Happy Holidays

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BEAUTIFUL TEETH WITH CEREC
Amazing Kids Thrive with Help from Equine Therapy

Listen up, Grandparents. This could be your niche...

By Kathy Bezy

Arthur Sanders was born with cerebral-palsy and at age two, he still couldn’t sit or turn over. His parents, Susu and Milton, worked with therapists with no significant changes. Then they put him on a horse and he began to sit. After that, Susu met with Lupita Fisher who had a center for equinoterapia. She eventually gave the Sanders her three horses to use. Martin Vargas gave them another horse, La Nina.

Susu explains, “We had these horses so I met Martin Lucero, a trainer who still helps us with the horses. Then, I began to talk with Victor Jimenez and we participated in two equine therapy events at Rancho El Camino with Ruth Njordsky. There were a lot of people interested in starting a program for disabled kids. So in February of 2015 we started Kids Up-Ninos Arriba.”

Sponsors were found and members and the pastors of Crossroads Christian Church have been supporting the project, as well as guests from Casa Buena B & B. Others have paid for hay and grain for the four horses now involved in the program. Kids Up has grown with the participation of four schools for disabled children plus the Casa Cuna and kids at risk.

Slowly, Arthur Sanders has continued improving and has become an enthusiastic rider. He walks on his own, sits a horse like a little pro, and communicates joy nonverbally. Arthur is 8-years-old and has become a happy, empathetic child.

Continues on page 30
Welcome to the Holiday Edition of *The Baja Citizen*!

The signs are all there. There is more traffic in the city. It takes a little bit longer to get from point A to point B. Your social calendar has filled up. Restaurants are busier. Stores are full with inventory. You can smell the scent of sunscreen more frequently as you walk around downtown. Your clothes are a bit tighter.

It is obvious. You don’t even have to consult a calendar. It is holiday season in La Paz and the city never seems more alive than it does right now. And it feels great!

In Mexico, Christmas is officially celebrated from December 12th to January 6th. December 12th is *Dia de Guadalupe,* a special day to many Catholics, especially Mexicans. It has been a national holiday since 1859. It is the day that the Virgin of Guadalupe (or, *La Virgen de Guadalupe,* in Español) was to have appeared before peasant Juan Diego near Mexico City in 1531.

From December 16th to Christmas Eve, children often perform the *Posada* processions or *Posadas.* *Posada* is Spanish for Inn or Lodging. It celebrates the Christmas story where Joseph and Mary looked for somewhere to stay before the birth of baby Jesus. Some folks will invite you to their Christmas party, but will use the term *posada,* instead of *fiesta.* *Posadas* make December a very festive month.

Christmas Eve is known as *Noche Buena* and is the big family day. Our traditional Christmas celebration meal is served at night on the 24th. You can read more about *Noche Buena* in Susan Fogel’s article on page 12.

Then, on December 28th, we celebrate the *Día de los Santos Inocentes.* This is a day for pranks, equivalent to April Fool’s Day. These pranks are called *inocentadas.* And just after the huge celebrations for New Years, we have Kings Day!

Kings Day in Mexico, known as the *Día de Reyes,* is celebrated by families holding onto the traditions of years past and is celebrated on January 6th.

On Kings Day, which has a religious background, children in Mexico receive gifts brought to them by the Three Kings, los Reyes Magos, Melchior, Gaspar and Baltazar. However, most kids in La Paz receive gifts from both Santa Claus and the Kings. The Santa Claus tradition has been imported from the United States while Kings Day has been passed down from generation to generation in Mexico.

On Kings Day, it is tradition for places of work, government offices and family and friends to get together to eat *rosca de reyes,* a sweet bread shaped like a wreath, with candied fruit on top, and plastic figurines that are to represent baby Jesus, baked inside. People who find the figurine in their piece of rosca must throw a party on February 2, *Candelaria Day,* offering tamales and atole, (a hot drink thickened with corn flour) hot chocolate or coffee to their guests.

The holiday season is on for these next few weeks! Take the time to learn local traditions and enjoy the season with family and friends. Enjoy La Paz!

To all my faithful readers, thank-you for reading *The Baja Citizen,* and however you celebrate, may you be happy and healthy with your loved ones near and present.

Before I sign off, I would like to say to my hardworking writers, editors and incredible advertisers, thank-you so much for helping me bring life to *The Baja Citizen* magazine. I wish you all health, love and happiness for 2018.

*Letter from the Editor*

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**The Legendary Elena Poniatowska in Todos Santos**

Russ Ham

Journalist. Author. Intellectual. Activist. Feminist. Icon. Hero. Elena Poniatowska is all these and more. So when the Palapa Society of Todos Santos built its new Learning Center, they chose to name the library after her. And because she is also kind and generous, Doña Elena attended the inauguration weekend, with an energy and enthusiasm that belie her 85 years.

The Palapa Society of Todos Santos is completing a momentous expansion. What began in 2003 as a children’s medical charity evolved quickly into a scholarship program, then educational programs as they realized that Todos Santos had no preparatoria — no high school for students who intend to go to university. Beginning in 2012, they were the beneficiary of Peter and Chloe Buck’s Todos Santos Music Festival. In 2015, they received a significant contribution from Cindy and David Higgins, retirees from Denver who have had a home in Todos Santos for ten years. With that donation, the Palapa Society has now built a campus that is an easy walk from anywhere in town. More than 250 students are being served by the school, the outreach programs, and the library; some students participate in multiple programs. The *Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska* has nearly ten thousand books, DVDs, and periodicals in English and Spanish, and about 600 people have library cards.

About forty 7th and 8th grade students from the Todos Santos and Pescadero area began full-time classes at the Palapa School in September; an additional grade level will be added every year for the next four years. Their curriculum is college-prep, and was designed to exceed the standards of Mexico’s Ministry of Education, the Secretaryía de Educación Pública (SEP), which has granted full certification to the school. Scholarships are available for students who need financial support.

The “Puente” English program provides part-time classes for 260 students, including 90 adults. This is nearly double the number of students who were enrolled before the campus was built. Seventy-five students are involved in after-school and summer programs like Art, EcoKids, and Water Safety.

To assure the continued operation of the Palapa Learning Center, the Palapa Society has teamed with the International Community Foundation (ICF) to establish an endowment fund. To help sustain the Palapa Learning Center’s unique educational opportunities, readers are encouraged to contact Eliza Brennan at the ICF: eliza@icdfn.org. The Palapa Society also welcomes volunteers and donors; contact them at info@palapasoassoc.org.
The Palapa Society hosted several events with Sra. Poniatowska in early November. There was a free, public panel discussion with audience Q&A, a dinner, and a ribbon cutting. Sra. Poniatowska spent many hours with the students at the Palapa Learning Center, especially encouraging the young women. Vice President Kathy Warnert summed it up by saying, “This was an historic week for the Palapa Society. The dream of the new Palapa Learning Center has become a reality. Our goal is to provide students the best possible education so they may fulfill their life dreams. We hope the next great writers, artists, builders, teachers, scientists and leaders of Todos Santos come from the Palapa School.”

Doña Elena holds a unique and significant place in Mexican journalism. On October 2, 1968, following a summer of labor and student unrest and ten days before the world press would arrive to cover the Olympics, soldiers of the Mexican army opened fire on a demonstration in a Mexico City neighborhood called Tlatelolco and killed more than 300 students. The official story was that the students had fired first and “got what they deserved.”

In the wake of the 1910 revolution, Sra. Poniatowska’s mother’s family had fled Mexico for Europe. Her father was a Frenchman of Polish heritage, and she was born in Paris in 1932. When she was ten, her family returned to Mexico to escape World War II. So although she is French by birth and only half-Mexican by heritage, she was introduced at the Palapa Society events as “more Mexican than mole.”

Sra. Poniatowska holds at least five honorary doctorates, but never attended university. When she was 18, she started writing for the Mexico City newspaper Excélsior, covering the beat that was allocated to women — society events. She quickly worked her way into political coverage. Her novels, non-fiction, and essays include several works essential for any journalist. She remains a voice for change and social justice. She told the crowd at the Todos Santos Theater that she may be finished with journalism, but that she would never stop attacking corrupt politicians. And despite that “I may be finished” statement, at the press conference the next day, she unzipped her purse to pull out the quintessential tool of every journalist worldwide — a pocket-sized audio recorder!

All photos courtesy of Russ Ham.

Russ Ham is a musician, photographer, and writer who loves the people and culture of the peninsula. He hosts an Open Mic night every other Wednesday at La Morancita del Bar.

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The Baja Citizen

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Holiday 2017
How to Rescue a Baja Dog

Hundreds of abandoned dogs are finding new homes thanks to dedicated volunteers. Here’s how you can help.

By Rebecca MacDonald

Spend any time at all in Baja and you see them: trotting along the highway, roaming the streets of Baja’s cities and towns, even waiting patiently for a traffic light to change before crossing a busy intersection. They are the street dogs of Mexico, what locals refer to as “Baja dogs.”

Of course, the first thing to understand about these dogs is that “Not all who wander are lost.” Many of these “street” dogs actually belong to someone, but are allowed to roam free. A well-meaning visitor who scoops a dog up without trying to find its owner could be “rescuing” that dog from its familiar home. Understanding the culture and how animals live in this society is a key component in helping Baja dogs.

That said, we have all seen far too many dogs that are obviously abandoned, starved and barely surviving on their own. Some are injured or sick. Many are pregnant females, or nursing mothers trying to teach their young puppies the ways of the street, if they should be lucky enough to survive.

“One of the biggest misconceptions we deal with is that there is some magic place for these dogs to go where someone will take care of them,” says Charlene Angelo, a volunteer at Baja Dogs La Paz, Inc., a U.S.-based non-profit charity with a network of dedicated volunteers and foster families here in Baja, and throughout the U.S. and Canada. “The hard truth is that there is no magic place. There are very few shelters, and the moment someone does open a shelter here, it’s full.”

However, Angelo says, there is good news. “If you are willing to foster the dog temporarily in your home, or can find someone who is willing to foster it, that’s where we can really step in to help get it adopted.”

“When my husband and I bought our La Paz home, we did what we could for many of the dogs in the street dogs. We always carried a huge bag of food in our back seat to share with any dog that looked hungry,” says Michelle Gaylord, who founded Baja Dogs La Paz (BDLP) back in 2008. “We donated money to our vet to use to spay female dogs, and to help those who were injured or sick, but were most then returned to the streets. We started Baja Dogs La Paz to help those dogs find forever homes.”

The organization operates on a 100% foster model, meaning all dogs are rescued by local individuals, called “vocasusarios,” who live or have vacation homes in and around La Paz. Many are local Mexican families who take in multiple dogs to foster. Baja Dogs La Paz then works tirelessly with the foster to find the dogs their perfect “forever” homes, some here in southern Baja, others in the U.S. or in Canada.

“Save” a dog from the street, they can bring it to a local shelter. The foster model is working. Since January of this year alone, over 150 dogs have been adopted through BDLP’s efforts, including Maui, the puppy who was born without the use of his front legs. He was recently adopted by a family in Seattle, Washington, and now happily wheels himself around in his shiny new cart, playing and snuggling with the family’s other dogs, also adopted from La Paz.

“We have learned that the foster model works so much better, because the dogs are living in homes where they are socialized and loved,” says Linda DiMeglio, a volunteer with Baja Dogs La Paz. “In a home, the dogs are able to learn the things they need to learn to become more adoptable, like how to walk on a leash, play with other dogs, and behave around people.”

For those who are able to foster, BDLP has intake forms on its web site (available in both English and Spanish), that the foster can really step in to help get it adopted.”

Friends and family coming to visit? Don’t despair. Here are five great things to do in La Paz to keep yourselves busy!

1. Laze away the day at the beach … Need I say more? The white sand beaches that line the malecon are convenient and great for paddleboarding, as are the beaches a littlefarther out. La Concha Beach, Caimancito, Coronado, and Picacho Beaches are all great. Further along, Balandra is considered one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Tecomolte and Pilchulite offer beach restaurants. Try the “chocolata” clams that La Paz is renowned for. Buses leave several times a day from the main bus station on the malecon for beaches.

2. Bay of Dreams Day Trip … A 1 hour drive from La Paz will take you to a beach that is almost too good to be true. Take the highway to La Ventana past the turn off for La Ventana. Another 10 minutes and you will see the sign and guardhouse (on the right) for Hotel Gran Sueño. Tell the guard you are going to the restaurant. White sugar sand and lovely swimming with a great restaurant. You can spend the afternoon there, eating and relaxing in the restaurant and enjoying their pool. A guaranteed hit!!

3. For Foodies: La Paz has a charming and vibrant organic market on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 8am to 1pm. Filled with delicious offerings (pastris, lasagnas, organic chicken, breads and cheeses), it is not to be missed. There are coffee shops, a bagel shop and a bakery all close by. Corner of Madero and Constitucion.

4. Strolling the malecon: The pure delight of strolling the malecon never fades; early morning walks or evening strolls when families are out with their front doors open and family plates classes can be found on the beach. Nightlife is active in La Paz and is mostly centred around the bars on the malecon, making it another reason to enjoy the malecon.

5. Golf at Costa Baja or Paraiso del Mar: The golf course at Costa Baja has reopened and is welcoming visitors. Stunning male dog, course and pay as you play. Similarly there is a very nice course on the El Mogote peninsula, part of the Paraiso del Mar development. Again, pay as you play. Heather is a resident of La Paz and a realtor with Diamante Associates. She can be contacted by email at heather@diamanteassociates.com or by telephone at 612 157 1884.
This program established clear protocols for marking birds, with color coding by country, as well as establishing an actual “right leg, left leg, above and below the knee” set of patterns. These patterns are clearly laid out so that field identification can be aided, and reported sightings can be much more accurate. This program makes it possible that you might find a shorebird species, with a white flag band above the right tarsometatarsal joint, a red band on the lower part of that same leg, a blue band on the left lower leg and green band above the left tarsometatarsal joint as well. This would give you a combination of all four to report. In addition to the bands, the flag portion could be imprinted with a combination of three letters, numbers or one of four symbols ( +  =  @  % ).

I just got my report sent off to PASP, so I really don’t know a whole lot about my bird yet, but via the reporting page, I am able to ascertain that it is bird #055, and that its new “Bird Bling” was added in either Bolivia, Ecuador or Peru. With the fact that the birds are migrating back to the south now, I would love to know how far to the north this little bird had traveled.

To learn more about the PASP, I am adding a link to their site……

www.shorebirdplan.org/science/pan-american-shorebird-program/

For more information about these or any other Birds of La Paz, feel free to contact me at focusonfeathers@hotmail.com.

All photos courtesy of Tom Brown.

Birds with “Bling” — Banded Birds Here in La Paz

By Thomas Brown

For most avid birders worldwide, finding a bird that has been leg banded, or has a tracking marker of any kind is like finding that four leaf clover, exciting stuff.

Ornithologists have been marking birds in order to learn more about them for over 200 years. While the procedures have changed over the years, the principal is the same. Mark the bird in such a way that allows it to carry on its normal life, but is still recoverable either via recapture, or upon its death.

This last weekend, I got a whole new lesson in bird banding. Now I have a fairly healthy list of birds that I have found with bands, both in field observations as well as in my photographs. Ducks and geese certainly make up the bulk of the numbers. I have over 200 waterfowl that I have recorded those shiny metal bands on. Then there are the colored bands, most of which are all in the last ten years or so. Gulls, Oystercatchers, and a few sparrows. I would guess that at least half of all Trumpeter Swans I have seen have had neck collars. A Black Oystercatcher, up in the San Juan Islands of Washington State that had not only a couple of different bands, but what appears to be the small wire antenna for a tracking devise along its back. Seeing this antenna on the Black Oystercatcher remains the highlight of my marked birds discovery.

Sunday morning here in La Paz brought a whole new surprise, however. A Western Sandpiper with a colored flag band. When I first spotted the bird thru my binoculars, I thought it had a piece of plastic stuck on its leg. Then I saw the boldly printed numbers.

The bird was walking/wading across the muck of the La Paz waste treatment plants ponds. It was not until I was able to get much closer, that I spotted the red band on the other leg, somewhat obscured by the “muck”. It was then that I learned about the Pan American Shorebird Program or PASP.

The Pan American Shorebird Program (PASP) was created in the mid-1990s as a standardized method for marking and identifying individual shorebirds in the field and to facilitate identification of the origin of banding.
Ramblings: The Powerful Story of Christian Schleifer

By Judy Ristity

Pizza - that was what I was fantasizing about as we drove to El Triunfo, but first we’d catch a concert at the piano museum. We never made it to the restaurant.

My pizza-related-thoughts evaporated when Christian Schleifer’s fingers made contact with the keyboard. During his performance I time-travelled back to my youth. I remembered every song he played and mouthed the words. I looked around; everyone was under his spell.

Christian loves music; it’s obvious in the way he caresses the keys and how he leans toward the grand piano, as if the Baldwin attracts him like the moon pulls the tide. And as he leaned toward the piano I leaned toward him. I whispered to Alex, “Next month, we’ve got to come back.”

Two songs later Christian stood and, in his quiet voice, announced that this concert might be the last. He was vague – something about property issues at the museum. I’d just discovered Christian, who I recognized as a valuable gift to the community, and his concerts could be snatched away from us? I needed to know more about this man.

A week later Christian, a tall, slender, soft spoken gentleman and Jan, his wife of fifty-two years, entered Hacienda Paraiso in San Pedro. Christian told me his story, occasionally augmented by Jan. Below is just the skeleton of that fascinating interview, because if I added flesh to the bones of his life, I’d fill an entire issue of The Baja Citizen.

Like many talented people Christian had a series of dramatic ups and downs. His quiet resilience aided by Providence kept him afloat. At four, he suffered Rheumatoid arthritis, Scarlett fever and Rheumatic fever; he almost died. Confined to his arthritis, Scarlett fever and Rheumatic fever afloat. At four, he suffered Rheumatoid arthritis, and given a scholarship. He was four-years-old. “I read music before I read words; gave recitals at six, learned the organ when I was eight and began to play professionally the same year. I never struggled; it was easy for me.”

At eighteen, he had a nearly “mid-life” crisis: drove away from Ohio and classical music and headed to Florida where he played contemporary tunes. The resort was huge, upstate and he played in a tiny piano bar where he earned more than he made at any other time in his career. “Sam, an eighty-year-old bass player, taught me the ropes – one Havana cigar and flattery got us two years of meals in the gourmet kitchen. Sam demonstrated how to get tips – lots of tips.” The clientele loved the tall, thin, innocent eighteen-year-old.

One evening a tall, beautiful young woman walked into the piano bar and his life. Within four months Christian and Jan were married and his life changed again. Jan was a singer and they began touring together. They laugh as they recall, “We had an awful agent who had no concept of the layout of the United States. We played in West Virginia then the next day in Texas. Cowboys with no interest in Broadway tunes demanded These Boots Were Made for Walking. Exhausted and disgusted Christian stopped performing, “I didn’t touch a piano for fifty years.”

After touring, they were given the opportunity to select and arrange music to accompany multi-media formats: motivational, promotional and educational presentations, for which they won a Canadian award. “I said to Jan, ‘We’re set. We won’t need to worry any more.’ Three days later we learned that Jan had cancer.” They sold everything including their recording to pay for Jan’s treatment. This began a financially and emotionally dark period. “We were too broke to take a bus to the doctor’s office.” But the doctor was wise and asked, “You’ve had successful careers before, can you begin again, Jan, what do you love?” Christian immediately said, “I love sailboats.”

Christian made a few calls and was told, “Sorry, I’m not authorized to sell the boat because it belongs to the Sea Scouts, BUT I can give it to you, if you make a $1000 donation.” Might as well ask for $1,000,000 – they were broke. A week later, a $1000 check arrived from Jan’s step-grandmother, who didn’t know that her gift was buying them a sailboat and a future.

They towed the hull to San Francisco’s Pier 42 (a ramshackle marina), moved aboard and found work repairing boats at that marina during the day. At night they rebuilt their boat. Once floatable, they practiced sailing for one year in San Francisco Bay, a quagmire of wind, fog and unpredictable seas. Then, in 1979 they were ready. They sailed their 1942 Alden Sloop “Moon Mist” under the Golden Gate Bridge, into the ocean, and down the Baja Coast to La Paz. Together they had survived bad agents, near bankruptcy and cancer, but it was a night of furious seas on the way down the Baja when Christian worried they would die. Like always, he survived. They have lived in La Paz for thirty-eight years.

Christian painted these tales in Technicolor: the dangers, hardships, and shockingly unconventional ways they solved their problems. But Fate was always at the helm steering him toward safety.

After the interview, I felt exhausted by the power of his story, but thankful, also. Grateful that Christian returned to his first love, the piano. Alex and I feel lucky that we’d decided to take a Sunday-morning drive so I could eat pizza. With a “side” of music. Instead of pizza I experienced a delicious taste of his music. We hope that circumstances will allow Christian to continue giving concerts on “his” beloved Baldwin. Let’s keep our fingers crossed.

Judy Ristity finds humor in the ordinary, then looks again and discovers the poignant.
10 Places to Visit In and Around La Paz

By Flavia Faustini

It wasn’t too long ago, and it wasn’t too recently that I visited La Paz for the first time on a casual vacation. It was Summer 2013, to be precise. I wasn’t looking for a place to retire, nor to escape winters. But, yes, whether I knew it or not, I was looking for a new set of experiences, and La Paz provided me with just that.

I made a list of my favorite experiences that I love and repeat often. To this day, the Spirit of La Paz still brings me as much joy as a resident as it did when I was a visitor.

1. Tecolote Beach and Balandra
   Every time I think of Tecolote and Balandra, I remember the first time I visited La Paz with a girlfriend, before I ever dreamt of becoming a transplant. It was the height of summer a few years ago. As a resident of Los Angeles, I actually appreciated being in weather and water warm enough to be inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat). The drive to the beaches is inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat). The drive to the beaches is inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat). The drive to the beaches is inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat). The drive to the beaches is inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat). The drive to the beaches is inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat). The drive to the beaches is inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat). The drive to the beaches is inviting to swim (I’m Brazilian, and so is my thermostat).

2. Espiritu Santo, Los Islotes
   “This is a magical island,” was the most concise description I’ve heard, by my niece, who visited last winter. And you’ll have to agree, as you realize that at each turn you’re to spot different colors, layers, formations, profiles, contrasts and wildlife. Every time I’ve been to Espiritu Santo, I remember spending the entire day in awe.

3. Tiburon Ballena
   The minute we hit the white sands clear waters in contrast to the cacti along the road. The route to La Ventana and around drops to the East, and de-seeds towards miles and miles of beach. I’ve spent hours watching windsurfers, wild birds, and Cerralvo Island, and had amazing fresh seafood meals.

4. The town of El Triunfo
   El Triunfo guards the resquice of a mining town that was incredibly active and successful in the second half of the 19th century. One of the prominent towers was designed by French engineer Eiffel himself. I have spent perfect afternoons in El Triunfo with a group of good friends. We pick one of the two main eateries there and we are always pleased. What a perfect day it makes to taste the amazing fresh seafood meals.

5. La Ventana, El Sargento
   The route to La Ventana and El Sargento goes through several ranches neighboring La Paz. Uphill at first, then a stretch of a winding road; and all of a sudden the road drops to the East, and different shade of green or blue in the ocean below. It’s not a long drive; it is a very, very rich one. When you get to the village, the most prominent white house as you ascend the hill at the end of the road is the mine container. There you will see the life and growth of green.

6. Todos Santos, Pescadero
   Todos Santos is one of two “Pueblo Magico” (Magic Villages) in Baja California Sur. I especially enjoy walking around town enjoying the Pacific breeze. I generally had a great day exploring restaurants in Pescadero. And I was very lucky to have a local friend share folklore and witch stories of the area.

7. Humpback whales, Mag Bay
   I am definitely not a morning person, and this is one special thing that will make me get out of bed before sunrise in winter. I have never been disappointed. A good friend mentioned Puerto Adolfo Lopez Mateos as a starting point for whale watching. Pangas are well organized and easy to arrange. Captains know where to find humpback whales. A few of the many whales accompanied by their calves, are extremely friendly. Of course, like anytime you’re dealing with nature, you’ll need a dash of luck; however, it’s not uncommon that they will come up to the pangas and examine their human visitors in their boats with as much curiosity and interest as we will them. It is an unforgettable image, to me, of an eye as big as a saucer, looking at me as if making acquaintance.

8. Escondido
   I had a couple of good friends visit me from Germany in late summer. I drove them to El Mogote, swept the scenery with my arm (Italian style), and asked them, “Do you understand, now?” And they responded, “Yes, yes, we do.” To me, the reason I love this corner of the Earth is summarized in that long stretch of sand populated with marine birds, filled with a salty scent in the air, and the brisk wind (always there in the afternoon). The warm water, the millions of shells along the waterfront, the view to La Paz. I love to “bring my own everything,” and losing track of time here.

9. San Juan de la Costa, Chayo’s Ranch
   I recently had a great day exploring restaurants in Pescadero, and the main attraction is the changing coastline, and the surprises every time on a casual vacation. It was Summer 2013, to be precise. I wasn’t looking for a place to retire, nor to escape winters. But, yes, whether I knew it or not, I was looking for a new set of experiences, and La Paz provided me with just that.

10. Sunset on the Malecon
   It’s been stated that living near the ocean is beneficial for human health. The malecon as well as the perfect expression of the strong sense of community in La Paz. Walking the malecon, whether at sunset, or in between, provides not only a view to the Sea of Cortez, but a window into the joy, light heartedness and warmth of the beautiful people of La Paz.

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Flavia Faustini (NOT Claudia) is an adventure experience curator with a degree in Economics and a career in the Visual Arts and translation. Currently on an extended sabbatical, she is planning another adventure for her Book of Good Memories as possible. Yes I’m a Brazilian but I can’t dance.
Noche Buena
~Three Very Different Meanings

By Susan Fogel

If you have lived in or visited Mexico regularly at the holidays, then you have heard or seen the words Noche Buena. Did you know that these two words, that literally translated, mean The Good Night, have three very different usages.

Most of us know that Noche Buena most closely means Christmas Eve. December 24th in Mexico is the culmination of the bustling, bustling holiday season. Families large and small, religious and secular, gather to open presents, play games, and at midnight enjoy a sumptuous feast.

Did you know that these two words, that literally translated, mean The Good Night, have three very different usages.

For weeks now, nurseries, grocery stores, and roadside stands have been laden with poinsettias, also known as Flor de Noche Buena, or Noche Buena for short. The poinsettia is native to Mexico and grows in various areas, including the Pacific Coast.

The religious connotation and the association with Christmas hails back to a 16th century legend about a poor, young girl name Pepita who had no gift to bring to celebrate Jesus’ birth. She said an angel told her to gather weeds from along the road and place them at the altar. From those weeds, crimson flowers with yellow centers bloomed. Franciscan friars of the 17th century used the flowers as part of their religious teachings at Christmas. They said that the golden centers and star shape symbolized the Star of Bethlehem. And the crimson flowers the blood of Christ.

Aztecs used the flowers for red dye and as an antipyretic...a substance to reduce fevers. Commonly considered toxic, the plant can be an irritant to skin and eyes. But an Ohio University study shows no problems with even extremely large doses.

Today, poinsettias come in hues that range from pink, to a creamy white, orange, speckled, and the traditional red. Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first United States minister to Mexico imported the plant to the U.S. in 1825, and it bears his name.

Building our beautiful eco-friendly home including solar and other green technologies was never an issue for Elinore and her team. We love our home. Thank you, Elinor.

Photos courtesy of Donneley McCann.

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Happy Holidays from Mares Projects and Construction

Building, Remodeling and Exteriors

Feliz Noche Buena!

Third generation American poinsettia cultivator, Paul Ecke, Jr., went into overdrive to promote the family’s specially grated full and compact plants, and until 1991 were the sole producers of the plants you see everywhere. He sent free plants to television stations to use on the air from Thanksgiving to Christmas and was a guest on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson and the Bob Hope show. He was linking his plants to Christmas using the best marketing media of the time.

Ubiquitous, but beautiful, the Noche Buena is a truly Mexican symbol of Christmas.

What could be better than an icy cold brew? And what could be better than a beer that is produced once a year in late fall and disappears just about the time the first Christmas toy breaks?

A rabbi once told me that he never partook of the holiday delicacies outside of the holidays. He said that if eaten at any old time, these special treats became mundane.

And so it goes with the golden, caramel flavored, stock beer called Noche Buena. This beer is brewed by Modelo and Bohemia, each one from a different brewery. They come boxed in 12-packs, and if there are any left on the shelf in Chedraui or Soriana, grab them while you can. They will not be available for another year. For years, the only Noche Buena beer that I saw was Modelo. Last year and this year the Bohemia version is all that I can find. It is a lovely beer, smooth, and dark with a nice golden head. If you like dark beer and you want to enjoy a Mexican holiday favorite, you will not be disappointed. The alcohol content is a robust 5.3%.

The pretty, dark bottle is smaller than usual, the label golden with a fiery red Noche Buena.

Heineken was recently given permission to sell Bohemia’s Noche Buena beer in the U.S. And you can bet that it ain’t gonna be cheap!

So, when your first-timer guests arrive, you can sound like an old Baja hand and explain to them the three meanings of Noche Buena.

Feliz Noche Buena!

Susan Fogel is a retired real estate agent. She spends her days writing, creating beautiful garments, and collecting shells.
By Melissa A. Bartell

The first Christmas I spent in La Paz was only a few months after my parents moved here, and I came toting a box nearly as tall as I am. The bottom third was filled with Ghirardelli chocolate chips, Celestial Seasonings peppermint tea, and Starbucks coffee in regular and decaf. The rest of the space was pillows and blankets for the casita my husband and I would be occupying.

I got the red light at customs, but the agent took pity on me, and I was allowed to keep the Casita my husband and I would be occupying.

As my parents became more and more a part of local life, and made more local friends, our visits changed. Sure, we still went caroling to Todos Santos, and, one year, sitting in a hotel restaurant, eating Christmas dinner was latkes and smoked salmon, hot tea and red wine, and leftover pie, and it was perfect in its simplicity.

It was also the year I’d brought latke mix (the traditional potato pancakes served at Hanukkah) with me to make for my parents. Christmas dinner was latkes and smoked salmon, hot tea and red wine, and leftover pie, and it was perfect in its simplicity.

Christmas, 2016, found us arriving later in the month than we’d planned, with little time for preparation. Without guests (other than ourselves) or children, there was no big meal to prepare. Instead, we spent Christmas Eve with friends of my parents I hadn’t yet met (though I’d been hearing about them for years) and Christmas morning with another set of friends. Two completely different families, but both were gracious, warm, and never once did we feel like we were crashing someone else’s celebration. (We didn’t open our own gifts until late that afternoon, back at home.)

It was some time in the last five years that I realized I no longer felt like a tourist, and that the only thing that even makes me feel like a guest is the fact that I have not acclimated to tropical temperatures, and am always too hot in my parents’ house.

When I visit La Paz, now, I have my own favorite places and people, my own personal rituals (tacos and beer at a sidewalk table, anyone?). The woman at the café closest to my mother’s house remembers my favorite drink, and I’m slowly forming my own relationships with my parents’ friends.

We still play tourist, sometimes – the whole museum is amazing – but my mother has moved past the need to entertain us, and instead we just hang out, reading, watching movies, sipping wine by the fire pit, or soaking in the hot tub.

We share morning coffee on the deck, and play new games (Bring Your Own Book!) in addition to our old standby, Phase Ten.

I’ve changed, because I’m no longer seeing La Paz through the eyes of a tourist.

And La Paz? It’s become the town where I don’t live full time, but where every trip is a homecoming.
Helping Restore Reef Fish in the Archipelago Espíritu Santo National Park

Only 14 miles from the city of La Paz lies the archipelago-known as Espíritu Santo, one of the most beautiful island groups in all the Sea of Cortez. The beautiful landscape and bays make the islands a highly desirable destination for locals and visitors alike. In 2007 the Mexican government declared the islands a National Park to protect its diverse ecology for present and future generations.

But over the past 20 years the entire Sea of Cortez, including Archipelago Espíritu Santo, has seen its reef fish populations decline, due in part to illegal fishing. The main illegal fishing methods deployed by “encerradores” and “pistoleros” use “hookah” diving equipment at night (hookah gear is a hose from a surface air compressor allowing illegal fishermen an unlimited air supply). Encerradores “herd” reef fish into nets and pistoleros use Hawaiian slings to spear reef fish at night while they are sleeping. Between them, pistoleros and encerradores can kill up to one ton of reef fish per boat in one night.

To confront this threat, the local, grassroots campaign “Espíritu Santo es parte de ti” aims to engage the La Paz community to stop illegal fishing and help the recovery of the reefs around Espíritu Santo National Park. The campaign will generate community pride by advocating responsible fish consumption and avoid eating fish that are critical to the ecology of the park’s reef ecosystem. The focus is on parrotfish, a keystone species vital to the health of reef ecosystems that are particularly vulnerable to pistoleros.

Parrotfish owes its name to the resemblance of its mouth to the beak of a parrot as well as to its vivid, intense colors. It inhabits both coral and rocky reefs in tropical waters around the world and provides a critical service to maintaining reef health. Four different species of parrotfish live in Espiritu Santo National Park.

Parrotfish are returning to Espirito Santo. Continues on page 34

Helping Restore Reef Fish in the Archipelago Espíritu Santo National Park

What’s New with FANLAP?

By Judy Peterson

Founded in 2000, Fundación Ayuda Niños La Paz, A.C. (FANLAP) is a Mexican philanthropic organization. Our mission is to provide basic support of food and education for children and adolescents from impoverished areas to give them the opportunity to complete their education and improve the quality of their lives.

We were introduced to the colonias (neighborhoods) in which we work in 1996, when volunteering at a breakfast program in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of La Paz. Seeing a need to build another dining room to serve the influx of families to this area, our lunch room was inaugurated in 2003. The area has grown, and we have continued to increase the number of children served.

In the summer of 2009 construction of the second floor of our dining room building was completed. The area consists of 155 m², and contains books and computers. In August of 2017 we received recognition from the federal government for our continued work in our dining room and library/learning center. We were one of three organizations to receive this honor. The other two were Asis de Ancianos (seniors home) and UABCS (the Autonomous University of Baja California Sur).

In October 31st in our library/learning center located in Colonia Laguna Azul, the local senior high school (EMASD Marquez de Leon) celebrated the Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos). This holiday is a multi-day celebration of the life of deceased loved ones.

In November, FANLAP was invited by the International Community Foundation to attend a conference with other non-governmental organizations in BCS. Our relationship with ICF began in 2000 with Fundacion para los Niños de La Paz, A.C., from 2000 – 2005, which was replaced by Fundacion Ayuda Niños La Paz, A.C. from 2005 to the present after an impasse.

We were delighted to meet Leticia Martínez Hermosillo, Marketing and Development Manager at ICF, Eliza Brennan, program officer in Education, Arts and Culture, and guest speakers Charlene Pryer and Bob Kelly who give us helpful tips in grant writing. A special thank you to Anne McEnany, president of ICF, and Cynthia Wickerink, ICS representative, for helping us represent the Children of La Paz all these years.

For more information, please visit our web page at www.lapazninos.org, or contact Judy Peterson at janpete84@hotmail.com.

In 1998, Judy Peterson and her late husband, Pete, set sail from San Francisco to travel the world. But during a “brief” stop in La Paz, they bought a house, sold the boat and started helping with a breakfast program in Colonia Marquez de Leon. First-person 30 years and Judy is very much active in FANLAP and the community of La Paz.

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What's Up in La Paz?!

A painting exhibit featuring works by Francisco Marina will open on Wednesday, December 20th, starting at 6:30pm. Hosting the event will be Casa Parro, #413 Independencia between Sardan and Revolucion, downtown La Paz.

Everyone welcome.

Photo courtesy of Sandra Munoz.

The La Paz Christmas Trangus, or open-air street stands, can be found on the streets of Madero and Independencia until Christmas Day. Along several blocks of streets downtown, vendors are lined up selling toys, clothes, shoes, backpacks, games etc.

Dia de Guadalupe - Tuesday, December 12th is Dia de Guadalupe, a special day to many Catholics, especially Mexicans, as it is the day that celebrates the belief that the Virgin of Guadalupe (or, La Virgen de Guadalupe, en espanol) was to have appeared before peasant Juan Diego near Mexico City in 1531.

The La Paz Ping Pong Club is happening!
Every Tuesday at 2pm
All you have to bring is a good attitude.
Contact Matt at mfmengco@gmail.com

Be sure to drive down the malecon in La Paz past El Moro Hotel towards the Arazo Inn turn-off. To your right you will without a doubt notice holiday lights and a Christmas display. Park, walk around and enjoy the sights! Admission is free.

Happy Holidays

The annual Christmas Bazar is taking place at Club Cruceros in Marfa La Paz (Topete & Legaspi) on Sunday, December 10th From 9am until 2pm. Contact 612 104 3290 for more information.
Amazing Kids Thrive with Help from Equine Therapy
Continues from page 5
Victoria Luz and her sister were severely disabled at birth. Her
twin died. The first time I saw Victoria Luz arrive at equine
therapy, she was screaming in frustration, all her muscles
contracted. She was carried over to Pepinillo, the horse. Her
wrapping blanket was carefully placed on the saddle, as the
baby was laid across the horse. With one slow walk around
the arena, little Victoria Luz ceased her crying and began to
relax. In a little while, Melanie Glover, a volunteer, mounted
Pepinillo, and held the baby in her lap as they road around the
arena. There was such a marked change in the child in a short
half hour of walking, that it brought tears to my eyes. Imagine
a therapy that can give peaceful moments to one suffering so
much and unable to communicate verbally.

Another story: One of the most stellar participants in the rid-
ing therapy program is 20-year-old Gabriel. As a young boy,
he loved horses and was a good rider. However, a victim of
meningitis at 15, he suffered brain damage. He walks with
limited upper body strength. He has been

Gabriel can now ride with a relaxed seat, controls the horse
gently, and stretches his arms out to the sides as he rides, as
a salute to the control he has gained in the last five years.
Another volunteer with barrel racing experience has taught
Gabriel new skills.

Gabriel is now a mentor for kids. Last summer he began to
ride with another student who also had meningitis, Fabian.
Fabian provided encouragement and companionship. After
just five weeks, Fabian’s father said he was much more so-
ciable and less angry, all because of Gabriel. The little kids
want to be like Gabriel, and practice at throwing balls into
the baskets placed around the ring, lifting cups off posts and
replacing them, capturing the Mexican flags and lifting them
up, forward and to the side.

Volunteers are a collection of interesting personalities and
busy people who make time to help others.

Susu and Milton Sanders: Owners and operators of Casa
Buena B & B. In her previous life Susu was a special educa-
tion teacher in the US. She and Milton came to Baja as boat
adventurers. In 1988, they purchased Casa Buena B & B and
became pachos.

Susu and Milton’s latest dream is to provide English Im-
ersion Activity for all kids ages 4-8. “We hope to invite
schools by classroom, with a maximum of 30 kids. Their cer-
tification will be for children with autism and other psycho-
cognitive disorders, including anxiety, learning disabilities,
and processing disorders. The program is called Horse Boy
Method and requires training for both horses and staff. This
is what I am in the process of developing, and Milton and I
would love to do more adaptive adventures with families of
disabled children.”

She sees Casa Buena B & B as more than simply a destination
for tourists. “We are a great kid friendly place for something
I call stay-cations.” But first, there is a need for more hands
on volunteers, money to provide scholarships for kids with
various challenges, a volunteer veteri-
narian, more help to buy and deliver feed
and supplies.

Victor Hugo Jimenez Estrella: As a
physical therapist, redesigns the physi-
cal activities for the kids as well as
evaluates their specific needs. He has
been working for CAM in special edu-
cation for the past 23 years. His young-
est daughter, Mia, often comes along to
help out.

Steve Martin: Steve has funded all
the facility rental costs for the past five
years. Steve is also known in La Paz for
his generosity in gathering and driving
down south with a plethora of supplies
like orthopedic apparatus, vet supplies
and other hard to come by items to ben-
efit those in need in La Paz.

Melanie Glover: A horsewoman, and
recent retiree from Genentech Inc. in
San Francisco, she has been volunteer-
ning for the past three years. She spon-
sors a gentle palomino named Guerrero.
She shared that working with the kids
and animals has inspired her to be a
better person. “I get so much pleasure
out of seeing loving parents who devote
their lives to helping their disabled chil-
dren. When a child learns to hold his
head up with the rhythm of the ride, I
realize I gain so much more than I could
ever give.”

Bob Williams: A wildlife biologist and
researcher with a PhD, he has retired in
El Sargento. He has lent two of his
horses for the project. He also provides
financial support along with his cowboy
skills and experience as a father of four
and 4-H Leader. He and his wife hail
from Washington State and California.

Bill Wolf: A social worker, and psycho-
therapist who has worked with troubled
children for 43 years. He can be found
caring for the horses as well as kids. His
broad smile is contagious.

I’m thinking there are many imaginative
people who will read this article and
might enjoy this most satisfying exer-
cise in helping their neighbors. In par-
ticular, those of you retired grandpar-
tons who hunger for more ‘kid-time’. A
new volunteer may also be needed for
Facebook updates.

Have you thought about the gifts you
have to share with youngsters? Please
find Kids Up La Paz on Facebook or
call Victor Jimenez Estrella at 612
141 8875 (Spanish) or Susu Sanders
at 149-1832 (English). Feel free to
e-mail Susu at sususanders@hotmail.
com or Kathy bezy@goldrush.
com with any questions.

Kathy Bezy is a mother of four and a grandmother
to 12. She and her husband Bill spend six months of
the year in California and the other six months in
La Paz. She loves to write and is probably the most
positive person you will ever meet!
How to Rescue a Baja Dog

Continues from page 10

Of course, every now and then, the organization experiences what is affectionately called a “foster fail.” One volunteer recently decided to foster Tess, a female terrier mix found on a local beach with a litter of puppies. With three dogs of her own, the volunteer worked the phones to find a good home for Tess. In the meantime, Tess wriggled her way into her foster pack and into the volunteer’s heart. “She fits so well into our pack, and she’s such a sweetheart, we just decided to keep her!” Her foster announced on Facebook. Becoming a foster fail is one of the risks of getting involved, but as one local rescuitista says, “Los perros de Baja son los mejores. No cambiaría nada. (Baja dogs are the best. I wouldn’t change a thing!)”

Want to get involved?
Here are a few ways you can help:
1. Foster a dog: If you decide to rescue a dog, make sure you have a plan. Are you able to foster the dog temporarily until it gets adopted, or know someone who can? Baja Dogs La Paz averages 63 days to adopt. If you can’t foster the dog yourself, use social media and your network to find someone who can.
2. Volunteer as a Pet Escort: If you are traveling north to the U.S. or Canada, you can volunteer to bring a dog to its adopters up north. Baja Dogs La Paz will handle all the arrangements to get the dog on your flight, at no cost to you.
3. Donate: Baja Dogs La Paz is an all volunteer organization. 100% of donations go to help rescued dogs, and your donation is tax deductible.
4. Volunteer at Home: BDL has volunteers in the U.S. and Canada who help find homes, interview potential adopters, and do home checks in their home cities.
5. Spread the word: You never know when someone in your network might want to adopt!

Rebecca MacDonald is a freelance writer living in La Paz with her husband, Jim MacDonald, and their three rescued dogs and a cat. She volunteers for Baja Dogs La Paz and has fostered several dogs that have since been adopted and now live happily in their forever homes.

Over half a million dogs are homeless in Baja California. Baja Dogs La Paz is working hard to change that. A non-profit organization, Baja Dogs La Paz is dedicated to rescuing dogs on the streets, providing vaccines, food, and transport to get them to their forever homes. With most of the animals who come through the organization coming from communities with few or no animal shelters, Baja Dogs La Paz is also working to build community awareness of the importance of spaying and neutering. We can fill out to list a dog for adoption. It’s important to note that the organization does not have “foster volunteers” waiting to take in dogs. You must either be willing to foster the dog yourself or find a foster home in order to list it for adoption.

Baja Dogs then engages with the foster and helps with vaccinations and food. Dogs that are being fostered, and have been sterilized and vaccinated, are evaluated and photographed by a volunteer, and listed on the Baja Dogs web site (www.bajadogslapaz.org/adoptions) for adoption. Interested adopters can view a dog’s profile on the web site, complete with pictures and video. When an interested adopter fills out an application, a volunteer matches them with a dog that fits their needs, while another interviews the family and makes sure the home is suitable for the dog.

Baja Dogs La Paz then reaches out to find volunteers who are traveling north and can act as “pet escorts” to take the dog to its new home city. Volunteers meet these pet escorts at the airport with the dog to help with check-in and getting the dog boarded for flight, at no cost to the pet escorts. More volunteers, and/or the adopting family, then meet the dog and pet escort at the destination airport to receive the dog.

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Parrotfish are grazers, feeding predominantly on algae that grows on rocks and corals. Their grazing activity prevents the overgrowth of algae which is detrimental to a healthy reef ecosystem. Without parrotfish and other reef grazers algae would quickly smother rock surfaces, preventing encrusting organisms from attaching to the rock surface. In short, parrotfish are the cultivators of diversity in reef ecosystems.

The key strategy of the campaign is to recruit restaurant owners and chefs in La Paz to not serve parrotfish and be promoters of the campaign. To date, 27 of the 33 top restaurants in La Paz have agreed to not serve parrotfish and to share our message with their clients and the public through their videos on social media. The largest Semipermarkets in La Paz (Walmart, Chedraui and Soriana) have also stopped selling parrotfish.

To foster pride in the community the campaign has produced 35 videos showing the beauty of Archipelago Espíritu Santo and the threats that it faces. Six videos are of restaurateurs talking about why they feel the campaign is important and the importance of Espíritu Santo to the local economy. Since the launch of the campaign, our videos have had over 1.5 million views on the campaign’s Facebook page.

The campaign is succeeding because there are greater numbers of parrotfish, small cabrilla (groupers) and snapper - the three fish species most targeted by illegal fishermen on the reefs around Archipelago Espíritu Santo.

What can YOU do to help?
You can help ensure the protection of this beautiful and critically important fish – the parrotfish – and the ecological recovery of our beloved Archipelago Espíritu Santo National Park!

1. Thank the following restaurants who joined our campaign and agreed to not serve parrotfish:

   Nino
   Azul Marino
   Tres Viñes
   Anamaco
   Pruni
   Feche
   Barboza
   Sevilla
   El Mangal
   Sonrisa
   Odyssea
   Jif Snack
   La Gaviota
   Los Laureles
   Palapas el Viento
   La Carancas
   El Cayaco
   El Pitu
   M.K. Fish

2. Ask your fish provider to not sell parrotfish. Show them this article! Request a “Free of Parrotfish” kit that includes brochures and stickers to hand to your favorite restaurants or fish markets. Send us pictures and share them on social media, tagging us @Espiritusantoenelpalmar.

3. Donate to the campaign through Seawatch and get a U.S. tax deductible receipt. www.seawatch.org

4. Share your pictures and videos on social media, tagging us @Espiritusan-toespartedeti.

If you want a kit e-mail us at: espiritusantoenelpalmar@gmail.com

What YOU can do to help in your community
1. Thank the following restaurants who joined our campaign and agreed to not serve parrotfish:

   Nim
   Azul Marino
   Tres Viñes
   Anamaco
   Pruni
   Feche
   Barboza
   Sevilla
   El Mangal

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Nestled on the heart of La Paz waterfront (El Malecon), Vista Coral Oceanfront Residences offers the most enviable views to the Bay of La Paz, in the heart of the Marina District. With access to all of the City’s services and comforts, at the threshold of the incredible Sea of Cortez, with views to breathtaking land and seascapes, the city’s waterfront and spectacular wildlife. It is the perfect home away from home, whether you are looking for a full ownership residence for rental income, the perfect place to spend that unforgettable vacation, or simply want to live full time in La Paz.

VISTACORAL@OUTLOOK.COM
Tel (612) 129-7482
Márquez de León 2415 Esq. Topete
Local 2-A, La Paz, Baja California Sur, México