

Mostly about People

By Wally Traling



Wreckreation—Peace Corps Style

I was a Peace Corpsman before the official organization was pieced together, and if you don't believe it, the next time you pass through Rosario, Baja California (look sharply), just you ask at the general store in the Plaza.

I gave the "cheeldren" of that Mexican wilderness outpost their first taste of organized recreation a few years back—bless their little noses. A transportation bumble dirty noses. A transportation bumble had stranded me at Rancho Bueno Vista for three days, and one afternoon at the Plaza, I saw these kids shooting marbles, aimlessly, having fun.

Nevertheless, this is an organized world we live in, and as we all know here in civilization-land, having fun is no criteria for enjoying one's self.

The square was a dusty version of Madame Tussaud's with a row of loafers bowed immobile in the sun against the adobe store wall; a back drop of nothingness; hot dust; and a listless building or two.

I motioned the kids to me and drew a circle on the hard ground and taught them the only marble game I knew—"Keeps." After a long drawn out series of gestures and bad Spanish, I enticed them one by one to lay two of their precious marbles into the ring. Then I explained that the marbles each boy knocked from the ring with his shooter would be his to keep.

Each step of instruction evoked gales of laughter until I began to wonder if they hadn't mistaken me for the new village idiot.

But they knuckled down around the circle and, like orderly little gentlemen, bade each other to take his turn.

One boy knocked three marbles from the ring, another six before he missed, another four, until the ring was empty. Gales of glee pierced the desert air. They all stood up and laughed and danced until a couple of the players, amid the festive atmosphere, realized they now had less marbles and that these marbles were now in someone else's pockets.

One of the losers hit a winner in the mouth. Naturally the winner hit the loser back, and suddenly I was stretching my nostrils skyward trying to breathe above the dust cloud. Some of the elders shot hot sauce glares in my direction. The din was terrific.

Struggling for composure, I scuffed out the "Keeps" circle with the thoroughness of one removing fingerprints from a smoking revolver and slunk off down the road to Buena Vista, looking back occasionally and wincing at the mushroom dust cloud that hung over the Plaza.

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When I returned to the Plaza the next afternoon, half expecting to find the local anti-vice squad warming up with close-order drill, the same group of kids clamored forward giggling and yelling, "Keeps! Keeps!"

I tried to shoo them away without attracting attention, but these kids were now hooked on organized fun and games and wanted to play the marble-fight thing

again. I plainly had to substitute something, and briefly Russian Roulette flashed through my mind.

But lacking in equipment I settled with Hide and Seek. I chose a boy who looked as if he could count and explained patiently that he was "IT" and that his part of the game was to face the store wall and count to one hundred, which he began to do immediately.

"The rest of you," I said, sensing approaching panic, "must run quickly and hide, and when your friend here . . ."

"Before I could finish everyone suddenly scattered. Not around the buildings, mind you, but toward the hills. I mean they ran like they intended to leave Mexico.

The Spanish word for "come back" failed me and just plain yelling seemed to spur them on to greater speeds.

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The boy at the wall finished counting and peered up askant. I needed time to think, so I told him to count again.

After he had completed the fourth hundred he turned poor sport and quit. The Plaza appeared as if a plague had hit it. We were the only souls in sight.

A half-hour passed and "IT" asked shyly where the others were. I thought this was a rather intelligent question and suspected some of the parents were wondering the same thing.

Finally I told "IT" he'd better go home. His young mind tried to grasp the point of the game, but I could almost see it fail.

However, he seemed relieved at not having to count to a hundred again, and walked down the road toward home, occasionally looking back at me and scratching his head.

Maybe today, there is no more Rosario!!

Last Tour Of SC School Facilities Slated Tomorrow

The final bus tour of local high school facilities, arranged by the "Yes" for school bonds committee to acquaint citizens with school needs, is scheduled tomorrow.

The free public tour will be of Santa Cruz High school. Bus pickups will be at Branciforte Elementary school at 10:30 a.m., Westlake school at 10:35 and Bay View school at 10:40. The return trip will start at 11:30.

A \$4.6-million bond issue will be voted on in the Santa Cruz City High school district at the Tuesday primary election.

PRISON EXECUTIONER FOR TEXAS DIES

Huntsville, Ttx. (AP) — The executioner for the Texas prison system, Capt. Joe Byrd, died Tuesday of a heart attack at the age of 78. Byrd's role as official executioner was a closely guarded secret until his death. Officials declined to say how many times he had thrown the electric chair switch.

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