Road which is in fair shape and is easily passable in any weather. This road is thirteen kilometers

shorter but due to heavier grades and sharper curves the driving time is about the same and the terrain is much less interesting.

"The high point in the East Guatemala section is near Guatemala City, six thousand three hundred feet. The high point in El Salvador section is the city of Santa Tecla, three thousand feet."

#### HONDURAS

"Herewith is a running description of the country through which the Inter-American Highway, Section of Honduras, lies.

"Beginning at the Salvador border (Goascoran River) the country is rolling with mountains to the left and right. The town of Nacaome lies on the right at kilometer 35 from the border. Leaving Nacaome the country is flat and you cross the Guacirope and Grande rivers arriving at the junction of the road from Tegucigalpa and the small village of Jícaro Galan. The next town is San Lorenzo, the port for passengers and freight to and from Amapala. The country continues flat with mountains in the background. After crossing Agua Caliente and Marial bridges, where there are many hot springs, you arrive at Choluteca, the largest and oldest town on the Highway through Honduras. One point of interest in Choluteca is an old church built in 1637. You cross the Choluteca River at this point and continue in what is known as the Choluteca flats where there is much grazing and scattered bushy vegetation. At Las Cabezas, kilometer 99 from the Salvador border, you begin to climb to a height of 3,776 feet—the Continental Divide. At this point there is a wonderful view of the Bay of Fonseca and the countries of Nicaragua, Honduras and Salvador. This point is known as James' Point. Volcanoes are plainly sighted in both Nicaragua and Salvador. The road remains in mountainous country with very little farming. Comalí Camp is next and then San Marcos. After leaving San Marcos you enter the pine timber section and the prettiest part of the road. Mountainous country continues all the way to El Espino, the border of Nicaragua. The Highway through Honduras is an all-weather road."

#### NICARAGUA

"Managua Elevation is about 170 feet. Leaving Managua headed for the Honduras Border the first 52 kilometers are flat. Then comes a moderately long climb, three or four kilometers, to a Central plateau, and next a gently rolling country toward Sébaco.

"A few kilometers from Sébaco you are near the edge of an old lake bed which now becomes much water-logged during the rainy season. You follow more or less around the edge of this to Sébaco (102 kilometers from Managua) elevation 1,400 feet.

"From Sébaco you head almost due west and cross this old lake bed for 11 kms. You then climb and wind through the mountains until you start dropping down into the Estelí Basin. Maximum elevation through the mountains about thirty-two hundred feet. Estelí is twenty-four hundred feet high.

"Estelí town is near one edge of a great bowl surrounded by mountains and is about thirty miles from Sébaco. North across this bowl for eight or nine miles you get into the mountains again and from there to the border it is mostly rugged mountain country.

"From Managua to Sébaco is a bituminous paved road."

## SAN SALVADOR TO SAN LORENZO, HONDURAS

(The Longest Way Round Is the Sweetest Way Home)

This is just the right prescription when you're escorting Nellie home, and it also applies to an exciting variation my wife and I injected into our Pan American meanderings the last time out.

If you're courageous, curious and sufficiently unintelligent, here's the recipe for an extracurricular jaunt from San Salvador to Jicaro Galan, Honduras, via Amapala. But don't say I didn't warn you! It's just plain "orful" but it's certainly unique.

Most folks are unaware that a narrow-gauge toy railroad runs right through from Ayutla on the Mexican/Guatemalan border to the Gulf of Fonseca. This choo-choo heroically puffs up hill and down dale under the added weight of its corporate title: "Ferrocarriles Internacionales de Centro America."

It's this line on which you venture forth, but as diners are unknown and native track-side food dirty and unappetizing, have your hotel in San Salvador put up a box lunch, a task at which it will excel.

Then at nine forty-five some morning climb aboard a south-bound train which by the grace of heaven and a long-handled toothbrush may pull into La Union at nightfall.

The fellows running this outfit certainly subscribe to the theory that haste makes waste for the one hundred fifty mile ramble takes more than nine hours.

But that's only the starter.

You detrain in probably the hottest, dirtiest town south of the North Pole, all dressed up and nowhere to go, not even to a fifth rate hotel, though a couple of dumps (and I use this old Anglo-Saxon word with full intent) maliciously attempt to masquerade as such.

It'll be too hot and sticky to sleep and the hotel (?) too messy to lounge around, so make the best of it by strolling down to the shore of the truly beautiful Gulf of Fonseca. May you be so fortunate as to arrive in La Union either at sunset or when the moon is full. By happy coincidence we did both.

In any event, you'll see the sunrise, for at seven you take a small and not over-clean launch for a two hour run to Tiger Island. This trip is occasionally very rough. Following a brief call at Amapala, Honduras' sole Pacific port, the launch heads for the mainland, reaching San Lorenzo



in two hours and a half. The approach is so shallow that passengers and baggage are "lightered" on the shoulders of the most piratical-looking natives you'll ever see this side of the Barbary Coast or the Bowery. For Mrs. Stephens and me, it had been many a long year since we'd ridden piggy-back, particularly with the added danger of being dunked in the briny.

A lop-sided, thoroughly undependable native bus then takes you the last seven or eight miles to Jícaro Galán, the junction point on the Pan American Highway.

### MANAGUA TO SAN JOSÉ

FOR "SOFTIES"—by plane or bus

FOR "TOUGHIES"—afoot

A TROPICAL RIVER DIVERSION—via Bebedero

#### FOR "SOFTIES"

Nicaragua, in spite of its wide expanse, is blessed with an all-weather road throughout its entire length. You can travel by bus any month of the year from the Honduran to the Costa Rican borders. Buses of decidedly second class run from Managua to Rivas. Once you reach the town of Rivas (sixty-eight miles south of Managua) or rather the isolated frontier station of Peña Blanca, twenty-odd miles beyond, not only the hard surface, but the whole gosh-blamed road itself disappears! Here you enter the lonely Province of Guanacaste where for miles and miles nothing but faint oxcart tracks or horse trails are to be found.

If you dislike unnecessary physical hardships, by all means hop one of the daily planes from Managua to San José. The fare is \$19.00 and the trip takes ninety minutes.

#### FOR "TOUGHIES"

Make the three hour bus stretch from Managua to Rivas, skirting en route lovely, lengthy Lake Nicaragua dominated by the island of Ometepe with its five thousand sixty-four foot volcanic peak. The fare is eighty cents.

There are a couple of places posing as hotels in Rivas, but their standards fall somewhat short of those at the Waldorf or the Ritz.

Rivas is definitely no place to get impatient even though it is flat,

hot and dusty. You won't, however, be annoyed by tourist hordes (American or otherwise), for you'll be very much off the beaten track.

Sooner or later, some kind of a truck will show up to take you to Peña Blanca. I'd allow three days hangover at the minimum. Peña Blanca, consisting of a shabby, old two-story frontier station and a straw hut or two, is twenty-eight miles south of Rivas. It is "the end of the line." That's all the road there is; there isn't any more.

Crossing the Nicaragua/Costa Rica border is precisely like stepping off the edge of the dining room table. North of the line there is a fair highway stretching back without a break two hundred thirty-nine miles to the Honduras border. An inch south of the line, the highway just ain't.

If you've patiently read thus far, you are one of the doubly select he-men, who find zest in the unusual, regardless of the physical hardships incurred. In other words, the Peña Blanca/La Cruz hike is exclusively for those who prefer the role of pioneers in the rough.

Though thirteen miles in length, the stretch from the border to La Cruz presents ample difficulties. There are several rivers to ford, some ravines to negotiate along narrow stony trails and plenty of lonesomeness. If you pass more than one house or three people en route, you'll be lucky, and in all probability, it will be torrid.

Horses, I guess, can be had, even an oxcart if you spend half a lifetime negotiating in Rivas. For those hardy chaps who choose shank's mare I caution against snakes and recommend, for that reason, high shoes.

Don't get overambitious along the way and expend excess energy chopping down trees. Even the trees are dangerous! The natives tell of at least one variety cursed with such poisonous sap as to have permanently blinded more than one careless woodsman.

This strenuous safari would be sufficiently enervating were there a worth-while goal. Actually La Cruz, the end of the trail, is anything but! It's about as colorless a town as you could imagine, sans hotels, sans restaurants, sans everything worth-while in life.

In La Cruz dry weather buses of markedly inferior type operate most erratically. A friend recently sent this information, but don't put too much reliance on the data—bus transportation in Guanacaste Province being still much on the raw side.

"Yes, there is bus service between La Cruz and Las Cañas, except when the rainy season interferes. There are usually two buses every

other day, sometimes every day at the end of the dry season. The trip takes about nine hours and costs twenty-eight colones.

"There is also bus service between Las Cañas and San José. (From Las Cañas to Puntarenas there are no buses during the rainy season. From Puntarenas to San José, the buses run year round. Four buses leave Las Cañas every other day. The trip takes about eight hours and costs twenty-two colones (about \$3.74 U.S.)."

#### A TROPICAL RIVER DIVERSION

(Liberia to Puntarenas and San José via the Bebedero River Launch)

In 1945, when I made my first trip to Guanacaste Province, there was no public bus service beyond Las Cañas. As a result I veered off to the west in a ramshackle native *camion* to the banks of the Bebedero River. Delays en route brought me to that smelly, filthy river settlement after dark. The weekly launch to Puntarenas was not to sail until 7:30 a. m., and as I had no bed, I slept on two solid wooden benches shoved together in the storage shed of the launch company. I was a hundredfold repaid, however, by an amazing five hour trip the next morning down the tropical, narrow river to Puntarenas.

The launch was foul and the accommodations of the worst sort. I scarcely had room to sit or stand, but the sights along the river bank repaid these inconveniences.

We hadn't shoved off a half hour before bands of monkeys swung through the tree tops close to the river's edge. Huge macaws eighteen inches tall with feathers of the brightest red, yellow and blue rested on the branches. Enormous alligators lazed in the sun along the bank. Overhead sailed great flocks of white heron.

As the river widens out, the trip becomes proportionately less colorful, the last hour or two being downright monotonous. Nor does the drab approach to flat Puntarenas afford much relief.

I found this town without color, quite messy and extremely hot. The single redeeming feature, so far as I was concerned, was the palm-lined bathing beach. Offhand, I'd classify the hotels as being mediocre. Surely they're nothing to write home about with any wild enthusiasm.

I spent Saturday night in a fairly comfortable hotel in Puntarenas and the next morning enjoyed a pleasant sixty-eight mile electric train ride up from this Pacific port to San José. Luckily, clean efficient electric trains operate every day on honest-to-gosh schedules from Puntarenas

to San José. The run takes about four hours, passing through a most fertile countryside in the climb from sea level to the nearly mile-high capital. Take a local. Yes, it's slower, but you'll be compensated by the bits of primitive village life seen at each stop.

Some fatherly advice: If you even remotely consider this detour from That Pan American Highway, sit down beforehand and scribble an inquiry or two either to our consul in Puntarenas or directly to Empresa de Transportes Marítimos del Golfo de Nicoya in the same city.

Here is their schedule but since then it has no doubt undergone more changes than a chameleon:

Boat Fares, Bebedero—Puntarenas

107 Kilometers

5 hours

(Empresa de Transportes Marítimos)

5.00 colones per passenger (no round trips).

1.00 colon per quintal (100 lbs.) plus an additional charge of 0.30 for loading and 0.30 for unloading services—total 1.60 colones.

Time schedules vary with the high tide.

Schedules of other smaller companies (not available in San José) are very much the same. Charter services are usually available.

Here's my latest time table for the train trip. Again I recommend an eleventh hour check and double check if you intend going via Bebedero and Puntarenas. The name of the transportation company is Ferrocarril Eléctrico al Pacífico. Address your inquiries either to Puntarenas or San José.

1st class—9.00 colones (one colon equals U.S. \$0.17825)

2nd class—6.35 colones

There are no round trip fares except for the excursion trains (*trenes de excursion*) which are scheduled every Saturday, and on other special occasions. Round trip—9 colones—leaves San José at 3 p. m. coming back Sunday at 4 p. m.

Freight fares vary according to the type of merchandise.

## SAN JOSÉ TO DAVID

FOR "SOFTIES"—by plane

FOR "TOUGHIES"—via Buenos Aires and El Volcan

FOR "MIDDLE OF THE ROADERS"—by plane, a four mile walk by foot or horse and narrow gauge



| LEA PARA ABAJO                 |                       |                                    |        | ESTOS TRENES HARAN<br>SERVICIO DE PASAJE EN<br>TODAS LAS ESTACIONES | LEA PARA ARRIBA     |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------|---|---------------------|--------|--------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Diario,<br>excepto<br>Domingos | Domingos<br>solamente | De lunes a<br>viernes<br>solamente | Diario |   | Diario              | Diario | Diario | Diario,<br>excepto<br>Domingos | Diario,<br>excepto<br>Domingos |       |
| <b>ESTACIONES</b>              |                       |                                    |        |   |                     |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 5.30                           | 7.00                  | 17.20                              |        | 8.00  | SAN JOSE            | 12.10  |        | 13.05                          | 6.50                           | 11.30 |
| 5.43                           | 7.13                  | 17.33                              |        | 8.13  | SABANA              |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | PAYAS               | 11.55  |        | 12.52                          | 6.38                           | 11.15 |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | LIZANO              |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 6.04                           | 7.26                  | 17.46                              |        | 8.29  | ELECTRIONA          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | SAN ANTONIO         | 11.40  |        | 12.37                          | 6.24                           | 11.00 |
| 6.15                           | 7.34                  | 17.54                              |        | 8.37  | SAN RAFAEL          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | OJO DE AGUA         | 11.29  |        | 12.27                          | 6.15                           | 10.45 |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | CORTIJO             |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 6.38                           |                       |                                    |        |   | NUESTRO AMO         |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 7.15                           | 7.41                  | 18.01                              |        | 8.45  | CIRUELAS            | 11.20  |        | 12.17                          | 6.07                           | 10.35 |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | LAGUNILLAS          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 6.44                           |                       |                                    |        |   | MONTECILLOS         |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 6.55                           | 8.00                  | 18.20                              |        |   | ALAJUELA            |        |        | 12.00                          | 5.50                           |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | APARTADERO FOURNIER |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | SANCHEZ             |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | SIQUIARES           |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 7.37                           |                       |                                    |        | 8.59  | SANTA RITA          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | TURRUCARES          | 11.01  |        |                                |                                | 10.10 |
| 8.00                           |                       |                                    |        |   | CEBADILLA           |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 8.10                           |                       |                                    |        | 9.22  | ATENAS              | 10.45  |        |                                |                                | 9.50  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        | 9.30  | BALSA               | 10.30  |        |                                |                                | 9.30  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | TORNOS              |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | PONCHO MORA         |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | MANGOS              |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 8.25                           |                       |                                    |        | 9.45  | ESCOBAL             | 10.15  |        |                                |                                | 9.08  |
| 8.35                           |                       |                                    |        | 9.51  | QUEBRADAS           | 10.09  |        |                                |                                | 9.00  |
| 8.45                           |                       |                                    |        | 10.00   | CONCEPCION          | 10.00  |        |                                |                                | 8.45  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | DANTAS              |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 9.01                           |                       |                                    |        | 10.12   | HACIENDA VIEJA      | 9.45   |        |                                |                                | 8.30  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | MARICHAL            |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 9.38                           |                       |                                    |        | 10.25   | OROTINA             | 9.38   |        |                                |                                | 8.20  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | MASTATE             |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 9.50                           |                       |                                    |        | 10.40   | COYOLAR             | 9.27   |        |                                |                                | 7.57  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | POZON               |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | MUÑOZ               |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 10.02                          |                       |                                    |        | 10.50   | CEIBA               | 9.13   |        |                                |                                | 7.40  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | HIDALGO             |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 10.12                          |                       |                                    |        | 10.58   | CASCAJAL            | 9.07   |        |                                |                                | 7.31  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | UVITA               |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 10.29                          |                       |                                    |        | 11.10   | JESUS MARIA         | 8.54   |        |                                |                                | 7.16  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | CAMBALACHE          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 10.35                          |                       |                                    |        | 11.15   | SALINAS             | 8.48   |        |                                |                                | 7.0   |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | ARANCIBIA           |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | MATA LIMON          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 10.45                          |                       |                                    |        | 11.25   | CALDERA             | 8.42   |        |                                |                                | 7.00  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | KILOMETRO 81        |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | CABEZAS             |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | PAN DE AZUCAR       |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        | 6.15  | GREGG               |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | ESPARTA             |        | 15.40  |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | LA LIGIA            |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | LA JUNTA            |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 11.10                          |                       |                                    |        | 6.35  | BARRANCA            | 8.24   | 15.25  |                                |                                | 6.40  |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | SANTA ROSA          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | RIOJA               |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | ROBLE               |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | SAN ISIDRO          |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | CARRIZAL            |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | CHACARITA           |        |        |                                |                                |       |
|                                |                       |                                    |        |   | COCAL               |        |        |                                |                                |       |
| 11.37                          |                       |                                    |        | 6.59  | PUNTARENAS          | 8.00   | 15.00  |                                |                                | 6.00  |

## FOR "SOFTIES"

Throughout the entire length of the Pan American Highway, with the exception of the Darien Jungles south of the Canal, there is no more trying terrain than that of southern Costa Rica and northern Panama.

The most thrilling section is over the majestic two mile high passes of the "Mountain of the Dead Ones" just below Cartago, Costa Rica. Fortunately for tourists, this stretch is passable by bus and private car.

The scenery is so superb, so thoroughly worth the extra two days, that I don't suggest, even to "Softies," that they fly direct from San José to David without first making the San Isidro detour.

Regrettably, there is no air service from San Isidro to David, though there is a local airfield at the former little village.

By all means make this fine, exciting truck, auto or bus trip, even though you will be obliged to backtrack to San José before flying farther south. Three years ago this little trek required seven days on horseback. Now cars do it in five hours.

## FOR "TOUGHIES"

Here's a real challenge. For grim details refer back to the record of my actual trip dealing with the nine day jungle jaunt from San Isidro to El Volcan, where I struck the first wagon road in one hundred twenty-one miles.

A weird old native jalopy runs daily from El Volcan, Panama, to Concepcion, requiring a half hour and costing a dollar. Then it moseys on down to David in one hour for but fifty cents. No, this is not a mistake. The longer ride actually costs less because the road surface is far better and the passenger traffic much heavier as you approach the important and larger "metropolis" of David.

## FOR "MIDDLE OF THE ROADERS"

Here's an alternate diversion for those who have a yen for variety. Be sure however to have your American passport, your Costa Rican exit visa and most vital of all, your entrance visa in apple-pie order or you'll end up in the Puerto Armuelles pokey as I did. Local yokel immigration officials are apt to be ignorant and adamant.

From San Isidro catch a local TACA plane to La Cuesta, a Costa

Rican frontier village. Presently the schedule between San Isidro and La Cuesta is Mondays and Fridays departing San Isidro at 8 a. m. and arriving in La Cuesta at 9:45 a. m. The return flight is on the same days, departing La Cuesta at 9:35 a. m. and arriving in San Isidro at 12:05 p. m.

The cost is only a few dollars. I remember La Cuesta principally because of the many saddle horses tethered along the sides of its tiny, grassy lanes. There are a few shacks and one general store. Better take along some nourishment in the form of a picnic lunch tossed together in San Isidro, as well as a thermos bottle of amoeba-free water. There are neither comfortable sleeping nor satisfactory eating accommodations to be had anywhere within fifty or sixty miles of La Cuesta.

I walked the four miles from La Cuesta to Progreso. It's level country, and there's a pleasant lane the entire distance, bordered for the most part by a succession of cool, green banana plantations. Of course, I suppose you could hire a horse but after the cramped ride in the small local plane, I was only too glad to stretch my legs.

Progreso is a messy railroad settlement of perhaps a dozen thatched shacks, a very, very "local" stop on the narrow-gauge track that makes two daily runs each way between Puerto Armuelles on the Pacific and David.

A first class ticket from Progreso to David costs \$1.50 (second class \$.75). The running time (walking would be a more realistic adjective) is two hours and a half.

## FERROCARRIL NACIONAL DE CHIRIQUI

### ITINERARIO DE TRENES

LÍNEA DE PUERTO ARMUELLES

LÍNEA DE PUERTO ARMUELLES

|                       | DIARIO ↓ |       |      | DIARIO ↓                 |       |      |
|-----------------------|----------|-------|------|--------------------------|-------|------|
|                       | AM.      | AM.   | PM.  | AM.                      | PM.   | PM.  |
| Salida de David       | 6.45     | 9.00  | 2.00 | Salida de Pto. Armuelles | 6.45  | 2.00 |
| " " Alanje            | 7.12     | 9.27  | 2.27 | " " Progreso             | 8.23  | 3.38 |
| " " Concepción        | 7.42     | 9.57  | 2.57 | " " Gariché              | 8.46  | 4.01 |
| " " Santa Marta       | 8.04     | 10.19 | 3.19 | " " Santa Marta          | 9.06  | 4.21 |
| " " Gariché           | 8.24     | 10.39 | 3.39 | " " Concepción           | 9.28  | 4.43 |
| " " Progreso          | 8.47     | 11.02 | 4.02 | " " Alanje               | 9.58  | 5.13 |
| Llega a Pto Armuelles | 10.25    | 11.42 | 5.40 | Llega a David            | 10.25 | 5.40 |

NOTA: El motor de 9.00 am., entrará al ramal de Balso, tanto a la ida como al regreso de Puerto Armuelles, los días viernes, sábado, lunes y martes y durante estos días sufrirá un retraso en la llegada a las estaciones terminales de David y Pto. Armuelles de 30 minutos.

## DAVID TO THE PANAMA CANAL

Here's an engineer's report of June 18, 1948 as to road conditions along this final three hundred and two mile stretch to Panama City.

|                                   |           |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| David to Santiago . . . . .       | 145 miles | all-weather road—low standard      |
| Santiago to Rio Hato . . . . .    | 82 miles  | bituminous surface—low standard    |
| Rio Hato to Panama City . . . . . | 75 miles  | concrete pavement—modern standard* |

In layman's lingo, the Pan American Highway is okay for vehicular travel three hundred sixty-five days of the year.

As I recall it, the terrain was not overly thrilling though my judgment is not to be trusted. Since it was the tag-end of a fairly rugged safari, I was extremely tired. The water was further muddied by a complete breakdown of the bus which necessitated my peeling off seven extra frogskins to a private car operator to complete the run. Had I not been homesick and fatigued and had the bus not emulated the One Horse Shay, all would have been fine.

Then, too, I'd been spoiled by the truly dramatic ranges of lower Costa Rica's "Mountain of the Dead Ones" (about eleven thousand feet elevation) so trailing about twelve hours along the relatively level backbone of Central Panama didn't excite me overmuch.

From David to Santiago the land is rather broken and unsettled. From Santiago to Rio Hato and on to Panama, it is mostly flat and rolling suitable for farming and stock-raising. This area is the main food producing section of Panama, the bread-basket of the Republic.

The route of the Highway follows the coastal plain quite closely, with the exception of the Peninsula de Azuero. The general elevation ranges from sea level to approximately five hundred feet. A yearly average of sixty inches of rainfall (somewhat less than most of Central America) is common on the Pacific slope. Most of this falls from May to December, the remaining months being quite dry.

Station wagons with 14 passengers make the 302 miles from David to the Canal in 16 hours. The fare is \$10.00 one way, the baggage allowance 35 pounds per person.

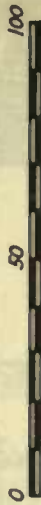
Every hour, every day, buses ply between David and El Volcan via Concepcion.

Planes fly from David to Balboa in about 90 minutes; fare one way, \$17.00; round trip, \$30.60.

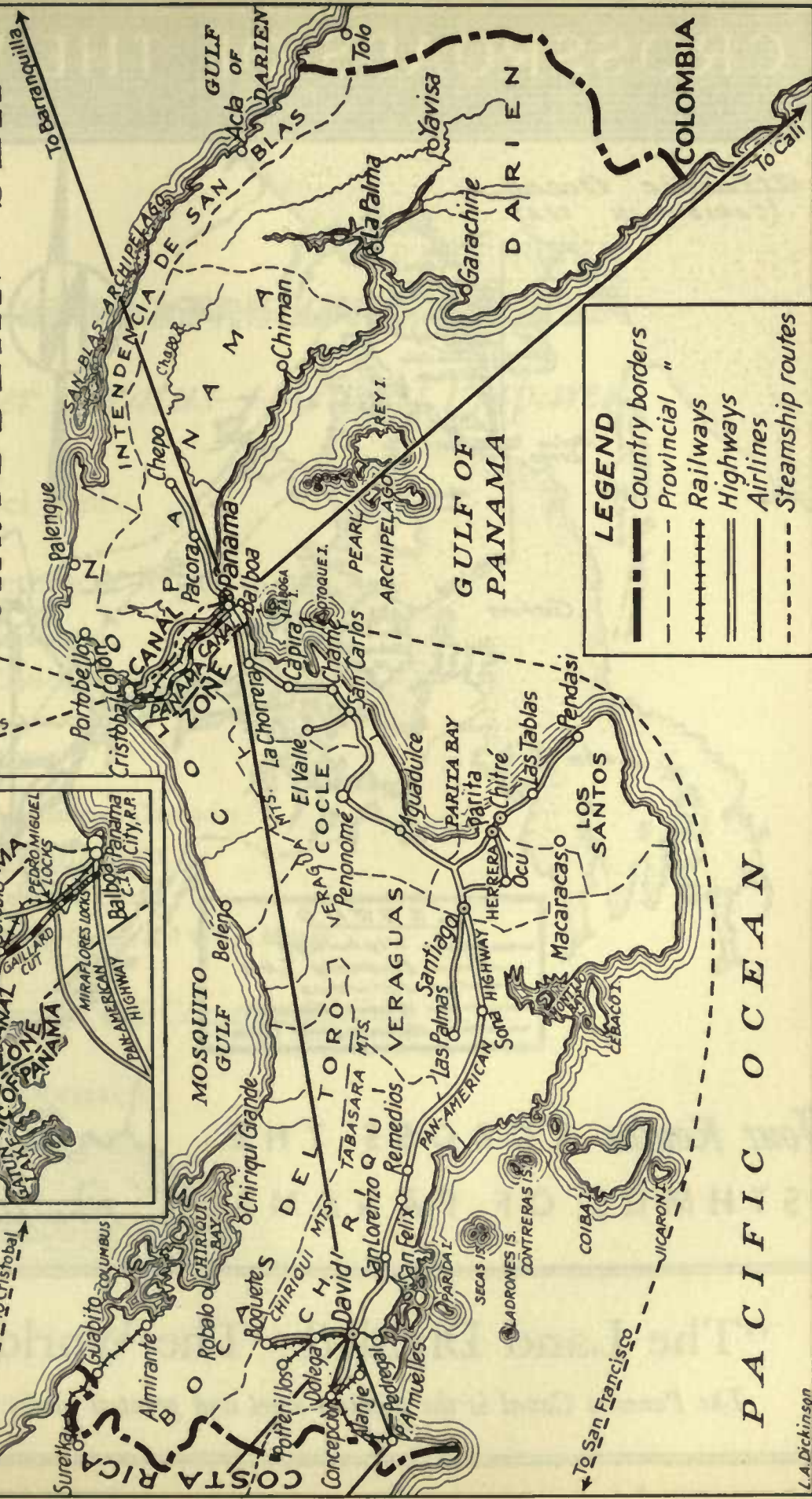
(\* Inter-American Highway Standards.)

# PANAMA

SCALE OF MILES



CARIBBEAN SEA



**LEGEND**

- Country borders
- - - Provincial "
- +++++ Railways
- ==== Highways
- Airlines
- - - Steamship routes

## CANAL ZONE



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PACIFIC OCEAN



PART FOUR



*Semper Paratus—Always Prepared*

Travel Hints

Government Regulations

Immigration

Customs Regulations

Money

International Currencies

Travelers Checks

Letters of Credit

Money Orders and Wired Money

Language and Communications

Transportation

Walking

Bicycling

Hitchhiking

Horseback  
Muleback  
Oxcart  
Carriages  
Private Cars  
Taxis and Buses  
Boats  
Trains  
Airplanes

Hotels and Accommodations

For the Inner Man

For "Wimmin" Only

Sightseeing and Amusements

Miscellaneous

Weather  
Health  
Clothing  
Baggage  
Identification

Ingratitude Is the Reward of the World



## Semper Paratus—*Always Prepared*

THIS SECTION is devoted to practical information bearing upon travel in general in Middle America.

As conditions vary from week to week and are often subject to change without notice (particularly with regard to passports and visas), it is suggested that before commencing your trip you check with the following bureaus. Each of the seven stands ready and more than willing to assist you in planning your itinerary.

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Mexico                 | Departamento de Turismo<br>Bucarelli 99, Mexico City, Mexico                                   |
| Guatemala              | National Tourist Committee<br>Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores<br>Guatemala City, Guatemala |
| El Salvador            | Ministerio de Fomento<br>San Salvador, El Salvador   |
| Honduras               | Departamento de Turismo<br>Tegucigalpa, Honduras   |
| Nicaragua              | Junta Nacional de Turismo<br>Gran Hotel, Managua, Nicaragua                                    |
| Costa Rica             | Junta Nacional de Turismo<br>San José, Costa Rica  |
| Panama and<br>The Zone | National Tourist Bureau<br>Panama City, Panama   |

## Travel Hints

"WHEN IN ROME, do as the Romans do."

When in Middle America, you get a break. The ever courteous Latin does not require that you do as he does, but common decency demands that you as a stranger within the gates refrain from criticism of your host, his country and his customs. Bear constantly in mind that now you are the foreigner. You will find many people, many conditions and many customs irritatingly different from those to which you are accustomed at home, but you have not come under duress. Therefore, it behooves you to conduct yourself with good taste. Do this and you will experience no difficulties. Fail to do this, and not only will you stamp yourself as an ingrate, but there's an excellent chance that if you carry your criticisms too far you may end up in the local hoosegow.

Here's a specific instance. While I was at Oaxaca in central Mexico, a young New Yorker worked himself into a lather with the local taxi driver over a matter of ten cents. So far, no harm was done, for price haggling has ever been indigenous south of the Rio Grande. However, our friend did not stop there. True to form, he hadn't taken the trouble to learn even a few words of Spanish, and misunderstandings, even honest ones, thrive where two parties have no common tongue. Our American, getting nowhere fast, gave the native a gentle shove, and he landed in the gutter. Our fellow-countryman landed in the Oaxaca jail where he cooled his heels, if we can cool anything in the tropics, for twenty-four hours incommunicado. Furthermore, the authorities fined him one hundred pesos which served him jolly well right.

I know well whereof I speak, for I subsequently ate of the same porridge farther down the line. My own experience had an even sadder ending. Attempting to enter the Sovereign Republic of Panama unconventionally through a "back door" (a lonely banana trail) my passport visa was challenged by the local yokel immigration official. He refused to let me cross the frontier, and upon my attempt to proceed anyway, he summoned a cop. With more courage than courtesy, I tried to shove the policeman aside as I climbed aboard the train. With an even worse

criminal than I, a drunken native in handcuffs, I was transported forty miles in the opposite direction to the jail of Puerto Armuelles. There, the Captain of the Port confiscated my passport. This set me back an extra ten bucks plus a full day's hangover on the Pacific Coast and a subsequent five day delay in Panama City. Nevertheless, the next morning the authorities graciously apologized and freely admitted that the little old man up in the jungle had made a mistake. My passport visa was valid, and though the experience was embarrassing and most inconvenient, I alone was to blame. I got just what was coming to me. Definitely I should not have laid hands on their sacrosanct flatfoot.

All this brings us back to the unfailing rule for behavior, applicable not only to Central America but to any other spot on this old globe of ours. Remember, it is the other fellow's country. Deport yourself decently and you'll never experience a discourtesy. The formula is just as simple as that, truly it is.



# Government Regulations

REGULATIONS affecting you, the traveler, are primarily twofold—those relating to immigration and those with respect to customs.

The United States Government maintains official representatives, ambassadors and/or ministers and consuls, in at least the capital of every foreign country. Moreover, American consuls are frequently found in some of the other larger cities. They are at your service at all times. All foreign countries maintain embassies, legations or consulates in Washington, with additional consuls in our principal cities to whom your inquiries may be directed.

## IMMIGRATION

### *Tourist Cards*

You require only a tourist card to enter Mexico or Guatemala. The former costs \$2.10; the latter is \$2.00. The cards are issued by the respective consulates of these countries in the United States.

### *Passports*

American passports are desirable for entrance into the five other countries. They are available to all citizens of the United States, and cost ten dollars. Applications should be made to the State Department in Washington.

### *Visas*

Before entering El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica or Panama, it is necessary to obtain visas from the nearest office of the consul of each nation. In some countries there is no fee for this service, while in others the charge is nominal.

### *Exit Permits*

Not only must you have passports and visas in order to enter several Latin American countries, but it is imperative that exit permits be obtained from the local governments. For instance, before leaving Hon-



PERMISO DE ENTRADA

CONSULADO GENERAL DE LA REPUBLICA DE PANAMA
SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

Visación No. 443.

San José, Costa Rica, 19 de Abril de 1946.

Nombre y apellido Roger Stephens

Lugar de nacimiento Estados Unidos

Fecha de nacimiento 12 Julio 1889

Profesión escritor Color/blanco Ojos café

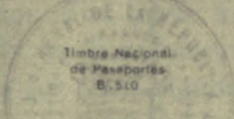
Estatural 70m Dirección

Religión protestante Lee y escribe sí

Señas especiales visibles ninguna

Viaja por Vapor a Panamá. Avión

Sale de San José el 2 de Abril de 1946.



Observaciones: Viaja por tierra en posesión de un pasaporte de los Estados Unidos y un boleto de avión a Panamá.



Signature of Consul General of Panama

Signature of interested party

1941 Impr. Ateora

Form with text: Todos los Pasajeros que salen de Honduras deben obtener su permiso de salida... USAS NECESARIAS DE SALIDA

Form with text: All passengers leaving Honduras must obtain a permit from Foreign Relations, War Department and Department of Investigation... NECESARIU EXIT PERMITS



TOWN OF WESTFIELD  
UNION COUNTY  
NEW JERSEY



JOHN R. SCHREIBER  
CHIEF  
CHARLES P. BAILEY  
COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE  
December 19, 1945

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:-

This is to certify that the undersigned has known Mr. Roger Stephens of Springfield Road, Westfield, New Jersey, for approximately twenty years.

Mr. Stephens is one of our outstanding citizens and according to our records there is no indication that he has ever been considered disloyal in any way to this Municipality, State or Country.

Any courtesy that may be proffered Mr. Stephens will be greatly appreciated by the undersigned.

Very truly yours,

*John R. Schreiber*  
John R. Schreiber,  
Chief of Police.



JRS:mfr



C. T. DECKER, M. D.  
L. H. SALVATI, M. D.  
375 ORCHARD STREET  
COR. MOUNTAIN AND LAWRENCE AVENUE  
WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY

Dec. 19, 1945.

To Whom it May Concern:-

This is to certify that for many years, I have been personal physician to Roger Stephens, of Westfield, New Jersey, and I am glad to state that he is in good health and free from all contagious and communicable disease. He has been vaccinated against smallpox.

Very truly yours,

*C. T. Decker* M.D.



duras you must obtain visas from three separate departments, those of Foreign Relations, of War and of Investigation.

#### *Police Certification*

Most countries other than Mexico and Guatemala require a letter from your local police officials testifying as to your good character. Granted, this may strike a sour note for many readers. But don't give up too easily. Even you must have one friend among the local cossacks willing to perjure himself in your behalf.

To avoid annoying delays or irritating complications, it is advisable to do two things. Take time before you start to ascertain, through the nearest consulate of the country you intend visiting, just precisely what will be required in the way of official papers. These conditions may change without notice. And carry with you a dozen or so of inexpensive passport photos. You never know in what emergency you will need them. I vividly recall one consulate that messed things up by requiring seven pictures for one insignificant set of documents. Near the Guatemalan frontier, I languished in hot, dusty Tapachula for five or six days because I had not taken the precaution of having my passport visaed back in Mexico City.

#### *Medical Certification*

In addition to the documents so far named, most consulates require a letter from your physician attesting to your good health. Some countries require certain proof of vaccination.

Forewarned is forearmed, and an additional general endorsement from some American governmental authority constitutes no objection. Emergencies may arise.

#### CUSTOM REGULATIONS

Limiting purchases to one hundred dollars for the entire trip you will have no trouble with the customs authorities. That is, if you don't consider it inconvenient to open all of your baggage for inspection as each frontier is crossed. In some countries special customs restrictions apply to the importation of liquor, tobacco and firearms. Here again, as with immigration requirements, it is best to post yourself in advance by directing specific inquiries either to our own State Department in Washington or, better still, to the nearest consulate of the country you are about to visit.

## Money

YOUR American dollar is good only in Honduras, Panama and the Panama Canal Zone.

In Mexico, the national unit is the *peso*, worth at the present rate of exchange about fifteen cents, 6.82 to the dollar to be exact.

Crossing into Guatemala you will use *quetzales* whose value is on a parity with our own. One Guatemalan *quetzal* is worth about one dollar in American money.

*Colones* are used in El Salvador. They are equal in value to forty cents U.S. currency. Two and one half make one dollar.

The unit of Honduras is the *lempira*, the equivalent of our half-dollar.

The Nicaraguan *córdoba* gives us a better break. It rates five to a dollar or twenty cents in value.

It is not until you reach Costa Rica that the maximum exchange advantage occurs. The Costa Rican *colon* runs five and six-tenths to the dollar, or about eighteen cents American money as against one *colon*.

Panama's unit of currency, sometimes referred to as a *balboa* and sometimes as a *peso*, is, like the *quetzal* of Guatemala, equal to our dollar.

Cross no frontier without having in your pockets at least a nominal supply of the coin of the realm into which you are passing. International frontiers are rarely in the vicinity of big cities. Money exchange facilities in the wilderness or even in the small towns are inadequate. Remember that the entire Central American economy is on a much lower scale than our own. It should not be expected that bills of large denominations will be accepted by small shopkeepers.

Remember, too, the gentle art of pickpocketing is not confined to the United States.

In many countries, notably Costa Rica, a far more profitable rate of exchange can be obtained from "sidewalk financiers" or in some local private money exchange shop than from the more orthodox banks or even your own hotel.

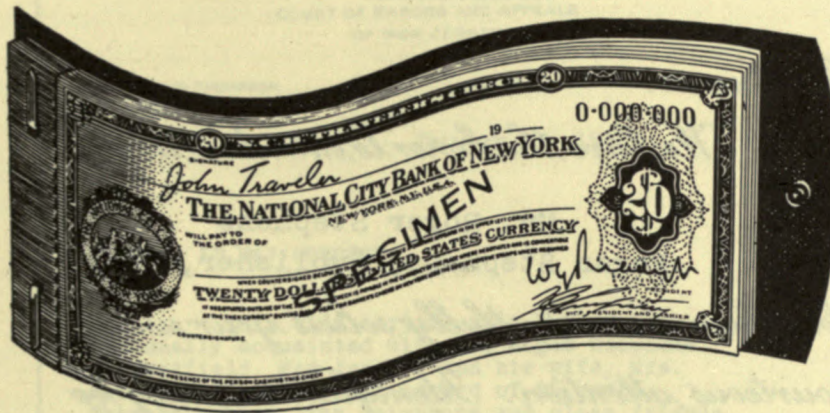
Have plenty of small change when using taxis. It is an old racket for



the chauffeur never to have change for coins or bills of larger denominations.

### TRAVELERS CHECKS

Travel with a minimum of cash. Rather supply yourself with travelers checks available at any bank in this country. They insure against loss or theft.



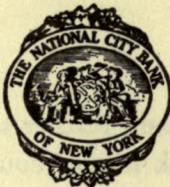
### LETTERS OF CREDIT

Strengthen your financial position by taking along a letter of general introduction and character endorsement from your local bank. If for some exceptional reason large sums of money will be required en route, apply to your local bank for letters of credit.

### MONEY ORDERS AND WIRED MONEY

Money order facilities, in general, are similar to those in the United States and are available in any post office.

If you get completely strapped without currency, travelers checks or letters of credit, simply go to any bank, telegraph or cable office and transmit your request back home. Money can be telegraphed or cabled without difficulty and the charge is moderate as four dollars will cover a nominal sum. The only hitch may occur at your end. You must



ESTABLISHED 1812

THE NATIONAL CITY BANK OF NEW YORK  
NEW YORK

---

*Gentlemen:*

*We have the honor to introduce to you*

Mr. Roger Stephens  
Roger Stephens, Publisher, Inc.

*for whom we respectfully solicit your usual  
courteous attention. Identification may be  
established by reference to the signature of  
the bearer which appears below.*

*Very truly yours,*

*Roger Stephens*  
*Signature of Bearer*

*J. Wolmsieeler*  
*Vice President.*

*To Representatives and Correspondents  
in the countries listed herein.*

be able to identify yourself properly to the satisfaction of the bank or communications company in the city from which your request emanated. Obviously, a sure-fire identification is their sole assurance that you are the particular person for whom the money is intended. Your passport probably will suffice. If not, check with the local American embassy, legation or consulate.

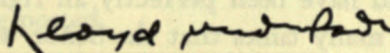
COURT OF ERRORS AND APPEALS  
OF NEW JERSEY

JUDGE LLOYD THOMPSON  
WESTFIELD

January 17, 1946.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This will certify that I have been personally acquainted with Mr. Roger Stephens of Westfield, New Jersey, and his wife, Mrs. Alice T. Stephens, for upward of 25 years. They have been near neighbors and close friends during all of that time. I have also been familiar with much of Mr. Stephens' business activities and career, and know that he has an excellent reputation for capability and for loyalty and integrity. Both Mr. and Mrs. Stephens have the most excellent standing in social and civic affairs of the community, and I bespeak for them such courtesies as may be appropriately extended to them during their contemplated journey, which I believe is to include Central and South American areas.



Lloyd Thompson,  
Judge, Court of Errors and  
Appeals of New Jersey.

# Language and Communications

## LANGUAGE

If you haven't time to learn Spanish, invest a dollar in a pocket dictionary and four bits in a simple phrase book. These, plus the ability to draw crude pictures and a freedom from embarrassment when indulging in a bit of pantomime, should suffice.

But have a care with your sketches. Perhaps brushing up at an art school would help. I have in mind the dilemma of an American who desired a glass of milk at a Mexican inn. Attempting to convey his wishes with a few free-hand drawings, he waited impatiently for twenty minutes. The waiter finally arrived at the door, breathless, with a ticket to a bullfight. The Chinese are right: a picture is worth a thousand words.

Beware of dialect variations. A good-looking gal in Guatemala is called "*tres piedras*" or "three precious stones," whereas in Nicaragua she's a "*durazno*" (peach).

There are other linguistic banana peels. "*La papa*" is "a potato"; "*el papa*" is the "Pope." "*Camion*" is "bus" while "*camino*" is "road." "*Casada*" means "married" and "*cansada*" means "tired."

Here's a slip in dialect that rolled the stenographers in the aisles down in southern Mexico. There, a resident engineer "went way out" in my behalf. Profoundly grateful, I bowed low from the waist, scraped my forehead on the tile floor and spouted profuse acknowledgment. This would have been perfectly all right except that I emphasized not once, but many times that the Señor was "*muy simpático*."

"*Simpático*" in all other parts of Mexico means "helpful, kindly and generally sympathetic." But not so in the state of Chiapas. Here it is slang for a snappy, good-looking gal—hardly a neat compliment for the florid, heavy-set engineer who had befriended me.

An American carriage factory when printing their export catalogue employed a literal Spanish translation. Their buggy was described as "lousy."

Latins are helpful, sympathetic and patient. They are quite complimented when we Americans attempt Spanish, regardless how

crude the result. Don't fool yourself. Even in the largest cities of Mexico and Central America, it is frequently difficult to find someone who speaks English. It is almost impossible to find any English-speaking person in the remoter districts.

## COMMUNICATIONS

You need never be out of touch with home and mother. Cable, telegraph, telephone, radio, air mail and ordinary post office facilities are available in most cities from the Rio Grande to the Panama Canal.

### *Telephone*

Local telephone service is inadequate and poor. Paradoxically, long distance communication with the United States is always available from the principal cities of Spanish America. It is remarkably clear and reasonable in cost. In some countries radio telephonic conversations are restricted to certain hours of day and night.

### *Telegrams and Cablegrams*

Telegraphing and cabling are just as easy as back home. Local fees are absurdly cheap. The messages can be transmitted in English and consequently present no linguistic nightmares.

### *Air Mail*

Air mail service is rendered at incredible speed. Two or three days suffice to carry a letter from New York, Chicago or San Francisco to any Middle American capital. Just one more thought. With respect to air mail make certain sufficient postage is paid. Otherwise the letter will not be transmitted from the point of origin. Your name and address should appear on every envelope posted.

### *Rail or Steamer Mail*

While low in cost, ordinary mail is as slow as air mail is rapid. Recently I had two letters from Costa Rica. The air mail arrived in two days; the regular post required five weeks.

### *Forwarding Address*

Before starting on your trip, leave with the proper party a detailed itinerary. A good plan, if you be uncertain as to just which hotels you

will patronize, is to have your mail forwarded in care of the various United States embassies or consulates. Immediately upon entering a new country, register your local address and itinerary with these offices. Advise them of your next move *out* of the country and arrange for forwarding letters that may come after your departure. If you have any interest in these letters leave sufficient money to cover *air mail* postage. Otherwise they will be delayed for weeks. Actually two letters have just come back to me here in New York July 20th, having been forwarded from Panama April 4th by regular mail, a delay of fifteen weeks. As in the United States, letters may be addressed everywhere in care of General Delivery.



Courtesy, This Week Magazine

*"Berlitz is going to hear about this—he can't understand me!"*

## Transportation

AT YOUR command are as many varieties of transportation as a Mexican dog has fleas. And most Mexican dogs have many. I recall a filthy pet poodle in Tuxtla Gutierrez affectionately dubbed Jasmine. Her dotting mistress referred to her as a "*camion libre para pulgas*," which, freely translated, means "a free bus for fleas."

Oddly enough, transportation costs south of the border vary in indirect proportion to the sheer joy afforded. If at heart you are a good vagabond, you'll find the cheapest means in all probability the most colorful.

### WALKING

Journeying afoot costs little other than shoe leather. I well recall sandals in West Indian native markets. Ingeniously devised from worn-out automobile tires, they retailed at four cents a pair. They were facetiously guaranteed as "good for ten thousand miles."

Joking aside, walking is the way to see the lay of the land and really become acquainted with local life.

### BICYCLING

In most of the capitals wheels can be hired, but the tough terrain makes cycling pretty strenuous.

There must be an exception to every rule. Ahead of me on my jungle trip across the Costa Rica/Panama frontier were two hardy chaps who had set out on bicycles for the Argentine. Who dares say the Latins lack energy?

### HITCHHIKING

This ethically questionable mode of travel is at once the most dangerous and the most exciting. I know whereof I speak, having thumbed my way from the Gaspé Peninsula in Canada to Mexico.

Latins, always generous, would provide ample opportunities for ride-sponging, but I strongly advise against it as it is fraught with

extreme danger both to the hiker and to the driver upon whom he imposes.

### HORSEBACK

On my first extended trip south of the border, I passed but two wheeled vehicles in over seven hundred miles. Every mother's son or daughter who wasn't afoot was astride a horse or a burro. This was some years ago, but last year I went through Costa Rica and Panama for seven straight days and saw but one auto.

Horses are available everywhere at from one to five dollars a day. They may be equal to the task, but all too frequently are pathetically undernourished and undersized. Your feet clear the ground by inches only, and I for one refuse to ride except in extreme emergencies. It just ain't cricket.

Out in the sticks many bridles are of rope without bits of any kind. This is infinitely less cruel than our vicious steel curbs. Don't expect any of your snooty English hunting stocks, either. Our good neighbors to the south wisely prefer a cross between an old McClellan and an overstuffed Morris chair. However, the stirrups are apt to be most uncomfortable.

### MULEBACK

Mules are difficult to find. They are slow, but more dependable for mountainous sections.

### OXCART

This is rugged transportation in the raw. Oxen, cruelly prodded, laboriously drag these cumbersome carts at two miles per hour. Unless you court an early demise, don't for one minute go ox-carting. Picturesque? Sure; but when you've said that, you've said everything. I know whereof I speak; eighteen miles in eleven hours in Nicaragua.

### CARRIAGES

Cities are crowded with automobiles. The exception is Managua which is overrun with old-fashioned four passenger coaches drawn by overworked and underfed horses. These scrawny and maltreated nags were most depressing. Anyone with half a conscience should steer clear of them, and either walk or patronize the dozen or so taxis Managua boasts.



### PRIVATE CARS

Taking your own car along is fine, if you adhere to the main highways along which gasoline is always available. It's a long time between drinks, however, if you're looking for what we spoiled motorists here at home consider adequate all-around garage servicing.

### TAXIS AND BUSES

Taxis swarm in the larger communities, and the tariffs are low. The drivers are as dependable as they are uniformly courteous. Few speak English. Agree on a price before you start off or you are likely to be over-charged. As a tourist you are fair game for exploitation in Latin America, as you are right here on the old home grounds. Don't take a cab directly in front of a railroad station or a better class hotel. Leaving the Buena Vista station in Mexico City, I hailed a taxi driver who wanted eight pesos for the trip to the hotel. Less than fifty yards away, I found one who was delighted to do the same job for three and a half. *Caveat emptor.*

Buses are the most desirable wheeled transportation, and are cheap, averaging a little over a cent a mile. From northern Mexico to the Canal they weave a far flung network serving any purpose of the ordinary traveler.

Down That Pan American Highway you can "bus it" almost the entire distance to the Canal (3,251 miles). There are just three bad breaks. The first gap is in Mexico, a two hundred and fifty-odd mile stretch from Juchitan to Tapachula which you can make cheaply by train. In Northern Costa Rica, the thirteen miles between Peña Blanca on the Nicaraguan Frontier to La Cruz presents the second obstacle. I made it on foot and by horse and mule. While jeeps and even private cars have negotiated it in dry weather, it is definitely extremely rough going and should be attempted only by the adventurer. In southern Costa Rica, the break is between San Isidro del General, eighty-five miles south from San José, to David in Panama, where there is daily bus service on the final three hundred and two miles to the Panama Canal. I personally have covered this section in three ways. The simplest, quickest and least interesting was the airflight which took less than three hours. Fast, comfortable Pan American planes operate daily between San José and David. The most exciting trip was the jungle trek afoot, by mule and by horse. This required nine days to El Volcan, from which a local bus

made the last thirty-eight miles to David in two hours. The "in-between" method which I once tried out was to catch a local TACA plane from San Isidro to La Cuesta, a half hour flight. From La Cuesta I walked through the banana plantations four miles across the border to Progreso, Panama. There, two narrow gauge trains go daily to David in a few hours.

Excellent de luxe buses operate from Laredo, Texas, all the way down one thousand and ninety-six miles to Oaxaca, Mexico, and the service compares tolerably well with that in the U.S.A. The three hundred and two mile long trip from David, Panama, to the Canal, at the other end of the line, is all right too, but I must admit that the majority of the so-called express cars and practically all local buses serving Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica leave much to be desired. For the most part they are pretty uncomfortable and quite dirty. These drawbacks are offset by local color. Buses offer the one positive way to see village life far removed from the more orthodox travel route.

Write the Comision Nacional de Turismo, Bucarelli 99, Mexico City, for their free complete guide to all bus and plane schedules in Mexico as well as general travel information. The guide is entitled: *Guía de Transportes Aereos y Autotransportes de Mexico*.

## BOATS

Along the accepted route of the Highway as far as the Canal, no water transportation is required. For those desiring to explore the colorful back country, native canoes, rowboats and even power launches navigate the principal rivers and larger lakes. If you prefer to confine your trip to the line of the Highway, it will be encouraging to learn that all countries bordering either upon the Atlantic, Pacific, or the Gulf of Mexico are blessed with at least coastal services. From many seaports, ocean liners sail direct to the States. The rates are not excessive for transportation back to the States of either your car or yourself.

## TRAINS

Most folks are not aware that it is now practicable to travel by railroad throughout the sixteen hundred mile north and south axis of Mexico and even beyond through Guatemala and El Salvador to the shores of the Gulf of Fonseca. From there coastal steamers will carry you on to the ports of Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and even Panama. Other than in Mexico, the tracks are narrow gauge. First and second class tickets are sold. Sleeping cars are available on the main lines in Mexico,

but there is no diner (only buffet) south of Mexico City. Rates are low, but trains crawl along on undependable schedules.

Pull up a chair while I give you some motherly advice concerning timetables. Don't take them too seriously. You're in for a sorry surprise if you do. On a local train from Veracruz to Tapachula some years ago, I was fussing and fuming over a twelve hour delay. The conductor firmly but, of course, politely set me back on my impatient Yankee heels by saying I was doggone lucky. At least I knew what day's train it was! Ordinarily, he confided, even the crew was in a fog as to whether their particular trip was yesterday's, today's or tomorrow's run.

That goes for pretty much the whole length and breadth of the land. It was up near Guadalajara that a fellow with a wooden leg was hobbling along a station platform as a train pulled in. "Get aboard," called the conductor. "Thanks, no," courteously responded the realistic Mr. Peg-Leg, "I'm in a hurry!"

## AIRPLANES

Mexico and Central America are extremely air-minded. Several great lines service these countries day and night. Safe, rapid and comfortable planes make an incredible number of local and express flights every day of the year. Despite its insignificant area, remote Honduras boasts something like eighty airports.



## Hotels and Accommodations

FACILITIES FOR getting out of the rain and for sleeping run the residential gamut from dirt-floored, windowless straw shacks to a few first class hotels. For sheer swankiness and exorbitant prices, the latter bear comparison with ours of similar category. Between these extremes fall many clean well-serviced economical pensions or native boardinghouses and, at least in the larger cities, a fine selection of moderately priced hotels.

There is only a scant difference in the rates throughout the seven countries for similar accommodations. Villages are markedly less expensive than big cities. The pronounced variations are governed by the location of the hotel. I was not too badly off in a room and bath at four pesos (eighty cents American money) out in the less ostentatious section of Mexico City, whereas elsewhere six and eight times that rate were not considered out of the way. You pays your money and you takes your choice.

Don't expect too much for what you pay even in the better class hotels. Elevators, when they exist, are frequently indisposed. In many places they offer no service at all after midnight. You come in early evenings or else have recourse to the stairs. Hot water will be available only at certain limited times of the day and rarely at night even in the largest cities. Naturally, there are exceptions, but not many!

Latins are consistently hospitable, but they just aren't hotel-minded, as we understand the term.

Invariably, some minor thing is out of order or quite likely to be missing entirely. You'll discover this as you enter your room. Probably a wardrobe door won't open. There'll be no waste basket, coat hanger or soap, maybe not even a towel. These deficiencies are the rule, not the exception. Mark that well. If these situations irritate you and you're subject to high blood pressure, don't cross the Rio Grande. These criticisms apply with exasperating frequency.

Don't misunderstand me. From manager to yard boy, they are willing to remedy the troubles but solely at their own easy-going convenience.

Up here in the States the postman always rings twice. Down in even the snootiest hostelryes you'll ring not twice but five or six times before anyone recognizes your physical existence.

I repeat: if short-comings and slow-comings or mine host's procrastination in correcting them are apt to upset the nervous system, stay home. There's no use shutting one's optics to these aggravations, innumerable and universal.

As the hotels in the big cities are crowded, wherever practicable arrange in advance for reservations. In the country villages, hotels are few and distressingly far between. Arrive sufficiently early to locate lodgings before dark. Then, too, don't give up when first refused. Use your charm, powers of persuasion, or what have you.

As with railroad schedules, hotel rates are "subject to change without notice" but the following will afford a general idea of facilities and rates in principal cities DOWN THAT PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY. I've personally stopped at all the places listed and found much to commend along the "line".

| LOCATION              | NUMBER OF ROOMS | RATES per PERSON per DAY<br>AMERICAN PLAN (Single) | per DAY<br>EUROPEAN PLAN (Single) |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| MEXICO                |                 |  |                                   |
| MEXICO CITY           |                 |  |                                   |
| Hotel Gillow          | 150             | \$2.37*  | \$3.55*                           |
| Hotel Geneve          | 400             | —  | 3.30                              |
| Hotel Roosevelt       | 40              | 3.09*  | 6.01*                             |
| GUATEMALA             |                 |  |                                   |
| CHICHICASTENANGO      |                 |  |                                   |
| Pension Chiguila      | 25              | 5.00— 6.00   | —                                 |
| GUATEMALA CITY        |                 |  |                                   |
| **Pension Gueroult    | 18              | 5.00— 6.00   | —                                 |
| San Carlos Gran Hotel | 50              | 6.00—10.00   | —                                 |
| PANAJACHEL (Atitlan)  |                 |  |                                   |
| Hotel Monterrey       | 15              | 5.00— 6.00   | —                                 |
| QUEZALTENANGO         |                 |  |                                   |
| Hotel Recreo          | 25              | 6.00— 7.00   | —                                 |
| EL SALVADOR           |                 |  |                                   |
| SAN SALVADOR          |                 |  |                                   |
| Astoria Hotel         | 75              | 4.00— 7.00<br>(Without bath)                       | —                                 |
|                       |                 | 8.00—10.00<br>(With bath)                          | —                                 |
| **Casa Clark          |                 | 5.00<br>(Including laundry)                        | —                                 |
| Hotel Nuevo Mundo     | 28              | 4.00— 8.00   | —                                 |
| HONDURAS              |                 |  |                                   |
| TEGUCIGALPA           |                 |  |                                   |
| Hotel Panamericano    | 42              | 6.00   | —                                 |
| NICARAGUA             |                 |  |                                   |
| MANAGUA               |                 |  |                                   |
| Gran Hotel            | 100             | 4.00 —5.00   | —                                 |
| COSTA RICA            |                 |  |                                   |
| SAN JOSE              |                 |  |                                   |
| Gran Hotel Costa Rica | 125             | 6.50   | —                                 |
| PANAMA                |                 |  |                                   |
| DAVID                 |                 |  |                                   |
| Hotel Nacional        | 31              | —  | 3.00—6.00                         |
| CANAL ZONE            |                 |  |                                   |
| ANCON                 |                 |  |                                   |
| Hotel Tivioli         | 132             | 3.00 up  | 2.00—4.50                         |

\*Odd figures result from having been quoted in pesos @ 4.86 to the U.S. dollar.

\*\*These two merit special notice for they are most charming little pensions, immaculate and inexpensive.

## For the Inner Man

NUMEROUS restaurants in the large centers offer a wide selection of dishes.

In villages and in the open country, tropical fruits and fresh eggs are in abundance. Otherwise, you will find the diet largely confined to rice, beans and tortillas, all prepared in the same monotonous and tasteless manner. The innkeepers, however, are not at all sensitive on this score. With a minimum of effort, more balanced meals can easily be had by supplementing the universal one-two-three diet (rice, beans and tortillas) with canned soups, vegetables or fruits imported from the States. Many stores are well stocked with these cylindrical luxuries.

Unless you carry along a fire extinguisher or are blessed with an asbestos tongue, beware the Latins' propensity for fiery sauces.

Except in first class hotels, it is definitely unwise to drink other than boiled water. Fortunately, a ready substitute is to be had in the innumerable bottled spring or mineral waters. Amazingly enough, Coca Cola or Pepsi-Cola is on sale in most towns.

A white-ribboned, blue-nosed, teetotaler myself, I'm a poor authority on firewater. However, judging from the alacrity with which many American tourists dash for the nearest bar, you will find on every hand a vast selection of thirst-aids. Here you need not worry, at least with respect to availability. I can't promise as to the aftereffects.



| ICE CREAM  |         |
|--|---------|
| Vanila, Chocolate, Pistachio,<br>Nut, Strawberry ..... | \$ 0.60 |
| Sundae .....   | 1.10    |
| Hot Fudge Sundae .....                                 | 1.10    |
| Ice Cream Soda .....                                   | 0.90    |
| Malted Milk .....                                      | 1.10    |
| Milk shakes with Ice Cream .....                       | 1.00    |
| Parfaits .....   | 1.00    |
| Malted Milk with 1 egg .....                           | 1.50    |
| Banana Split .....                                     | 1.10    |
| Strawberries with cream .....                          | 1.00    |
| Banana with cream .....                                | 0.90    |
| Strawberries with Ice Cream .....                      | 1.50    |
| Tres Marías .....                                      | 1.00    |
| Sherbets .....   | 0.50    |

| SANDWICHES   |      |
|--|------|
| Hot Dogs .....   | 0.50 |
| Hamburgers .....                                       | 0.50 |
| Chicken breast .....                                   | 1.00 |
| Ham .....  | 0.90 |
| Chicken salad .....                                    | 1.10 |
| American Cheese .....                                  | 0.90 |
| REY ESPECIAL .....                                     | 1.80 |
| Egg .....  | 0.90 |
| Ham or Bacon with egg .....                            | 1.10 |
| Egg and Tomato .....                                   | 1.00 |
| Peanut Butter and Jam .....                            | 1.00 |
| Mexican Sausage .....                                  | 0.90 |
| Mexican Sausage with egg .....                         | 1.00 |
| Ham and Cheese (Toasted) .....                         | 1.10 |
| Hot Sandwiches with Mashed<br>Potatoes and Gravy ..... | 1.70 |

| E G G S                        |      |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Boiled (2) .....               | 0.75 |
| Fried (2) .....                | 0.90 |
| With Ham or Bacon (2) .....    | 1.55 |
| With Mexican Sausage (2) ..... | 1.40 |
| Mexican Style (2) .....        | 1.10 |

| COFFEE, TEA, ETC.                   |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Coffee, Black, small .....          | 0.25 |
| Coffee black, large .....           | 0.30 |
| Coffee with milk (230 grs.) .....   | 0.45 |
| Coffee with milk (316 grs.) .....   | 0.50 |
| Coffee with cream (230 grs.) .....  | 0.50 |
| Tea .....                           | 0.60 |
| Tea with cream .....                | 0.70 |
| Double Tea .....                    | 0.90 |
| Iced Tea .....                      | 0.70 |
| Milk, hot, cold, (230 grs.) .....   | 0.40 |
| Milk, hot cold, (316 grs.) .....    | 0.45 |
| Chocolate (cocoa) .....             | 0.60 |
| Chocolate, Spanish (230 grs.) ..... | 0.80 |
| Chocolate, French (230 grs.) .....  | 0.65 |
| Chocolate mexicana (230 grs.) ..... | 0.60 |

| PASTRIES                |      |
|-------------------------|------|
| Pies (individual) ..... | 0.90 |
| Layer Cake .....        | 0.90 |

|                                |      |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Doughnuts .....                | 0.20 |
| Pie with american cheese ..... | 1.00 |
| Pie a la mode .....            | 1.00 |
| Buttered Toast .....           | 0.40 |
| Bread and Butter .....         | 0.40 |

| REFRESHMENTS                        |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Dr. Pepper .....                    | 0.40 |
| Pine apple juice .....              | 0.40 |
| Tangerine juice .....               | 0.40 |
| Sidralí .....                       | 0.40 |
| Orange Crush .....                  | 0.40 |
| Orange Juice, Large .....           | 1.10 |
| Orange Juice, Small .....           | 0.70 |
| Tomato Juice, Small .....           | 0.90 |
| Fresh Lemonade .....                | 0.40 |
| Fresh Lemonade with Lemon-Ice ..... | 0.70 |
| Coca-Cola .....                     | 0.40 |
| Canada Dry .....                    | 0.40 |
| Sidral (large) .....                | 0.50 |
| Sidral (small) .....                | 0.40 |
| Plain Sodas, any flavor .....       | 0.50 |
| Tehuacán Mineral Water .....        | 0.60 |
| Ginger Ale Canada Dry .....         | 0.60 |
| Extra Poma .....                    | 0.60 |
| Pepsi-Cola .....                    | 0.40 |

| M E A T S                        |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Enderloin steak (150 grs.) ..... | 2.50 |
| Breaded steak (150 grs.) .....   | 1.75 |
| Hamburger steak .....            | 2.00 |
| Pork Chops (250 grs.) .....      | 2.00 |
| Vienna Sausage, mashed pot ..... | 1.70 |
| Lamb Chops (250 grs.) .....      | 1.75 |
| Fried Chicken (200 grs.) .....   | 2.40 |
| Chicken Salad .....              | 2.30 |
| Potatoe Salad .....              | 1.00 |
| Lettuce and tomato salad .....   | 1.00 |
| Salad (Day Especial) .....       | 0.60 |

| MEXICAN DISHES  |           |
|---|-----------|
| Chicken consomé .....                                 | 0.60      |
| Chicken consomé with egg .....                        | 0.80      |
| Enchiladas with cheese .....                          | 1.50      |
| Enchiladas with chicken .....                         | 1.80      |
| Tamales frontier style (6) .....                      | 1.50      |
| Chicken or Mexican sauge Tos-<br>tadas or Tacos ..... | 1.20 1.50 |
| Mexican Sausage with egg .....                        | 1.40      |
| Fried beans .....                                     | 0.50      |
| Chile con carne .....                                 | 1.50      |

| HOT CAKES, WAFFLES, CEREALS                           |      |
|---|------|
| Hot Cakes or Waffles .....                            | 1.20 |
| Hot Cakes or Waffles with nuts .....                  | 1.50 |
| Hot Cakes or Waffles with ham<br>or bacon .....       | 1.80 |
| Oatmeal or Cream of Wheat .....                       | 0.90 |
| Corn Flakes, All Bran, Grape<br>nuts, with milk ..... | 0.90 |
| Ditto with Cream .....                                | 1.20 |

Mexico City's little, but clean, pleasant Restaurant Rey offers good food at reasonable cost. Don't get heart failure! These prices are in pesos, worth only about 15 cents in U.S. currency.



En el Centro de la Ciudad

Todo el confort moderno en una deliciosa atmósfera de la época Colonial.

In the heart of the City

Every modern hotel luxury in a delightful Spanish Colonial atmosphere.

GUATEMALA - CITY.

8a. Avenida & 9a. Calle.

GUATEMALA, C. A.

BREAKFAST

|                   |                |                   |                                |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>Choice of:</u> | <u>Cereals</u> | <u>EGGS</u>       |                                |
| Papeya            | Cornflakes     | Scrambled         | French Toast                   |
| Pineapple slices  | Krumbles       | Boiled            | Pancakes (American or French)  |
| Oranges           | Rice Crispies  | Fried             | Toast, Rolls, Marmelade, Jelly |
| Orange Juice      | Kix            | Poached           | Coffee, Tea, Cocoa, Milk       |
| Bananas           | All Bran       | Omelet            |                                |
|                   | Oatmeal        | Al Plato          |                                |
|                   | Cream of Wheat | A la Ranchera     |                                |
|                   |                | With Ham or Bacon |                                |

VARIOUS LUNCHES

|                |                                      |                |                         |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| (1) Choice of: | Tangerine Juice                      | (2) Choice of: | Alligator Pear          |
|                | Artichokes in Vinegarsauce           |                | Cucumber Salad          |
|                | Alligator Pear                       |                | Melon Balls             |
|                | Cream of Brain Soup                  |                | Tomato Cream Soup       |
|                | Ham Biscuits                         |                | Chicken Livers on Toast |
|                | Broiled Steak with Hot Chutney Sauce |                | Roast Lamb & Mint Jelly |
|                | Squash and Nuts                      |                | Brussels Sprouts        |
|                | Lattice Potatoes                     |                | Browned Potatoes        |
|                | Coffee                               |                | Coffee                  |
| Choice of:     | Eclairs                              | Choice of:     | Orange Ice Box Cake     |
|                | Stewed Peaches                       |                | Scotch Cream            |
|                | Fresh Fruit                          |                | Fresh Fruit             |

DINNER

|                |                                  |                                |                        |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) Choice of: | Tomato Juice                     | (2) Fruit Cocktail             | (3) Prunes with cheese |
|                | Lettuce with Chiffonade dressing | Dexter Canape                  | Fruit juice            |
|                | Alligator Pear                   | Alligator Pear                 | Alligator Pear         |
|                | Consomme                         | Consomme                       | Asparagus Cream Soup   |
|                | Chicken Pie                      | Jewel Mold                     | Fish with Tartar Sauce |
|                | Minute Steak                     | Turkey with Onion Stuffing     | Fillet Mignon          |
|                | Vegetables in Buttersauce        | Creamed Macedoine              | Mashed Guisquil        |
|                | Fried Potatoes                   | Sweet Potatoes, Georgian Style | French Fried Potatoes  |
|                | Coffee                           | Coffee                         | Coffee                 |
| Choice of:     | Crabapple Tarts                  | Ice Cream                      | Strawberry Sponge Cake |
|                | Charlotte Russe                  | Bouchees                       | Spanish Cream          |
|                | Fresh Fruit                      | Mamey Compote                  | Fresh Fruit            |

*If variety be the spice of life (and variety is what you seek) visit the San Carlos Gran, definitely one of Guatemala City's most excellent hotels.*





### Menú

San Salvador, Julio 1948

Almuerzo

Lunch

Sopa de Pollo  
Chicken Soup

Carne a la Milanesa con  
Salsa de Tomate.  
Patties a la Milanes.

Beefsteak con Ensalada y  
Papas a la Francesa.  
Beefsteak, French fried  
Potatoes and Salad.

Fruta  
Fruit

Café  
Coffee

778-TIP. 19880



### Menú

San Salvador, Julio de 1948

Cena

Dinner

Sopa a la Bolognesa  
Soup a la Bologna

Pastelitos Americanos  
American Meat Pie

Lomo al Vino Tinto con Zanahorias en Mantequilla.  
Beef in Red Wine and Buttered Carrots.

Postre  
Dessert

Café  
Coffee

778-TIP. 19880

### HOTEL NUEVO MUNDO

SAN SALVADOR  
EL SALVADOR, C. A. June 20.,

#### Menú

Enchiladas Mexicanas  
..

Crema de Apio  
..

Tallarines en Jugo  
..

Chuleta Milanesa  
..

Papas Fritas  
..

Fruta  
..

Café  
..

### HOTEL NUEVO MUNDO

SAN SALVADOR  
EL SALVADOR, C. A. Julio 15, 1948

#### Menú

Ensalada Italiana  
..

Sopa Princesa  
..

Omelet Paisano  
..

Beefsteak Grillee  
..

Papas Sautees  
..

Fruta  
..

Café  
..

In San Salvador, good eating may be found either at the Astoria or the Neuvo Mundo. Both are large hotels. If by now you yearn for a bit of home cooking (American style) trot around the corner to the much smaller, but thoroughly delightful Pension Clark.

*Menú* LUNES  
Junio 14

Lunch


Puree of Split Peas  
 Asparagus Tip Hollandaise  
 Hungarian Goulash with Noodles  
 Fried Plantain  
 Fresh Brown Potatoes  
 Lettuce and Avocado Salad

Fresh Fr  
or  
Cheese &  
Iced

*Menú* LUNES  
Junio 14

Dinner

Cold Essence of Beef  
 Arroz con Pollo  
 Red Ribbon Loin of Beef  
 Yorkshire Pudding  
 Roast Potatoes  
 Braised Cabbage  
 Season Salad  
 Ris a la Imperatrice  
 Demi Tasse



**HOTEL PANAMERICANO**  
HENRY MEYER <sup>OWNER</sup>  
 TEGUCIGALPA, D. C.  
 CARRANDELA, CENTRO AMERICA

August 13th, 1948

Roger Stephens, Publisher, Inc.  
 119 West 19th Street  
 New York 3, N.Y.

*Menú* MERCOCLES  
Julio 28

Lunch

Vegetable Soup  
 Chile con Carne  
 Lobster Mayonnaise  
 Salad Parisienne  
 Chocolate Cream Cakes  
 or  
 Cheese & Crackers  
 Iced Tea - Coffee

*Menú* MERCOCLES  
Julio 28

Dinner

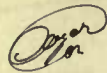
Cream of Tomatoes Soup  
 Cod Fish with Garbanzas  
 Roast Leg of Veal  
 Baked Potatoes  
 Mashed Turnip  
 Rice & Peas  
 Hearts of Lettuce  
 Bread & Butter Pudding  
 Demi Tasse

Dear Mr. Stephens

To-day I received your letter of August 8th, and by return of mail I send you some of our usual menus, as requested.

We do not have menus for breakfast, as we serve breakfast according to the wishes of our guests.

Sincerely yours


---

 Henry Meyer, Manager  
 Hotel Panamericano

*Even in exotic Honduras, they not only "aim to serve" but really do! These menus are from the modern Hotel Panamericano in Tegucigalpa.*

# SALON DE TE "BONBONNIERE"

## DESAYUNO - BREAKFAST

|   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| Café negro  | 0.75 | Coffee   |
| Chocolate con leche                                     | 1.25 | Chocolate w. milk  |
| Café con leche  | 1.00 | Coffee milk  |
| Café con crema  | 1.00 | Coffee with cream  |
| Té caliente, tostadas y mantequilla                     | 2.00 | Hot tea with toast   |
| Café c. leche, tostadas y manteq.                       | 1.75 | Coffee milk with toast butter                                  |
| Té con leche  | 1.25 | Hot tea with milk  |
| Desayuno con huevos, café con<br>leche, jugo de naranja | 3.50 | Breakfast with eggs coffee<br>milk and orange juice            |
| Desayuno especial, lo anterior<br>más jamón con huevos  | 4.50 | Spec. breakfast, ham. egg. orange<br>juice; coffee milk, toast |

## REPOSTERIA - CAKES - PASTRY

|                |             |                |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Cakes Dobos    | 1.25        | Dobos cake     |
| " Mokka        | 1.25        | Mokka cake     |
| " de Chocolate | 1.25        | Chocolate cake |
| " de nueces    | 1.50        | Nut cake       |
| " ruso         | 1.50        | Russian cake   |
| " de naranja   | 1.25        | Orange cake    |
| " de ponche    | 1.25        | Punch cake     |
| Pudines        | 1.00        | Puding         |
| Galletas       | 0.15 y 0.25 | Cookies        |
| Flan           | 1.00        | Custard        |

## SANDWICH

|                                  |      |   |
|----------------------------------|------|---|
| Sandwich de jamón                | 1.50 | Ham sandwich                                      |
| " " queso                        | 1.50 | Cheese sandwich                                   |
| " " gallina                      | 1.75 | Chicken sandwich                                  |
| " " lengua ahumada               | 1.50 | Smoked tongue sandwich                            |
| " " huevo                        | 1.25 | Egg sandwich                                      |
| " " carne fría y tomate          | 1.75 | Cold meat sandwich                                |
| " " paté de hígado               | 1.25 | Liver paté sandwich                               |
| " " jamón y queso                | 2.50 | Ham and cheese                                    |
| " " paté y queso                 | 2.25 | Paté and cheese                                   |
| " " hamburger caliente           | 1.75 | Hamburger   |
| " " cheeseburger caliente        | 2.25 | Cheeseburger                                      |
| " " beefsteak caliente           | 2.25 | Beefsteak   |
| " " Club con tocino y<br>gallina | 3.00 | Club sandwich (with bacon,<br>tomato and chicken) |
| " " jamón con huevo              | 2.25 | Ham and egg sandwich                              |
| Plato frío                       | 6.50 | Cold plate  |
| Bocas de beefsteack              | 3.00 |   |

*To learn "what's cookin'" in Nicaragua, go to work on these from Managua's  
Salon de Té Bonbonniere.*

# CAFÉ HILDA

TELÉFONO 4919

## HELADOS

|                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| Helados.....           | ¢ 0.50 |
| Pie a la mode.....     | 1.35   |
| Sponge a la mode.....  | 1.00   |
| Helados «Sundaes»..... | 0.75   |

## ICE CREAM

|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Ice Cream.....             | ¢ 0.50 |
| Pie a la mode.....         | 1.35   |
| Sponge Cake a la mode..... | 1.00   |
| Sundaes.....               | 0.75   |

## FRESCOS

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Ice Cream Soda.....             | ¢ 1.25 |
| Naranjada.....                  | 0.50   |
| Limonada.....                   | 0.50   |
| Coca-Cola.....                  | 0.50   |
| Pinolillo con leche.....        | 0.75   |
| Pinolillo sin leche.....        | 0.50   |
| Avena con leche.....            | 0.75   |
| Avena sin leche.....            | 0.50   |
| Cebada con leche.....           | 0.75   |
| Cebada sin leche.....           | 0.50   |
| Leche fresca.....               | 0.60   |
| Leche malteada.....             | 1.00   |
| Leche malteada con helados..... | 1.50   |
| Toddy.....                      | 1.00   |
| Tamarindo.....                  | 0.50   |
| Jugo de aerenja.....            | 1.00   |

## COOLDRINK

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Ice Cream Soda.....             | ¢ 1.25 |
| Orangade.....                   | 0.50   |
| Lemonade.....                   | 0.50   |
| Coca-Cola.....                  | 0.50   |
| Pinolillo with Milk.....        | 0.75   |
| Pinolillo without Milk.....     | 0.50   |
| Oat-shake with Milk.....        | 0.75   |
| Oat-shake without Milk.....     | 0.50   |
| Barley with Milk.....           | 0.75   |
| Barley Water.....               | 0.50   |
| Fresh Milk.....                 | 0.60   |
| Malted Milk.....                | 1.00   |
| Malted milk with Ice Cream..... | 1.50   |
| Toddy.....                      | 1.00   |
| Tamarind.....                   | 0.50   |
| Orange Juice.....               | 1.00   |

## LUNCHES

|                               |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| Carnes frías.....             | ¢ 3.00 |
| Bistec.....                   | 3.00   |
| Arroz con pollo.....          | 3.00   |
| «Chicken pie».....            | 3.00   |
| Macarrones a la Italiana..... | 3.00   |
| Huevos con jamón.....         | 2.50   |
| Huevos a la Ranchera.....     | 2.50   |
| Huevos fritos con papas.....  | 2.25   |
| Omeleta de petit pois.....    | 2.50   |
| Omeleta sencilla.....         | 2.25   |
| Lechón con verduras.....      | 3.00   |
| Chile con carne.....          | 3.00   |
| Porción papas fritas.....     | 1.00   |
| Roast beef y verduras.....    | 3.00   |

## LUNCHES

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Cold Cuts.....                  | ¢ 3.00 |
| Bistec.....                     | 3.00   |
| Chicken & Rice.....             | 3.00   |
| Chicken Pie.....                | 3.00   |
| Macarrones.....                 | 3.00   |
| Ham and Eggs.....               | 2.50   |
| Eggs «A la Ranchera».....       | 2.50   |
| Fried Eggs with Potatoes.....   | 2.25   |
| Omelette with Petit Pois.....   | 2.50   |
| Plain Omelette.....             | 2.25   |
| Roast Pork with Vegetables..... | 3.00   |
| Chile con carne.....            | 3.00   |
| Fried Potatoes.....             | 1.00   |
| Roast Beef.....                 | 3.00   |

**EN EL COCKTAIL BAR**  
**CERVEZA DEL PAIS**  
**O CERVEZA EXTRANJERA**  
**Y LICORES EXTRANJEROS**  
**CUALQUIER OTRO PLAYO,**  
**A SU ELECCION**

**BEER IMPORTED OR**  
**DOMESTIC**  
**COCKTAILS LIQUEURS**  
**ANY OTHER ORDER, AT YOUR**  
**SELECTION**

## SANDWICHES

|                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Jemón.....            | ¢ 1.50 |
| Queso extranjero..... | 1.25   |
| Lechón.....           | 1.25   |
| Pollo.....            | 1.75   |
| Club.....             | 2.00   |
| Roast Beef.....       | 1.50   |
| Combinación.....      | 2.00   |

## SANDWICHES

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Ham.....             | ¢ 1.50 |
| American Cheese..... | 1.25   |
| Pork.....            | 1.25   |
| Chicken.....         | 1.75   |
| Club.....            | 2.00   |
| Roast Beef.....      | 1.50   |
| Combinación.....     | 2.00   |

## ENSALADAS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| lechuga.....         | ¢ 0.50 |
| usa.....             | 2.50   |
| tomate.....          | 1.00   |
| mate «Surprise»..... | 2.75   |
| ve especial.....     | 2.00   |

## SALADS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Lettuce.....         | ¢ 0.50 |
| Russian.....         | 2.50   |
| Tomato.....          | 1.00   |
| Tomato Surprise..... | 2.75   |
| Potato, special..... | 2.00   |

## SOPAS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Pollo.....           | ¢ 1.25 |
| Bullion.....         | 1.25   |
| Crema de tomate..... | 1.25   |
| Tamales Hayacas..... | 2.00   |

## SOUPS

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Chicken.....                   | ¢ 1.25 |
| Bouillon.....                  | 1.25   |
| Crema of Tomato.....           | 1.25   |
| Tamales Hayacas every day..... | 2.00   |

## MISCELLANEOUS

|                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Chiricays.....       | ¢ 0.75 |
| Waffles.....         | 1.50   |
| Café.....            | 0.50   |
| Pan Queque.....      | 1.50   |
| Pie.....             | 1.00   |
| Chocolate.....       | 0.85   |
| Chocolate.....       | 0.75   |
| Caramel Custard..... | ¢ 0.75 |
| Waffles.....         | 1.50   |
| Coffee.....          | 0.50   |
| Pan cake.....        | 1.50   |
| Te.....              | 1.00   |
| Pie.....             | 0.85   |
| Chocolate.....       | 0.75   |

216047 U.

*Like Mexico City's Restaurant Rey, the Cafe Hilda in Costa Rica's nearly mile high capital of San José, is little but most pleasant and reasonably priced. Furthermore, as with the Rey, the Cafe Hilda is right in the center of town.*



MARCO JULIO GOMEZ  
GERENTE

Sugerencias Especiales  
Special Sugestions

12.00 m. - 9.00 p. m.



J. Leslie Kincaid  
PRESIDENT

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Jugo de Naranja, Toronja, Tomate, Manzana, Ciruela o Piña . . . . .      | 0.20 |
| Orange, Grapefruit, Tomato, Apple, Prune or Pineapple Juice              |      |
| Naranjas Injertadas, Piña del Volcán, Papaya, Guineo o Toronja . . . . . | 0.15 |
| Boquete Oranges, Volcan Pineapple, Papaya, Bananas or Grapefruit         |      |
| Cocktail de Langosta Fresca . . . . .                                    | 0.40 |
| Fresh Lobster Cocktail   |      |
| Cocktail de Frutas Chiricanas . . . . .                                  | 0.20 |
| Chiriqui Fruit Cocktail  |      |
| Chicharrones Hotel Nacional . . . . .                                    | 0.50 |
| Hotel Nacional Cracknels   |      |
| Abrebocas Surtidos . . . . .   | 0.35 |
| Assorted Apetizers   |      |
| Sopa del Día . . . . .   | 0.20 |
| Soup of the Day  |      |
| Caldo de Pollo Frio . . . . .  | 0.25 |
| Cold Chicken- Consomme   |      |

**Emparedados: Sandwiches:**

|                            |      |                              |      |
|----------------------------|------|------------------------------|------|
| Jamón Cocido . . . . .     | 0.35 | Pollo y Lechuga . . . . .    | 0.45 |
| Bolled Ham                 |      | Chicken and Lettuce          |      |
| Jamón o Tocino y . . . . . |      | Bistec con Tomate . . . . .  | 0.85 |
| Huevos . . . . .           | 0.45 | Steak with Tomatoes          |      |
| Ham or Bacon and Eggs      |      | Sardinias Importa- . . . . . | 0.35 |
| Pavo y Jamón . . . . .     | 0.60 | das                          |      |
| Turkey and Ham             |      | Imported Sardines            |      |
| Hamburguesa con . . . . .  |      | Lengua de Novillo . . . . .  | 0.30 |
| Cebollas . . . . .         | 0.65 | Beef Tongue                  |      |
| Hamburger with Onions      |      | Lechuga y Tomate . . . . .   | 0.30 |
| Jamón y Queso . . . . .    | 0.40 | Lettuce and Tomato           |      |
| Ham and Cheese             |      | Club . . . . .               | 0.75 |
| Queso Americano . . . . .  | 0.35 | Club                         |      |
| American Cheese            |      |                              |      |

**Platos: Entrees:**

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Ensalada de Gallina . . . . .                      | 1.00 |
| Chicken Salad                                      |      |
| Ensalada de Frutas Frescas . . . . .               | 0.85 |
| Fresh Fruit Salad                                  |      |
| Tortilla Española, de Jamón o de Queso . . . . .   | 0.95 |
| Spanish, Ham or Cheese Omelette                    |      |
| Fiambres Fríos Surtidos con Ensalada . . . . .     | 1.00 |
| Assorted Cold Cuts with Salad                      |      |
| Pargo a la Parrilla, Maitre D'Hotel . . . . .      | 1.00 |
| Broiled Red Snapper, Maitre D'Hotel                |      |
| Ensalada de Salmón Canadiense . . . . .            | 0.95 |
| Canada's Salmon Salad                              |      |
| Pollo Frito a la Hotel Nacional . . . . .          | 1.25 |
| Fried Chicken a la Hotel Nacional                  |      |
| Filete de Mignon a la Parrilla con Papas . . . . . | 1.50 |
| Broiled Filet Mignon with Potatoes                 |      |

**Postres: Desserts:**

|                                      |      |                            |      |
|--------------------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|
| Biscocho Hotel Nacional . . . . .    | 0.25 | Flan al Caramelo. . . . .  | 0.20 |
| Hotel Nacional Layer Cake            |      | Caramel Custard Pudding    |      |
| Frutas Frescas en Estación . . . . . | 0.15 | Piononos . . . . .         | 0.20 |
| Fresh Fruits in Season               |      | Jelly Roll                 |      |
| Gelatina de Frutas . . . . .         | 0.15 | Compota de Frutas. . . . . | 0.25 |
| Fruit Jello                          |      | Fruit Compote              |      |
| Pastel del Día . . . . .             | 0.20 | Queso Martinz . . . . .    | 0.25 |
| Pie of the Day                       |      | Martins Cheese             |      |
| Pudín Hotel Nacional . . . . .       | 0.20 | Ciruelas Pasas . . . . .   | 0.15 |
| Hotel Nacional Pudding               |      | Stewed Prunes              |      |

**Bebidas: Beverages:**

|                             |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Café Boqueteño . . . . .    | 0.15 |
| Boquete Coffee              |      |
| Leche Fresca Pas- . . . . . | 0.20 |
| teurizada                   |      |
| Pasteurized Fresh Milk      |      |
| Te Helado . . . . .         | 0.20 |
| Iced Te                     |      |
| Chocolate . . . . .         | 0.25 |
| Chocolate                   |      |

•

**"Gran variedad de los mejores Vinos y Whiskies"**  
**"Wide selection of fine Wines and Whiskies"**

*If you go hungry while doing Panama, you've no one in the whole world to blame but yourself! And these appetizing menus are from even the more remote northerly section, David (Hotel Nacional), to be exact.*

## Mexican Food and Drink

Typical Mexican food is rich and colorful, derived from Indian, Spanish and even Moorish influences. Many of the dishes are hot and spicy, and even the familiar foods taste different when cooked with the distinctive Mexican touch. The favorite festive dish is mole de guajolote. Guajolote means turkey, and mole is a rich, thick sauce made from chiles, ground almonds, spices, sesame seed and chocolate. Other popular dishes are those made of frijoles, or brown beans, cooked in various ways; rice combined with vegetables, chicken livers, bananas or eggs.

The tortilla, a thick pancake made of coarse corn meal, appears in many guises on a Mexican menu. Tacos, the Mexican counterpart of sandwiches, are rolled tortillas stuffed with beef, pork, chicken or cheese. A popular custom is to season them with alligator pear and chile sauce. When served with mole or tomato sauce, tacos are called enchiladas. Crisply fried tortillas, spread with minced chicken, meat or salad, are called tostadas. Tortilla dough, made into turnovers and filled with fried beans, cheese or potatoes, then fried in lard, are quesadillas. Tamales are made from the same dough, filled with bits of chicken, pork or sweets, wrapped in corn husks and steamed.

Typical Mexican desserts are various fruit pastes and the browned custard called flan. Mexican sweets or dulces are sugar-coated fruits in their natural form, or little cakes of honey, coconut, almonds, etc.

In the large cities the cuisine is cosmopolitan and if you want to sample the typical foods of the country, you will find them in greater variety in the smaller restaurants, catering more to the Mexican than the tourist trade; the sign "Antojitos Mexicanos" indicates that you can get real Mexican food.

Native Mexican drinks include: tequila and mezcal, distilled from the juices of the maguey plant; brandy, a sugar-cane brandy; aguardiente, a grape distillation; pulque, the fermented sap of the maguey, slightly stronger than beer; and a variety of wines.

*Courtesy, Mexican Tourist Association*

*Courtesy, American Automobile Association*

## FOOD AND DRINK

Mexico is famous for its good cuisine. In Mexico City and other centers are some of the finest restaurants in this Continent. Generally speaking, Mexican, American and European dishes are available according to choice. Breads and coffees are exceptionally fine, and many tropical fruits and vegetables provide a savory variety.

There is an impression that all Mexican dishes are highly seasoned. Such is not the case. The traveler may enjoy many healthful native foods without concern.

On the Grand Central Plateau, the principal meal of the day is usually had at noon —there is a reason: altitude makes for a slower digestion. You will derive more pleasure from a light evening meal than from natural indulgence of hearty appetite when fine foods are offered at suppertime.

Good water is supplied almost everywhere and it may be supplemented by bottled mineral waters, soda pop or any of several remarkable good brands of beer. Wines, also, are abundant, and excellent vintages may be had most reasonably.

By law, all milk in Mexico is pasteurized.

"When things look black" in Middle America, have no fear! Never have I failed to find excellent, prompt, economical laundry service in any city, village or even remote jungle settlement.

**SALON DE BELLEZA "EMMA"**  
 PROPIETARIAS  
 EMMA GUTIERREZ P. Y JOLANY DE MARICHAL  
 TELEFONO No. 12-11  
 SERVICIOS DE LIMPIEZAS

| PRECIO   |                            |
|----------|----------------------------|
| L. 8.00  | Permanente sencillo        |
| L. 8.00  | Permanente PERMA WADE      |
| L. 10.00 | Permanente MILDENOL CLEAR  |
| L. 12.00 | PERMANENTE SOLUCION ACEITE |
| L. 15.00 | PERMANENTE SIN MAQUINA     |
| L. 0.75  | Shampoo pelo corto         |
| L. 1.00  | Shampoo pelo largo         |
| L. 1.75  | Henna shampoo              |
| L. 2.50  | Henna Pack                 |
| L. 1.50  | Peinado                    |
| L. 1.00  | Peinado en seco            |
| L. 0.50  | Repelado                   |
| L. 1.50  | Peinado marcel             |
| L. 1.00  | Corte de Pelo              |
| L. 2.50  | Aclarado de pelo           |
| L. 1.50  | Tratamiento para la caspa  |
| L. 1.00  | Manicure                   |
| L. 2.50  | Masaje facial              |
| L. 1.00  | Depilación de cejas        |
|          | Almas                      |
|          | Ganchos de pelo            |
|          | Redes                      |
|          | TOTAL                      |

### LISTA DE PRECIOS

| SEÑORA                |      | SEÑOR                 |      |
|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|------|
| Batas agua            | 0.40 | Batas agua            | 0.40 |
| Blusas algodón        | 0.30 | Calcetines            | 0.05 |
| " seda                | 0.50 | Calzoncillos          | 0.10 |
| Brassier              | 0.10 | Camisas agua          | 0.50 |
| Camisones algodón     | 0.30 | Camisetas algodón     | 0.10 |
| " seda                | 0.50 | Cuellos               | 0.05 |
| Delantales algodón    | 0.20 | Overoles              | 0.60 |
| Faldas algodón        | 0.30 | Pantalones algodón    | 0.50 |
| Fondos                | 0.30 | Pañuelos              | 0.05 |
| Pantaletas            | 0.10 | Pijamas algodón       | 0.40 |
| Pañuelos              | 0.05 | " lana o seda         | 0.90 |
| Slacks                | 1.00 | Slacks algodón        | 0.60 |
| Vestidos algodón      | 0.50 | " seda                | 1.00 |
| CASA                  |      | NIÑOS                 |      |
| Carpetas              | 0.05 | Blusas                | 0.15 |
| Colchas grandes       | 0.60 | Calcetines            | 0.05 |
| " medianas            | 0.40 | Calzones              | 0.10 |
| Fundas grandes        | 0.15 | Camisas               | 0.25 |
| " medianas            | 0.10 | Camisones dormir      | 0.15 |
| Manteles agua grandes | 0.25 | Camisetas             | 0.05 |
| "    " chicos         | 0.15 | Corpifios             | 0.10 |
| Sábanas grandes       | 0.30 | Delantales            | 0.10 |
| " medianas            | 0.20 | Overoles              | 0.40 |
| Servilletas           | 0.05 | Pantalones            | 0.25 |
| Toallas chicas        | 0.05 | Pijamas               | 0.20 |
| " afelpadas           | 0.10 | Vestidos niña algodón | 0.25 |
| " de baño             | 0.20 | Pañales               | 0.10 |
| Trapos cocina         | 0.05 | " triangulares        | 0.05 |

**ROPA NO ANOTADA EN ESTA LISTA, PRECIOS CONVENCIONALES**

JEFE DEL DEPARTAMENTO DE TURISMO  
MEXICO

August 12th, 1948.

Mr. Roger Stephens,  
 Publisher, Inc.,  
 118 East 19th St.,  
 New York 3, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Stephens:

Your kind inquiry of the 7th inst., at Man and here is the  
 results you desire:

Salvate.....\$2.00 pesos  
 Shaves..... 1.50 to 2.00 pesos  
 Shampoos for men..... 4.00 to 5.00 pesos (men for women)  
 Manicure..... 2.50 pesos (both sexes)  
 Shoe shine..... 50 to 40 centavos.

These prices prevail at better class barber shops and beauty  
 rates at some beauty shops somewhat higher.

I am wishing your forthcoming book a wide acceptance, I am  
 Sincerely yours,  
 Alejandro Guzman, Jr.

## For "Wimmin" Only

MANY ASK if it be safe for a woman to make the trip alone. This is a fair question. I underwrite no insurance on the lives (much less the morals) of females peregrinating Down That Pan American Highway. This is not my side of the street.

The subject in question must stick to her knitting and must confine her itinerary to the accepted lines of transportation. Then she'll be quite safe, probably more so than under similar conditions in the sophisticated sections of the States or of so-called civilized Europe.

It's assumed she will observe the most obvious precautions: check and double-check her hotel accommodations; travel by day rather than by night; and not dress ostentatiously to suggest easy pickings to petty thieves.

Mrs. Stephens and I honeymooned on a ranch in Spanish America so remote that an old tomato can served as a coffeepot. Since then my wife, patient soul that she is, has intermittently withstood the rigors of unorthodox wanderings to some twenty lands and islands of the Caribbean and all without untoward incident.

From this paragon of much sense and few words, I glean these pearls of wisdom for my "Wimmin's Page":

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Top coat</i>   | It's awfully coolish in the mountains.                                  |
| <i>Flat-beeled shoes</i>                                | Rough walking will be encountered all over the map south of the Border. |
| <i>Head scarf</i>                                       | This will be most helpful on dusty roads and gusty buses.               |
| <i>Nylon underthings and overthings such as blouses</i> | These wash easily, dry quickly and require no ironing.                  |
| <i>Suits of light color</i>                             | These will not show dust.   |
| <i>Dresses of figured design</i>                        | These will not show spots.  |
| <i>Money belt</i>                                       | Carefully concealed, not exposed.                                       |

If you want to get wet publicly in the orthodox manner, by all



means take along a bathing suit. There will be many opportunities to swim, but disproportionate opportunities to find your particular size and style suit in the limited stocks available locally.

Do not wear slacks, particularly in the villages.

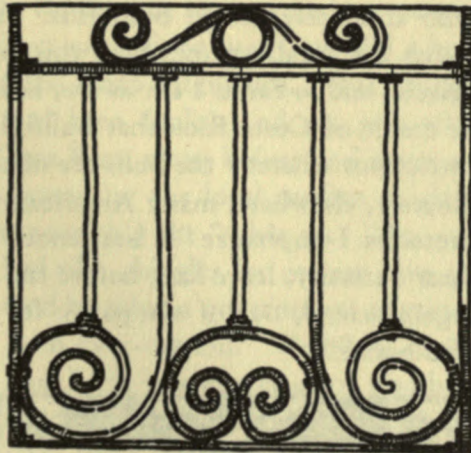
Laundry service is universally available, economical, excellent and prompt. I can't recall a single place, even in the jungles, where clothes could not be washed and ironed within twenty-four hours.

Dry cleaning facilities are available in all capitals and larger towns, but the quality is not always "too hot" in spite of the high tropical temperatures.

Don't worry about your hair-do, there are satisfactory beauty shops in all capitals.

A few miscellaneous musts are dark glasses, a flashlight, matches, individual drinking cups, and above all, cleansing tissues.

Unless you read Spanish fluently, take along a bit of English reading matter (provided, of course, you read English fluently), as nowhere except in Mexico City, Guatemala City and the Canal Zone will there be much literature other than magazines of incredibly ancient vintage. The one exception is *Time* which can be had up to the minute in all seven capitals.



## Sightseeing and Amusements

FROM Archeology to Zoology, through the whole rubber-neck gamut, it's purely up to your personal predilections.

Before you start from home, grab time by the forelock and purchase a couple of the many comprehensive guide books published for every country you will be visiting. Many on-the-spot sightseeing agencies in Latin America are woefully ignorant of much that is of consuming interest to American tourists. This applies even to their own backyards. Our southern neighbors are not hotel-conscious, and with respect to sightseeing potentials, they are discouragingly *unconscious*. This last is a compliment rather than a complaint and so intended. They just aren't commercialized on this score, yet. Give them time. They'll learn from us quickly enough. Too quickly, if you ask me!

Golf, tennis, swimming, horseback riding and other of our northern sports may be enjoyed in most of the big cities, even skiing or at least snowballing at the peaks of several high mountains.

With respect to amusements, may I be permitted to figuratively doff my hat and pass out not one, but several orchids in praise and gratitude to the Salvadoreans who absolutely forbid bullfights. The good people of Honduras, who though not legally proscribing this cruel sport(?), evidence no interest therein, and so far as I am aware, never stage them.

Be it said to the credit of Costa Rica that bullfighting there is only permitted under restrictions whereby the bulls are neither mistreated nor killed. But unfortunately, elsewhere, many American tourists go *at least once* to these sad spectacles. I emphasize "at least once" because many who have gone out of sheer curiosity, leave long before the sorry mess is over, resolved never to again attend, out of sympathy for the bulls and the poor, old, blindfolded horses!



## Miscellaneous

### WEATHER

Though summer travel in Central America is entirely practicable and for the most part pleasant, you may be slightly inconvenienced by an hour or two of rain afternoons from June to November. From November 1st to June 1st the weather presents no difficulty, and the climate is ideal Down That Pan American Highway.

Temperature is a question of altitude rather than latitude. I have been unbearably hot in Tuxtla Gutierrez which is pretty well down to sea level, yet within twenty-four hours I was almost frozen in the ten thousand foot Highlands in near-by Guatemala. It seems incongruous, but I breakfasted in tropical Quezaltenango with a charcoal brazier burning at my feet.

### HEALTH

In spite of many rumors about malaria, amoeba infection (extreme dysentery), altitude sickness and similar indispositions, I have never experienced illness in the tropics. Others with me have, so perhaps I was just lucky. Come to think of it, there were two exceptions. Continuously subjected to the direct rays of the sun, I overdid a hard day's walk along the rough trails of the Maya Highlands. I was groggy for a short while afterward, but I had been foolish and got just what I deserved. Last year in southern Costa Rica, never before and never since, I contracted a skin irritation diagnosed by the local medico as shingles. This was not surprising, as I am invariably the "other way." So, as everyone else from Texas to Panama had tiles, shingles for me ran true to form.

I was once amused by what a government physician said when I confessed not having been over-careful. "Well," he replied, "I think you're probably right at that." He was in charge of possibly a hundred men at this particular road camp, and we were talking in the general dining room at the time. "See those robust guys over there in the corner? Well, they never lose a day although they drink like fish, eat indiscriminately and go native to a startling degree. Yet those anemic, sickly, pasty-faced

hypochondriacs at the far table meticulously take medical preventives and scrupulously follow my injunctions. They virtually live in the sick bay."

So don't be alarmed by the plethora of well-intentioned precautionary measures you are supposed to take. Be even reasonably careful of what you eat, what you drink, where you go and what you do, and you shouldn't suffer from a single hour's sickness, any more than you might back at home. Hospital facilities, physicians and dentists are to be had in all the capitals. Many of the professionals speak excellent English, having taken their degrees from universities in the United States.

### CLOTHING

For the sea-level interior sections you will require ordinary summer clothes. For the higher altitudes a light topcoat is desirable. At night in the very high mountains a medium weight overcoat comes in handy, though ordinarily you pass over these in the daytime when the light top coat should suffice.

Clothes worn in the latitude of New York in summer should be all right throughout Middle America. If you travel between November and June you may leave your raincoats, rubbers and umbrellas home in the hall closet.

Shorts and slacks for women are not acceptable in the smaller communities. Better leave them home. More orthodox clothing is safer, even in the larger cities. What's the use of offending or becoming needlessly conspicuous?

For the countryside, take along a flashlight, candles, toilet tissues, paper napkins and, most important of all, some safety matches. The native variety in remote sections leaves much to be desired. Some are limp wax affairs with phosphorus on both ends. Ask a city slicker from one of the big towns down there why, and he'll tell you it's because the peons are too dumb to know which end to strike.

Whether you travel to city or country, take along an extra pair of eyeglasses. This is a real must. Opticians are rare birds in these here parts.

A pocket dictionary and personal identification papers are most essential articles of clothing regardless of weather.

### BAGGAGE

Don't carry excessive luggage. It complicates matters all along the

line with proportionately increasing irritations. Err on the side of taking, if anything, too little. Replacements are available and good clothes can be bought at moderate prices in every fair-sized city. Furthermore, twenty-four hour laundry is on tap everywhere. Maybe I cut my luggage a bit thin as some fastidious folk go, but I made a seven week trek of over three thousand miles from Laredo to Panama with a brief case and a thirty-pound bag.

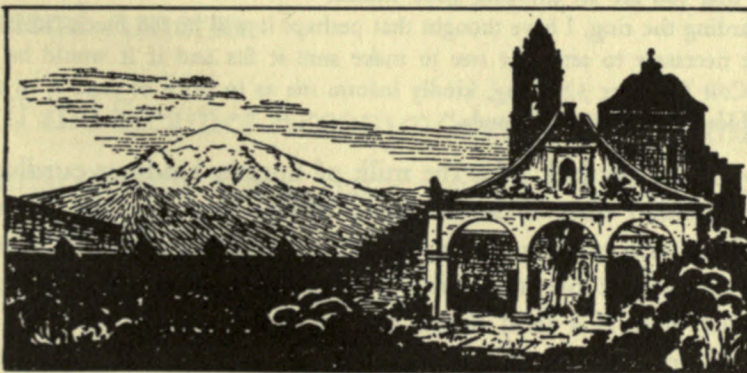
Travel light; take no trunks but rather a couple of suitcases that you can keep your eye on every minute of the trip. Somehow or other trunks and native buses don't mix. Keep each piece under sixty-six pounds, the plane maximum weight without excess fee.

Even suitcases are evasive. Mark yours with some odd device in a contrasting color so that it will stand out prominently. It's amazing how a bag without benefit of such distinction can merge with a Latin American landscape, particularly when snuggled up to twenty or thirty other pieces of hand luggage.

## IDENTIFICATION

Clearly mark your name and address on the inside of each bag.

Make sure you carry similar identification on your person though obviously not written on the inside. In other words (and this is the most vital tip of the whole kit and boodle), carry a dog-tag in the event of accident. Remember, you're apt to be a long, long way from home.



## Ingratitude Is the Reward of the World

I CHALLENGE the cynic's definition of gratitude as no more than hope for further favors. Don't hesitate to express gratitude. Regardless of the service rendered, folks are rarely injured by saying or writing *muchas gracias*. Occasionally, thanks backfire in an amusing way, but this is the exception, not the rule.

In a remote jungle section in Panama, I was entertained by a native constabulary officer who was most gracious. Upon my return to New York, I sent him a note of thanks and assured him that if ever there were any commissions I might do for him, I was his to command. Six weeks later a brief note arrived requesting that I buy him a ring—just that and nothing more. No word of whether the chap wanted to play quoits, get married or run the ring through a pig's nose. I wrote that I would be delighted to purchase almost any kind of a ring if only he'd send along more detailed specifications. This naive response followed:

"Allow me to convey to you and your honorable family the best of greetings with the wish that you are all enjoying good health.

"Regarding the ring, I have thought that perhaps it will be too much trouble because it will be necessary to send the size to make sure it fits and if it would be easier to obtain a Colt Revolver 32" long, kindly inform me as to price or send it to me and I shall be pleased to mail the money."

I'm still in the dark. Has the milk of human kindness curdled in the hot Panamanian sun? Women are so fickle. I suspect the engagement was broken with a bang when the dusky princess glimpsed one of my handsome passport photos. Obviously, our soldier boy decided to shoot it out with her. If I send down that thirty-two inch shooting iron, I might end up in double jeopardy—alienator of affections and accessory before the fact. Mr. Anthony, I have a problem!

While on the subject of expressing thanks, I gratefully acknowledge the generous cooperation of the Pan American Union in making available many of their delightful, little, decorative line illustrations.

PART FIVE



*Motor Meandering in Middle  
America*

Gasoline, Oil and Tire Information

Automobile Clubs

Driving Licenses

Bonding

Entrance and Exit Formalities for Mexico and  
Central America

Rail and Steamer Accommodations Available for  
Transporting Cars Back to the United States



# American Automobile Association

25 BROAD STREET  
NEW YORK 4, N. Y.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DEPARTMENT

Mr. Roger Stephens  
National Arts Club  
15 Gramercy Park South  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Stephens:

It is a pleasure to contribute the details you have requested concerning motoring in Mexico and Central America.

As to gasoline, oil and tires, the motorist will find them available along the entire Mexican and Central American section of the Pan American Highway. However, it is strongly advised that tires be in good condition and that two spares be carried if the trip is to be a long one. Needless to say, the car should be in excellent mechanical condition in all respects.

Gasoline and Oil Prices are subject to variation but the following are in effect at this time:

| <u>Country</u> | <u>Gasoline Per Gallon</u> | <u>Oil Per Quart</u>     |
|----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mexico         | 23¢                        | 35¢                      |
| Guatemala      | 49¢                        | 33¢                      |
| El Salvador    | 50¢                        | 33¢                      |
| Honduras       | 50¢                        | 38¢                      |
| Nicaragua      | 35¢                        | 37¢                      |
| Costa Rica     | 45¢                        | 25¢                      |
| Panama         | 30¢                        | No information available |

Automobile Clubs in Mexico and the other Central American Republics are always glad to render assistance. Clubs affiliated with the A.A.A. are:

Mexico Asociacion Mexicana Automovilistica, Berlin No. 6, Mexico, D.F.  
Asociacion Nacional Automovilistica, Londres 67, Mexico, D.F.

Guatemala Auto Club Turista de Guatemala, Septima Avenida Sur, No. 27  
Guatemala City

El Salvador Auto Club de El Salvador, Calle Once, No. 138, San Salvador

Honduras Asociacion Hondurena Automovilistica, Camera de Comercio e  
Industrias, Tegucigalpa

Nicaragua Asociacion Automovilistica Nicaraguense, Junta Nacional de  
Turismo, Gran Hotel, Managua

Costa Rica Asociacion Costarricense Autovilistica, Junta Nacional de  
Turismo, Las Arcadas, San Jose

Panama Panama Automobile Club, P.O. Box 281, Balboa, C.Z.

The one crime more heinous than crass ignorance is the failure to frankly admit it. Not wishing to compound a felony, and having had no personal experience in driving my own car south of Puebla, Mexico, I sought out the foremost authority on "Motor Meandering in Middle America", namely, the American Automobile Association.





Driving Licenses - As an official issuing agency for the driving documents called for in the Inter-American driving agreement, officially known as the "Convention on Regulation of Inter-American Automobile Traffic", the A.A.A. issues an international automobile certificate, an international driving license, and an international registration marker for the car. These Inter-American documents do away with the need to secure driving licenses and registration plates in the various countries adhering to the system. Naturally they in no way eliminate the need for passports and visas in those countries requiring these documents nor do they serve as customs passes for the car. At the present time the following nations have ratified the Convention:

- |                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Brazil             | Nicaragua     |
| Costa Rica         | Panama        |
| Dominican Republic | Paraguay      |
| El Salvador        | Peru          |
| Guatemala          | United States |
| Honduras           |               |

In all the countries along the Central American section of the Pan American route, U.S. licenses are honored for varying periods of time, or a local license will be issued upon presentation of a valid U.S. permit. It is always advisable to check with the local police upon arrival.

Bonding - The formalities connected with the temporary importation of a car into Mexico and most of the Central American countries are very simple. The only country which requires a bond to cover customs duties is Costa Rica, where a bond equal to such duties must be posted on entry, to be refunded on exit.

Entry Requirements for Temporary Importation of a Car

| <u>Country</u> | <u>Documents Required</u>  | <u>Valid For</u>                        |
|----------------|--|---|
| Mexico         | Entry permits secured at border. Certificate of ownership and driver's license must be presented. Charge about 10¢ U.S.  | 180 days<br>(may be extended 6 months.) |
| Guatemala      | Tourist must petition Collector of Customs on a special form; report to Traffic Bureau in Guatemala City upon arrival.   | 60 days                                 |
| El Salvador    | Certificate of ownership, U.S. auto license, driver's license, document showing car will be taken out of country. Car must be reported to police within 24 hours of arrival. | 15 days                                 |
| Honduras       | No customs duties on cars  |   |
| Nicaragua      | Certificate of ownership, auto license and signed pledge car will be removed from country in 3 months. Certain formalities must be observed after passing through customs.   | 90 days                                 |
| Costa Rica     | For stays of less than 30 days there is no customs fee, although a bond equal to such fee must be posted on entry to be refunded on exit.                                    | 30 days                                 |
| Panama         | Temporary permit must be secured from Ministry of Treasury and Finance   | 90 days                                 |

Regulations change - it's well to make a last-minute check.



Entrance and Exit Formalities for Mexico and Central America - Here again regulations change with almost bewildering frequency but fortunately the tendency is toward simplification and the substitution of the tourist card for the passport and visa. Present requirements for entry are:

**Mexico**

Tourist card for stay up to 6 mos.  
Proof of U.S. citizenship  
Vaccination certificate

**Nicaragua**

Passport for stay up to 30 days  
Visa  
Health, vaccination and police certificate

**Guatemala**

Tourist Cards for stay up to 90 days  
Passport or other proof of citizenship  
Police certificate or character references

**Costa Rica**

Passport  
Visa  
Health, vaccination and police certificates

**El Salvador**

Tourist Card for stay up to 8 days  
Proof of U.S. citizenship  
Vaccination, health and police certificates

**Panama**

Tourist card for stay up to 15 days; may be renewed for additional 90 days  
Proof of U.S. citizenship

**Honduras**

Passport for stay up to 60 days  
Visa  
Vaccination certificate

Exit Formalities vary but in general the tourist card and car permit must be surrendered on leaving. The manager at your hotel can tell you whether it is necessary to secure an Exit Permit from the police.

Rail and Steamer Accommodations for Transporting Cars Back to the U.S.

Mexico - Automobiles may be shipped via National Railways of Mexico although delays are apt to be prolonged. Steamship lines offer service from Vera Cruz or Tampico to New York; from Progreso or Vera Cruz to Gulf ports, and from Acapulco or Manzanillo to San Francisco. The lines presently in operation include A.G.W.I. Lines, Yucatan Line and Grace Line.

Guatemala - International Railways of Central America (with offices in the U.S. at 20 Exchange Place, New York 4) connect the capital with the principal seaports and with Mexico and San Salvador. Steamship lines operating from Puerto Barrios to U.S. ports include Standard Fruit and Steamship Co. and United Fruit Co.

El Salvador - International Railways of Central America have connections from San Salvador to Guatemala and Mexico. Steamship lines operating from La Libertad include Grace Line, Panama Line, United Fruit Co. and Standard Fruit and Steamship Co.

Honduras - Standard Fruit and Steamship Co. maintains service between La Ceiba and U.S. Gulf ports.



Nicaragua - Grace Line has service between Bluefields and San Francisco.

Costa Rica - Automobiles are carried by United Fruit Co. from Puerto Limon to the U.S. and from Puntarenas by Grace Line, Panama Line, Standard Fruit and Steamship Co., United Fruit Co. and Lloyd Shipping Co.

Panama - Service between Cristobal or Balboa is offered by a number of lines, including Grace, Lykes Bros., Panama, United Fruit and Fred Olsen Line.

A word of warning about insurance - most U.S. policies are not valid outside the limits of this country. The motorist should check with his agent before starting on the trip. For the convenience of those going to Mexico, the A.A.A. border office at Laredo issues an insurance policy valid in that country.

As you have explained, Laredo is the starting point from the United States. Driving distance from New York is about 2100 miles; from Chicago approximately 1400 and from San Francisco about 1900 miles.

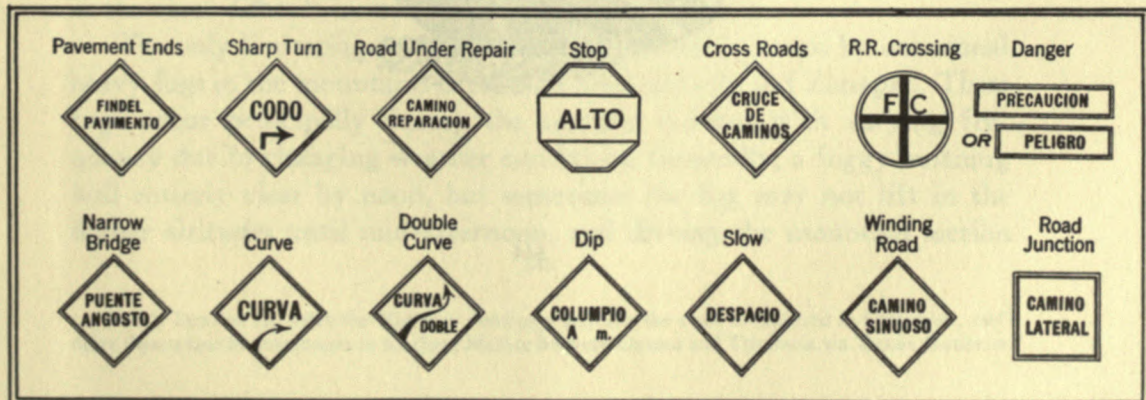
Local A.A.A. motor clubs, situated throughout the United States, are always pleased to map out individual routings for their members and to give all the available information on highway conditions, regulations, etc.

To all those who - after reading your book - decide to embark on the fascinating adventure of driving down the Pan American Highway, we wish a happy trip.

Sincerely yours,

Elise Phillips  
Information Service  
International Travel Department

September 1948



## Recessional

**H**AVE the foregoing pages bred within your soul that yen to go places and do things? If things beyond control make travel downright impossible, seek solace from the fine old philosophy of the late lamented Mr. Dooley:

"Here I am, almost as well as before I made me pleasure jaunt. I'm not goin' to do it again. Let them that will bask in their comforts. I stay at home. Whiniver I feel th' desire to fly through space I throw four dollars out iv th' window, put a cinder into me eye, an' go to bed on a shelf in the closet."

Maybe, Mr. Dooley, too, "has something there!"

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Adios, señor, buen viaje, hasta la vista."*  
("So long, sir, happy landing, I'll be seein' you.")



## APPENDIX

### LAST REPORT OUTLINING ACTUAL ROAD CONDITIONS — SEPTEMBER 1947 \*

#### *Pan American Highway — Laredo, Texas, to the Panama Canal*

In 1947, the official inspection trip was made by automobile from San Antonio, Texas, to Panama, along the established line of the highway so far as practicable to determine the exact driving conditions, the status of improvement in Mexico, and the convenient detours where necessary. Mr. E. W. James, Chief of the Inter-American Regional Office of the Public Roads Administration, and Mr. William Furlong, representing the Mexican Highway Department at San Antonio, Texas, made the trip together as far as Tapachula, Mexico. There they were joined by Adrian Williams, photographer for the Public Roads Administration, and together they continued the trip to Panama.

Planning to inspect all the construction along the Highway through Mexico and to take moving pictures of the road in Central America, the group drove from San Antonio, Texas, to Panama, with exceptions noted, approximately on schedule. The Highway in Mexico was found to be in better condition than reported, and its continued maintenance by the Mexican Government is constantly improving the road over the original construction.

Traffic as far as Monterrey is generally heavier than farther south, but as one proceeds an increasing fraction of truck traffic is encountered, practically to Mexico City. The pavement is everywhere wide enough for two lane traffic at high speeds across the valleys and at 30 mile speed in the most difficult mountain section in clear weather.

The only limitation on free and normal traffic is caused by occasional heavy fogs in the mountains between Tamazunchale and Zimapan. These fogs occur principally during the summer months with varying frequency due to changing weather conditions. Generally, a foggy morning will entirely clear by noon, but sometimes the fog may not lift in the higher altitudes until mid-afternoon, and driving the mountain section

\*As of October 1st, 1948 the Highway remains practically the same as reported in September, 1947 other than major improvements in southern Mexico between Oaxaca and Trinitaria via Tuxtla Gutierrez.

may be attended by hazards except to a skillful driver used to mountain roads.

The party had heavy fog from Tamazunchale to within a half hour's drive of Zimapan with a short break in the valley at Jacala, a total distance of 95½ miles, and made the run in four hours. This was at an average speed of 24 miles per hour.

In the section between Monterrey and Victoria, which was covered during a beautifully clear day, the most impressive evidence of what the improved highway has done to encourage local development is seen in the region of Allende and Montemorelos, where citrus culture, formerly scant, has advanced to a remarkable degree. It would pay the traveler south-bound to turn left at Allende over a somewhat rough but easily passable road for a couple of kilometers and climb the ridge to the spot marked by a tall concrete monument carrying a cross. From this point a view may be had across the valley for something like five miles to the left, to the right and straight ahead, where the entire area is almost completely covered with the geometric pattern of citrus groves. The rows of trees vary their direction and the separate groves can be distinguished almost as far as the eye can reach. It is a view of orange, lemon, tangerine and grapefruit cultivation, probably not to be seen to such an extent and to such advantage anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere.

Returning to the main road, the traveler should stop at one of the many fruit stands lining the road at Allende and beyond as far as Montemorelos and freely sample the orange juice offered at these road stands.

Some distance beyond Montemorelos in the region of Linares, there is another large citrus development, and the traveler will pass one citrus grove whose white fence extends along the highway for more than a kilometer and a half, this single grove having a frontage on the road of almost one mile.

After crossing the plateau of Llerā the road enters the Manta Valley, drained by the Sabinas and Frío rivers, where sugar culture is general. There is a large Sugar Central at Manta, electrically equipped with the most modern machinery.

Leaving the Manta Valley, the highway passes through a deep canyon called El Abra and continues to Valles. Here an old Mexican town has virtually had its face lifted in a most remarkable manner. Hotels, tourist camps, gasoline and garage services have been built and provided to meet the most exacting demands of the traveler, and a night or two should be spent in Valles to see something of the heart of Mexico.

Some 30 miles to the south of Valles, a trail opened to traffic since the construction of the highway leads up the mountain for about two miles to the very interesting old Indian town of Tancanhuitz, which until the coming of the road could be approached only on muleback or afoot and in which a wheeled vehicle had never been seen.

Still beyond Valles the road continues its gradual descent to Tamazunchale, which is the gateway to the long mountain section of highway up the Moctezuma River and over the mountain rim on the approach to the Valley of Mexico. Tamazunchale has an elevation of less than 400 feet, and the stone monument on the right of the road at the highest point (Km. 90) on the mountain range near Colonia has an elevation of about 8,000 feet. This monument was unveiled on July 4, 1936, when the Nuevo Laredo-Mexico City road was officially opened. From Colonia to Mexico City, some 50 miles, the road extends across the broad flat former lake beds of the Valley and enters the capital by a newly constructed route of imposing proportions that leads directly into Avenida Insurgentes, one of the city's principal thoroughfares.

Continuing south of Mexico City by way of Puebla and Izucar de Matamoros, the party came to a part of the Mexican highlands which, until recent years, was practically closed to the ordinary traveler. For 352 miles the road is paved to Oaxaca, except for a single short section of about nine miles not far north of the city. The route crosses some of the fairest valleys in Central Mexico. Around Puebla, Matamoros, Tamazulapan, Tepozcolula and Nochistlan there are distinct valleys each forming an oasis of cultivation among the rocky, sometimes barren hills and ranges lying between.

The whole region abounds in house fronts and churches that are decorated with the bright-hued enameled tiles that have for centuries been produced near Puebla and Oaxaca. At Cholula there is a church dome completely covered with canary yellow tile which glistens in the noonday sun like a huge topaz set in a mounting of green. Sugar, corn, and some wheat were growing on land apparently irrigated with abundant water from a mountain stream.

At Huajuapán de León a newly completed hotel furnished good accommodations. At Oaxaca there was a choice of hostleries, and for the group too little time to visit the museum and the especially interesting churches with their amazing decorations. The Mayan antiques from the famous tomb VII at Monte Albán are displayed at the Museo, and the workmanship in gold, silver, copper, jade, gem stones and even on plain

lava rock attests the unusual skill and patience of the Mayan workmen who, years before Columbus, knew those valleys and hills and called them home.

A few miles beyond Oaxaca the practically unbroken continuity of the paved road from Laredo, Texas, ends, and from that point the trio had a hard surfaced road of gravel or macadam for many miles down to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and up again into the mountains of Chiapas, the large southernmost state of the Republic of Mexico. The crest of the mountain rim that bounds the huge three-pronged valley of Oaxaca to the south, is reached soon after passing the forks leading to the ruins of Mitla. When this crest is passed, the road winds down into the Tehuantepec Valley following one tributary after another along a line that must have taxed the ingenuity of the engineers responsible for the location. Finally with a series of thrilling turns along the cliffs of the lower canyon which rise in gorgeous colors for hundreds of feet, the route enters the Nejapa Valley and from that point crosses to the Tequisistlan watershed down which it continues to the Isthmus. At the Oaxaca valley crest the elevation is about 7200 feet and at Tehuantepec on the floor of the Isthmus the elevation is scarcely more than sea level.

The Isthmus is noted among other things for its high winds and dust, and the trip across the flat stretches of the valley floor was a long, hot dusty ride. Passing Juchitan, Miltepec and Zanatepec all on the flat Isthmus, they soon began the winding climb into the mountains of Chiapas. These mountains, with variations, extend into the Cuchumatanes Range which centers away down in Guatemala and constitutes the highest mountain mass in all Central America.

They were able to drive uninterruptedly to Comitán and with a little difficulty to Trinitaria, about 50 miles from the point on the Guatemala frontier, where a new port of entry is being considered and the roads of Mexico and Guatemala are to meet. But below Trinitaria, the Grijalva River valley compels a descent of about 2500 feet and here it is at present impossible for cars to proceed.

With the exception of various by-passes, all in excellent condition, around uncompleted structures (bridges, culverts, etc.) they covered by car the final location of the Inter-American Highway from the United States border at Laredo, Texas, to Comitán, in the State of Chiapas, Mexico, about 50 miles from the Guatemalan frontier on *ALL-WEATHER SURFACES*, a distance of approximately 1627 miles. The last link (Las Casas to Comitán) of 61 miles has been transformed



in the short period of one year from the dreaded bogs, which at times during the rainy season definitely halted all vehicular traffic, to a two-way well-maintained thoroughfare offering positive traction regardless of weather conditions. This is a remarkable achievement when it is realized that lacking rock-crushing machinery and other mechanical equipment, Filemón Zurita V., Resident Engineer stationed at Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chis., put his men on this particular job and with ordinary *HAND SLEDGES* produced broken stone in sufficient quantity to provide an all-weather surface over the entire distance of 61 miles. Wherever by-passes had to be made around bridges still under construction, there were entirely satisfactory and usually very short temporary crossings, either fords or temporary bridges.

However, it should be understood, despite reports to the contrary released by uninformed persons, that while it is possible to travel the Inter-American Highway from Laredo, Texas, to the city of Comitán by motor, it is impossible to enter Guatemala either directly or by going south to Tapachula via Comalapa and over the Motozintla Pass.

To reach Guatemala City and other points in Guatemala from Comitán, it is at present necessary to double back to a rail point, preferably Ixtepec or Juchitán, or down the mountain from Las Cruces to Arriaga or Tonalá where, if facilities are favorable, the automobile may be loaded and shipped to Tapachula by the National Railways of Mexico from which point an all-weather, well maintained road may be followed across Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua to the Costa Rica line, the end of the all-weather road for the present.

By doubling back by the way of Arriaga and taking the train to Tapachula, the three men reached Huehuetenango in Guatemala, and from there went down the Selegua River valley as far as they could drive, nearly to a little mountain town called Colotenango. There they were about 35 miles from that same frontier point they had sought in Mexico. The gap which they failed to cover in a car was about 85 miles at the Mexican-Guatemalan frontier. The length of the detour around this gap was 450 miles.

After returning from Colotenango the trio investigated a possible alternate route which had been proposed over the Cuchumatanes Range, and soon demonstrated how unsatisfactory this route would be for either the casual tourist or the more serious commercial traveler. From Huehuetenango, at about 6200 feet elevation, they climbed to over 11,200 feet.

There the party turned around at the present head of construction

where the road is cut in a cliff above a *barranca* or gorge that according to the statement of one of the Guatemalan engineers on the survey has a measured depth of over 3500 feet. From the road it takes two looks to see the bottom, and for a timid person three. It is more spectacular than the Barranca de los Mármoles north of Mexico City, because it is on so much larger a scale and is so much wilder in its setting.

In spite of its being the very middle of the dry season, the travelers experienced a terrific storm as they returned to Huehuetenango. They were in the clouds and the rain started with a torrential downpour. It changed to hail, then to snow and back again to rain. The lightning was terrific and being diffused by the dense clouds and fog seemed to surround them as flash after flash came and the thunder reverberated among the mountains. It was dusk but they could see small stones and pockets of earth start slipping and falling in the cuts as they crept along the winding road. They dared not stop, fearing a slide large enough to imprison them on the mountain over a cold night. So they gradually worked lower until they passed below the clouds. With the water racing down the ditches they hurried to the flatter reaches in the valley where they should be safe from an interrupted trip.

Of course, by sunset the sky was clear in the west, and for the two following days they had a beautiful trip, cold and clear, through the Guatemala Highlands over all-weather roads.

They went over the María Tecum Pass at about 11,000 feet with almost no fog. They went down from Los Encuentros to Lake Atitlán, a gemlike body of water in a setting of volcanic peaks. They went up to Tecum (where there was no fog) along the new proposed location for the highway and by four o'clock that afternoon reached Guatemala City, having come the long way from Tapachula, Mexico. So far they had covered by car all the line on the Inter-American Highway from Laredo, Texas, to Guatemala City, except the frontier section of about 85 miles at the Mexico-Guatemala line.

One month to the day after their start, and with a total of 3011 miles of travel by highway except for the short rail trip from Arriaga to Tapachula, the party checked in at the Gran Hotel, Managua, Nicaragua, after a steady and easy trip across Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. From Managua they went down past Rivas to the Costa Rica line and returned.

Nicaragua was the "end of the road" on the first leg of their long trip, for beyond lay Costa Rica, the "land of mountains," over portions

of which no motor way has been built, not even trails that might serve the native oxcarts.

From Managua they went by plane to San José, the capital of Costa Rica. From San José they covered the improved roads north and south. Two days were devoted to the inspection of the mountain road southward over the Talamanca range which at one point reaches an elevation of 11,000 feet. The plane again on the third day made the short hop over more mountains to the little city of David (pronounced Dah-veed), Panama, where they were greeted at the airport by the resident engineer of that district. Another two days were given to a trip northward toward the Costa Rica line on the Chiriquí plateau, after which the group in three cars headed for Balboa and the huge rambling Hotel Tívoli.

The official trip ended here after thirty-eight days of almost constant travel through regions replete with every type of terrain, scenic grandeur, climatic extreme, tropical loveliness indescribable in its variations, and all enhanced by the friendliness and hospitality so warmly offered by the kindly people whom they contacted in the seven Latin Republics included in their itinerary. They had used station wagons and sedans and had found no road difficulties in the total of 4000 miles that they had driven.

Apart from creating a new and unique tourist artery, this road will definitely serve to develop areas rich in agricultural possibilities and a wide diversity of mineral deposits, practically untouched growths of cabinet woods, such as, mahogany, ebony, cypress, logwood, cupape, granillo, matilishguati and the forests of cinchona, from which the quinine of commerce is obtained. All these are storehouses of almost fabulous wealth and economic value, which have remained in complete isolation because of the lack hitherto of transportation facilities. Diversity of attractions unmatched on the continent, scenic grandeur, historic lore, famed battle grounds, volcanoes, noted ruins, ancient cathedrals, pyramids, varied and distinct Indian tribes, native dances, beautiful handloom textiles, pottery, colorful market days, climatic variety—all these will be available to the future traveler.

Briefly summarizing travel conditions, it may be said that the casual tourist can without any difficulty go as far south as Oaxaca and Mitla, lying just beyond in the valley. The more practiced motorist, used to Latin American conditions, can go as far as Comitán in the state of Chiapas. At the present time there is a gap of 85 miles more or less lying athwart the international boundary with Guatemala that cannot be traveled.

To pass this section one must return to a point on the National Railways of Mexico, ship the automobile to Tapachula, whence travel may be resumed by car to the north Costa Rica line.

The distance from Laredo to Oaxaca is 1102 miles; from Tapachula to Costa Rica it is 898 miles.

It is not advisable for any tourist to go beyond Nicaragua at present. The gap in the northern part of Costa Rica, approximately 100 miles, may be covered with some difficulty in the dry season but preferably with a jeep. The section in southern Costa Rica of about 125 miles is impassable to wheeled vehicles over almost the entire distance. From Concepción or David one may drive easily to Panama and the Canal Zone, 325 miles.

