

Attlee Mexico Trip

Thursday, July 14, 2005

I have long held a personal superstition that trips that begin badly often end very well. I hope it is true, for ~~attitude~~ ^{today} got off to a bad start, indeed. First of all Ed Fitzgerald took the wrong road out of Port Wadsworth, B.P. (We went through Arlington) which made us only ten minutes late but made me uncomfortable, just the same. Then, just after I had put my baggage through to the Wondler, and was given my ticket, Attlee discovered that she had not brought her passport. I was furious and had to take the plane to Mexico City alone, hoping that my instructions to Attlee on how to find Carmen Harris' house near San Angel would be sufficient.

It took almost two hours to go through Customs at the Mexico City airport. It is all being renovated and I didn't recognize the place - very modern now but not efficient yet. I got a cab and was at Carmine's house at about 4.30. The maid showed me to my room (Carmine was at the gallery until 6.30).

Oddly enough both Attlee and Carmine showed up at the same time. All turned out well at least for this phase of the trip. Attlee is rooming with another guest of E's in the main house - Claudia - whose father is ——— Moreno a very well-known painter from Toluca.

Alexandrea is sophisticated and good
company. She has just arrived from
London. She was there for the horrible
7/7 bombings of the London Subways.

Around seven thirty we all
gathered in Carmeen's living room and
had a light supper (my only food
of the day) and much talk. By 10:30
I was much fatigued - so I had
as Pepus would say. Didn't sleep very
well. 720 fm. W. Omnis and a
single irritating mosquito kept me
from a satisfying night's sleep.
Read a lot from Broder's article on
Sacred Landscape. At 10:00 tomorrow
morning Attlee and I are going to
INAH to see the show of the warriors
then to the Templo Mayor Museum.
Friday, July 15th

We had a wonderful
breakfast at Carmeen's. At 10:00 pm
an driver was at the door ready to
take us to INAH to see The Mexico Hall
and especially Attlee's "Piedra de los
Guerreros." The traffic was heavy
and the smog somewhat stifling. The
weather was nice, though and we soon
found ourselves at the Museum. In the
last couple of years the government has
presided over a considerable renovation
of the exhibits. The Mexico Hall being
no exception.

As we walked in under the
"front porch" of the Mexico Hall I spotted
the head of a large Caiman. This
was the same head I photographed
10 years ago at San Ildefonso but
left my camera a Carmeen's house when
it disappeared. The "Fisgón" is closer



The hair is still carved on the flat surface.

the entire head and about halfway down the chest. The back of the piece was curiously flat. We got a lot of photos.

Inside the Hall many pieces have been re-arranged. And many objects are no longer as well including the black and white Pulque cups, the "Conthum del Mito", "The Shiny Stone", "The God - And Horror of Horrors - The Stone of the Warrior" which Little had come all this way to see. Welcome to Mexico. This is a huge disappointment to her since she is writing the PhD thesis on this piece. This loss somewhat spoiled the rest of the tour for her and I found it somewhat difficult to get her attention on other objects. Somehow we must try to get into the back rooms of the museum to see the stone if it has not been loaned out for exhibition.

Both of us were so tired after the Mexico Hall that we gave only a cursory look at the Tlaltecatl and Teotihuacan Hall before departing to the book store where I bought a couple of dozen black issues of Archaeological Magazine and saw also the lovely modern Stone Carve for sale for 200. That I almost bought but did not and now I regret it. I was very happy in feeling.

John was at the door to greet us as we exited. After some maneuvering out of the park we made it downtown. Much street work and traffic all slowed up. John dropped us off near an excellent restaurant that had been recommended. El Cardinal. We had a good meal and a much needed peaceful

time before hitting the street for a short walk to the Templo Mayor Museum.

We walked through the main part. I had a chance to observe the door of the House of the Marguerite de Cortés. To my amazement the door opening to the Courtyard and aligning with the steps beyond inside was much further south than I observed on my last visit. How could I have miscalculated so badly. I distinctly remember looking out that door as I seen the light steps across the way. I think I even photographed it. Perhaps they moved the door. How could that be. The alignment of the steps under the House of the Marguerite there would be similar to the way they are shown on the Templo Mayor Model.

Neither Attlee nor I had much enthusiasm for the Templo Mayor Museum. Many pieces not on display. I guess they are all travelling around on exhibition.

George met us at the corner of the Zocalo near the National Palace and our trip home was relatively pleasant. Attlee and I bought two fine - thank you - for our room.

We got home at about 7:00 and I went into my room to lay down for a few minutes and woke up at midnight. Across the street a drunken party was going on. Lasted till 3:00 in the morning.

Saturday July 14th

Today is Carmen's Saint Day and she plans to have a party at the house this afternoon.

I spent most of the day reading. Carmen and I went to do errands

for the party. Job to do. Her cook Julia
has been working for 2 weeks on
her Mole sauce. She is famous for
it. — Justifiably so!!

After lunch shopping. Carmen and
I went to her gallery which she is
remodelling mainly to be a residence
and painting studio. The addition
is really huge.

As we toured the place we stopped
and looked over to the Creanulung house
next door, the very house at Tzapan
where the Creanulung's entertained the
rich and famous artists of the day
in the thirties and forties. The house
is a lovely rose color. Interesting legend.
In one of the smaller patios just
below us was a large reproduction
of the Temple of Sacred War. The place
invited exploration. The current owner
is alas recently put in jail.

After the gallery we went to
the Church and Monastery of Santa
Carmen where Carmen took communion
on her first day while I explored
the museum room in the convent,
the Church in the century and later. A
beautiful small chapel upstairs — for
the nuns' private beautiful flowers. This
place has the kind of peace and spiritual
calm that must have been here in
days past.

Carmen later joined me and we
further explored the Church. She took
me down to the crypt to see the
mummies. — A few moldering
remains of flesh and fellow skeletons —
all gray and dusty in shredded
clothes and robes. The crucifixes looked

from the second half of the 15th century. All were in narrow glass topped coffins stood up around the walls with a few displays horizontally. Quiet, and so quiet. I would have been a great place to make drawings. On the way back home Carmen stopped and bought some pozolli (corn hominy) from a street vendor. Carmen bought all she had!

The party began at about 330, an hour later than Carmen had planned. About fifty people or more showed up. All very classy. These people are fun loving and natural. There is something elegant and classy about them. All have interesting life stories. Most speak English as well as Hindi, Japanese, German etc. Almost all are world travelers.

Attila enjoyed herself. She looked lovely in her "Mexico" gown. She had just bought a new pair of Mexican designs (She by the way, has a room mate Alejandra Moreno, daughter of the famous Nicaraguan actor Moreno).

Attila and Alejandra have lost it off wonderfully.

The food was excellent. A few of our catalogues were passed around to great compliments. Salinas was there and excitedly told us that when we come to Tlaxcala on Monday we will see the place where they wound the Spaniards who were killed during the conquest.

I spent time with Jose Javier who 5 years ago went with us to Salinas at Tlaxcala. A very delightful man, beautifully educated.

I went to bed at 7:30.

Sunday, July 17th

There must be a black cloud hanging over Attlee as far as this trip is concerned. To get her passport was an inconvenient and somewhat negative beginning of our trip. And the fact that her stone of the warriors was not on display at INAH was a major disappointment. Otherwise she made friends easily with Alejandro and Rocio and Jorge and many of the people who have visited La Casa Blanca.

Carmen has been a very solicitous hostess to Attlee and has proved her friendship in countless ways. Thank heavens she was with her on Sunday afternoon. While walking back down the hill to Nezahualcoyotl Attlee slipped (she was wearing sandals) and broke her lower leg. At first she just probably only sprained her ankle, but her weight was so much that the fracture not only broke but the lower leg actually was somewhat separated from her foot! I just saw the X-Ray and I don't believe she was able to walk with Jorge de Olmos and my considerable help.

We finally got her off the mountain via a very difficult rocky path. Several times some Mexican gentlemen actually offered to help us carry her down the mountain. Attlee is fat and weighs (she told me) 270 lbs, so I don't think there was any practical way to carry her down and maintain our own footing on that difficult path.

Carmen and Jorge took us to a camp

fine hospital not far from Carmine's home
in San Angel. At that point I saw
hours to have her leg examined and
a Cast prepared. (I paid the bill which
was \$1,200 pers / Doctor \$5,750.00 pers for
the hospital and \$450 pers for drugs).
Just getting her up to her bedchamber at
Carmine's was a labor. It would have been
easier to move a grand piano. Needless to
say, we didn't go to Testina's. (In
writing this account on Monday. To day we
will probably be able to do nothing. We
will have to take Attie to the airport at
10.4. for the whole afternoon is shot.
What a trip. I have been disappointed
in Attie's lack of curiosity about so
much that should be of interest to her
here. I know she is only 21, but
she is very bright and knows a hell
of a lot more about the letters than
I did at 21. Still there is a strange
distance between her and this place that
I cannot help her to cross. She rarely
asks me questions. I know one thing -
that if I had had an expert like
me on a trip like this, I would
never have stopped asking questions.
As far as Attie is concerned I will
continue to help her in any way
possible except making another trip
like this one. It has been a big
mistake so far. Now that she is leaving
perhaps I can get some real work done.
Sally's girl wants me to come to Corcoran
to see where they dug up some massaged
gravel at Jaltipac. I will try my best
to go.
Now let me talk about my observations
of the Butte of Nigduallayatl!

We arrived at the camp at about 12:00 o'clock. There are no signs finding the way, I think the last time I was there was over 30 years ago and much has changed.

First of all, there are lots of buildings around the Western base of the hill. The western view up is marked by a huge gravel pit not far away. Also there were in all about 30 people on the path up the mountain that afternoon.

The first part of the path is rough until it reaches the Bono de la Reina on the western side. Here and there one can see small altarcas carved partially into the hill side and partially constructed of loose stone masonry. There are at least two or three pools here, one small pool no more than four feet in diameter was fed once fed by a spring that appears to issue out of the mountain itself.

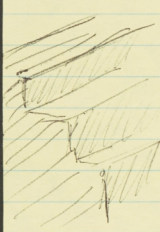
It is at el Bono de la Reina that the path divide. Atlee, Jorge and Carmen to the path that goes around the southern half of the mountain following the Costa del Channel past the "bath of Negabandayote" with its royal seat and ditch the many stairway of rock cut steps nearly instead of following them, I took the route up the mountain west side to the summit. Here and there along the way were stairs cut out of the rock and interspersed with a line of fluted shaped stones. Some stones were shaped very roughly, others rather well shaped. The risers of the steps were unexpectedly high.

About three quarters or more on the

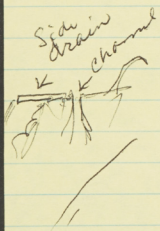
way up, & come to an area carved out
of the living rock and with remains
of small structures all around. Here
were the remains of the famous Chicomocall
and Chalchulucence statues, destroyed, & broken,
in the 18th century. Only their feet remain
to show where they stood. On the flat
floor in front of them were two large
stone fragments of the goddess's loincloth
and part of her head dress, and another
part of a head dress next to it. This
place offered a beautiful view of
the valley. You could easily see
Chalchupetz and the mountains of
Guadalupe north of Mexico City and
even glimpse of the lake that they are
trying to restore. I photographed
everything. While I was at this spot
I met an elderly ^{mountain} man with two friends,
who really knew a lot about the mountains
in the distance. He gave me a little
fragment of a Tlaltec figure he had
found on the mountains.

After I left the two goddesses
the north to the top of the hill grew
rougher, there was hardly any
path. But here and there I would
see evidence of small altars and
small platforms with adobe walls
nearby. Everything was small in
scale - though not miniature when

When I finally reached the
crest there were more small
structures, walls and platforms. A
Christian cross on a small white stone
platform had been placed at the summit
but had been vandalized. From the
summit one could easily see the great
aqueduct which brought water to the mountain.



from the slope of Mount Tlaloc. All the hills around here are denuded. I could also see a number of pyramids and "palace" structures at the other end of the Aqueduct. The aqueduct itself was most impressive. Rather than being 150 feet high from being built from the ground up it looked as if it had been built upon a ~~ridge~~ preexisting ridge that connected the two mountains. There are a number of impressive platforms and structures built up on the Eastern facade of Tlatzingo that are rather complicated to figure out. Double stairs are common. There is a large platform called the Prince Platform.



As you climb down to where the Aqueduct joins the mountain you can see where the channels divide to circle the north and the southern side of the hill meeting at Asniwar at the Pico de la Reina. (I never found where the water went from the Pico de la Reina. I did not follow the north channel either.) On the south side there were several side ditches like water run-off spouts ~~on~~ a roof that released water down the sides of the hill when raining.

By the time I came down of the east side of the mountain I could see Atilio, Carmen and Jorge sitting on the grass at the far end of the Aqueduct. They were soaked. As was I but I wanted to see the Palace and pools at the Mount Tlaloc end of the Aqueduct so I went on to explore closer. The palace was ~~was~~ very simple, just

a few chickens laid out next to a rather large holding tank. More structures appeared to be located further East but had not been restored.

I ran into a pretty Mexican girl who asked me several questions about the place. At almost seemed as if somebody had told her that I was an Aztec authority. I ended by telling her in Spanish that this was one of my favorites, ~~that~~ Aztec sites in the Valley. She promptly corrected me.

"Not Aztec" she said, "but Acalhuan."
Of course she was correct.

Monday July 18th

We did nothing this day. Attlee packed all morning. At noon she said her goodbyes to Carmen (who has been wonderful throughout Attlee's ordeal). I accompanied Attlee to the ~~Hotel~~ Airport while she arranged for her flight home. She had two and a half hours to wait for her flight, so we said our goodbyes. For Attlee. My last glimpse of her was of her in the wheel chair the airport had provided with her crutches laying crossways on her arm rest.

In spite of the disaster her trip has endured, she did have a good time while she was ambulatory. She is so adult in so many ways and so much like a little girl in others that it's difficult to know when she is serious or not. She is not a glib person and though she has considerable knowledge about the Aztec culture, she doesn't have the passion for the subject that I thought she had. Come to think of it - I don't think I quite

had that passion when I was 21 - But I certainly was more curious. Either Arthur did not know how to use me on this trip or she had other reasons for coming to Mexico. In a, shame because she wasted my time and hers and I'll never, never, allow myself to be used like this again to no purpose, especially since I have so much to do back at home.

This evening we will go to Tlaxcala with Sabino to see the place where a number of Spaniards and their allies were captured and sacrificed during the Conquest of Mexico. It is an absolutely unique archaeological discovery, one that Cortez (2nd letter to Charles V) and Bernal Diaz del Castillo wrote about. I will try to get as many photos as possible.

Oh God! I can see that I'm getting the Burnstap. The first time in 20 years. What's next?

Tuesday 19th -

We did not go to Tlaxcala. Something came up. I'm never quite sure what's going on here. I'm puzzled that we did not go yesterday. I had cramps and Barbara all day until Caroline took me to a farmacia to get some Lomestil. How'd I like an extra god, huh?

When I was feeling better she drove me to Chapultepec park to see the castle. I was hoping to get a photo of Moctezuma's death mask but, alas, it was not on display. The place was crowded. I did get

a book of photographs from Maximilian's day and I did see the skulls of the Spaniards sacrificed at Zultepec/Tlacoac on display. They also had some very good pieces of agates on display. I also managed to photograph the remains of Moteguma II's statue carried in by the rock at the base of Chapultepec. He literally jumped into it. No signs of typical. I certainly was not feeling well but we walked over to WHA culture I bought some more archaeological magazines and a small green stone Coyatl. It's contemporary, but I thought it had a good Mexican feel about it.

When we got home Carmen informed me that Salinas was going to come pick me up, at 5:30 pm for the drive to Tlaxcala. I didn't want to hurt Carmen's feelings, but I was feeling so bad I went back to my room to rest and get ready. At about four o'clock it began to rain and very heavily too. It lasted for three or four hours. My room over the "Car entrance" is completely cut off from Carmen's main house, especially in rain. I just lay here in my bed, dressed and packed for a trip I didn't know if I had the strength to make. Salinas was not only going to take me to Zultepec/Tlacoac but also to that site Ocotular where the painted shield ~~was~~ on a structure. It was discovered a few years ago. I have a monograph at home on the site and the workmanship of the shield is exquisite. Then we were going to visit Izagatlan, Xictepec's Palace and other relevant sites.

It was an opportunity that I thought

shouldn't mind, no matter how bad the
pelt. But I simply did not have the
energy and I also knew I would have
to return to Mexico City by Bus the
next day and have to make my way back
by Cab.

I would have been ok if we could have
done it ~~on~~ on Monday as planned, but
after accident ^{on Sunday afternoon} changed everything. I
fell asleep waiting for Dr. Schino, and
was glad to hear on Wednesday Morning
that he had had to cancel at the last
minute because of the rain and traffic etc.

By Tuesday evening I had made
up my mind to leave as planned on
Thursday Morning. I really missed heat
and I wanted to get on and to a
ship that seemed to have a good one
it, since we started. I know that in
the future when I think back at this
ill-starved expedition, that I never
wanted to do in the first place - that I will
tend to think of it in all negative. There
were some good things about this trip.

Carmina's wonderful hospitality. Her
delightful friends, Emiliano too. But I
definitely wanted to get back home as
soon as possible.

Whitney will probably be disappointed
in me as well. Because she wanted me
to come to see Miguel Allende. I just
did not feel up to it and I did need
to get back home.

Wednesday 20th.

Stayed in bed most of the
day and read. I do feel better but
now my mind is turned toward home.
I wanted to go to the newly museum
found in Diego Rivera's studio. It

only a couple of blocks away but
no energy.