

Our Formative Years and Mexico City College 1952-1961

(Text and Photos Slides)

**By Richard W. Wilkie and Oriol Pi-Sunyer
(Emeritus Professors, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)**

Discussion Sequence

- **Our Backgrounds & Why We went to Mexico**
- **Mexico in the 1950s:
A Sense of Time & Place**
- **Mexico City College
& its Unusual Faculty**
- **A Unique Student Body at
MCC**
- **What We Gained from
the Experience**



Near Mitla, Oaxaca

ORIOI'S LONG JOURNEY TO MEXICO

- **ORIOI & his Mother**
Passport Photo
in 1938 at
age 8

BARCELONA



THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR RAGES 1936-1939

The children of Barcelona give moral support to the Republican Government against Gen. Franco's Fascists

Oriol's father had been Mayor of Barcelona, but in 1937-39 was Economic Minister of Spain's Republican Government

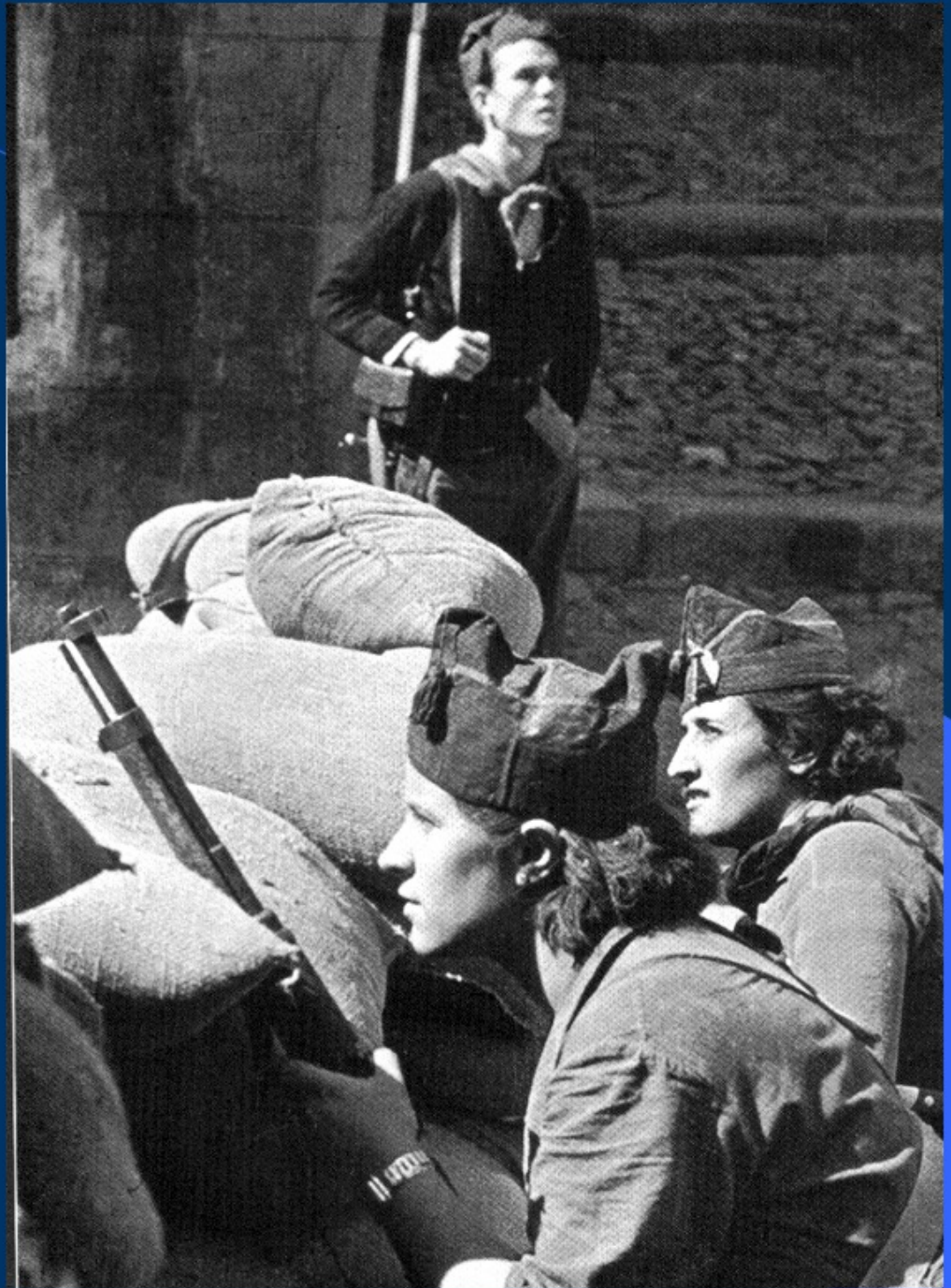


MILICIANAS

Barcelona

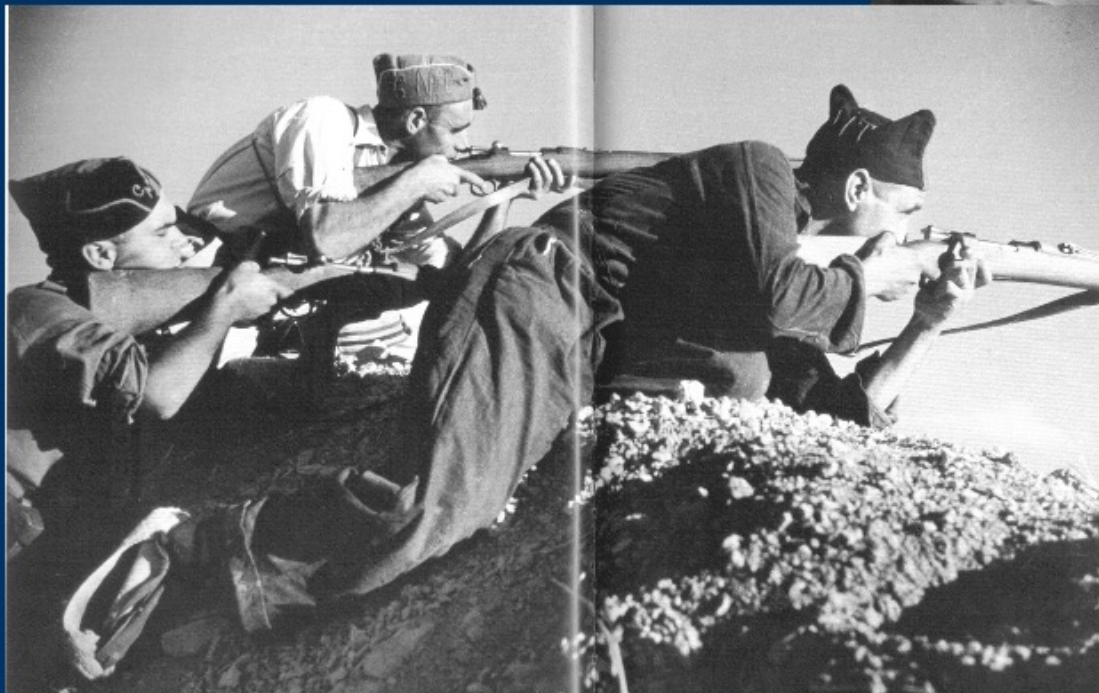
1936

- During the time Oriol's father was still Mayor of Barcelona



DEATH IN BATTLE

ON THE CORDOBA
FRONT -- 1936



Robert Capa photos

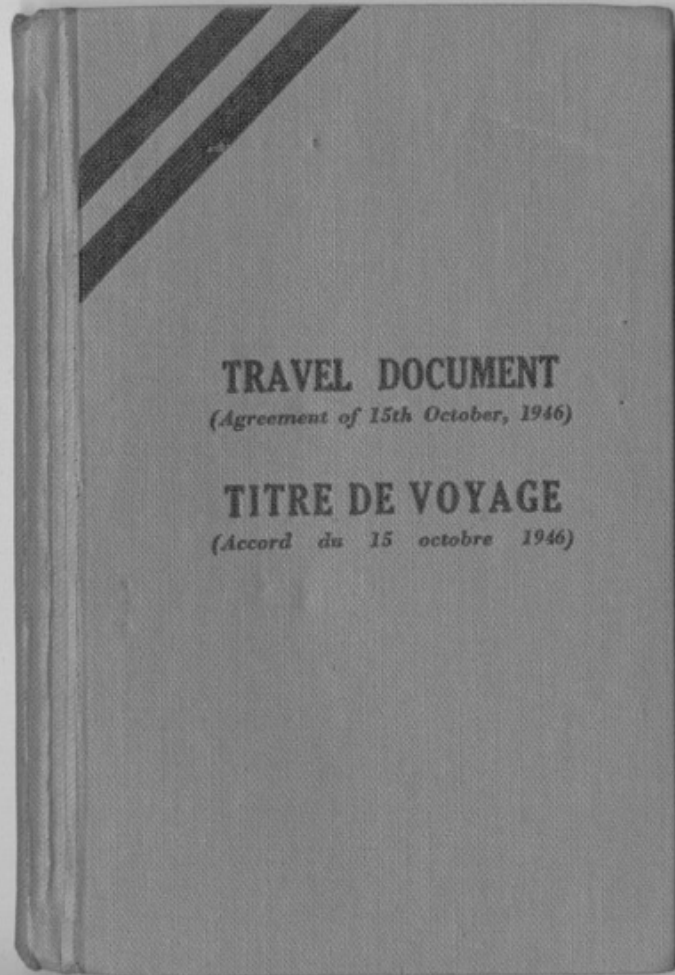
FINAL COLLAPSE OF THE SPANISH REPUBLIC WINTER 1939

French police
interning
refugees

British Navy
evacuating
children



ORIOLO AS A STATELESS REFUGEE



- **Dec.1938 to France**
- **1939 to England**
- **1952 to Caracas,
Venezuela**
- ❖ **1953 to Mexico**

ORIOLO'S Documents for Mexican Citizenship

El C. JOSE GOROSTIZA.

*Subsecretario de Relaciones Exteriores de
los Estados Unidos Mexicanos
por orden del C. Secretario del Ramo*

A todos los que la presente vieren, sabed:

Que EL SEÑOR ORIOLO PI-SUNYER CUBERTA.

*se ha
presentado en esta Secretaria solicitando naturalizarse mexicano, con fundamento
en LOS ARTICULOS 21, FRACCION VII, 28 Y 29.*

*de la Ley de Nacionalidad y Naturalización vigente;
ha acreditado llenar todos los requisitos legales, hecho formal renuncia de su propia
nacionalidad como ESPAÑOLA.*

*y protestado adhesión, obediencia y sumisión a las Leyes y Autoridades de la Repú-
blica; en virtud de lo cual y por acuerdo del C. PRESIDENTE DE LOS ESTADOS
UNIDOS MEXICANOS se le concede la naturalización, otorgándose la presente para
que pueda acreditar que ha adquirido los derechos y obligaciones que competen a los
mexicanos conforme a la Constitución y demás Leyes de la República.*

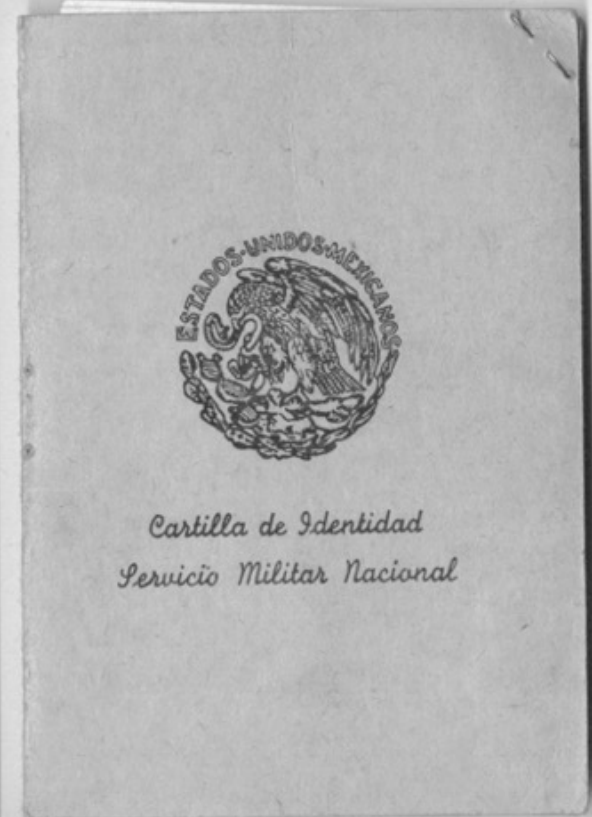
Dada en la ciudad de México, el día HUEVE

del mes de SEPTIEMBRE *de mil novecientos cincuenta* Y CUATRO.

Jose Gorostiza



TAPON
MEXICO
100 PESOS
1954



Richard WILKIE'S JOURNEY

GROWING UP in IDAHO & then TO MEXICO - Sept. 1956

- **Born in 1938**
- **Growing up 5 months each year in the Idaho wilderness – working, fishing, playing, and mountain climbing – during formative years (ages 7 to 17) ----- 1945 to 1955**

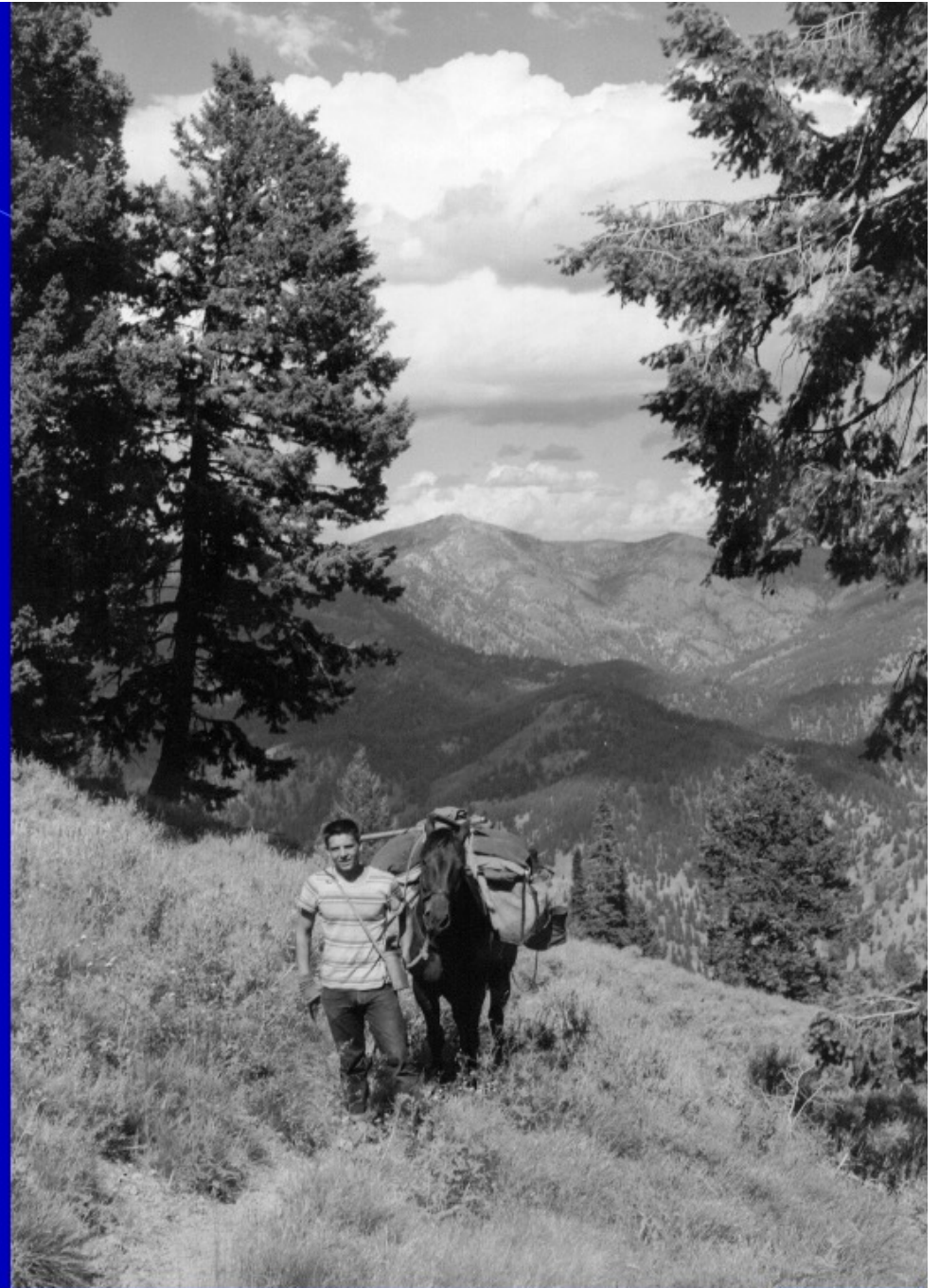
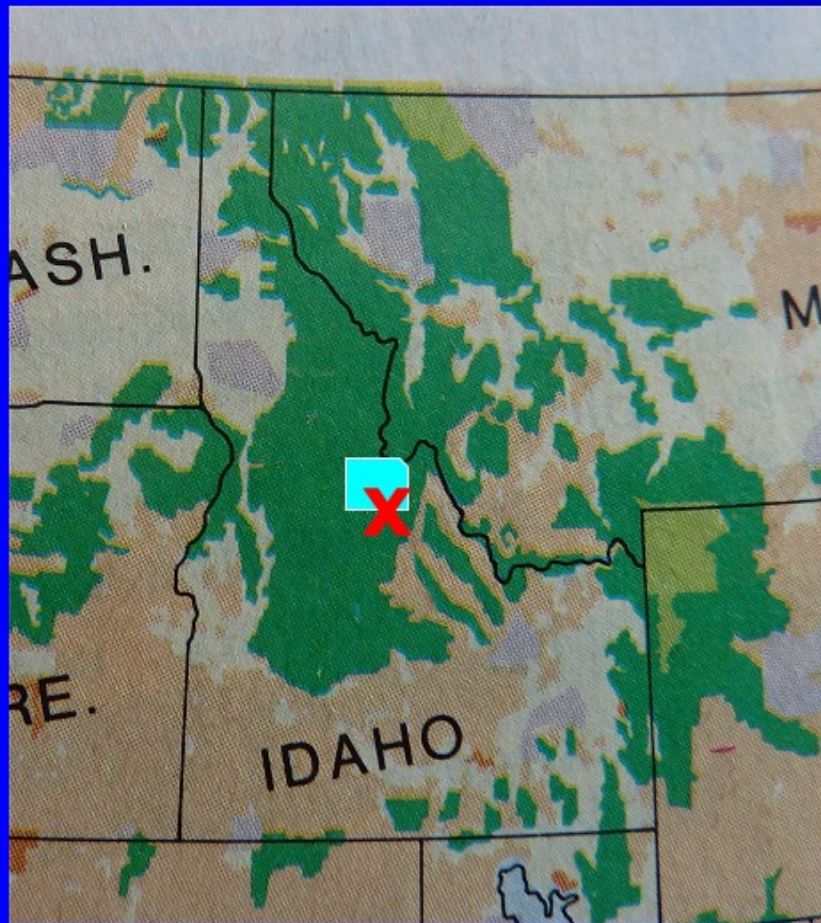


Dad with Steelhead Trout – Aug. 1945



Richard (left) with parents Lucile and Waldo, Sancho our dog, and brother Jim -- At our North Shore Lodge, Warm Lake ---- August 1945

- o **Six-week hike (363 miles) in the Idaho Wilderness Area with brother Jim -- 1955**





○ **Two-week hike (122 miles)**
Big Creek Wilderness Area
with brother Jim -- 1956

**First visited Mexico in January 1947
(at Tijuana) with his family (at age 9)**

**Went to Mexico as a college freshman in 1956
at age 18 after hearing stories of exploration and
adventure in Mexico from his brother Jim
who had transferred from
the Univ. of So. California
(USC) to enroll at
Mexico City College
in Fall 1955**



**R. Wilkie at age 20
in Veracruz**

MEXICO IN THE 1950s: A SENSE OF TIME & PLACE



**COBBLESTONE
ROADS**

**AT FIRST MEXICO WAS – AS ORIOL STATED:
“AN OVERLOAD ON THE SENSES”**

**We both agreed that:
ONE QUICKLY FELT THE POWER OF MEXICO ---
BUT THAT UNDERSTANDING IT FULLY TOOK LONGER!**

**WE WERE STRUCK BY THINGS WE HAD NOT
EXPERIENCED TO SUCH AN EXTENT PREVIOUSLY:**

- ❖ **THE RICH HISTORY of CULTURES, ART AND COLOR**
- ❖ **FOOD AND TASTES**
- ❖ **MUSIC, SOUNDS & SMELLS IN THE CITIES**
- ❖ **THE AMAZING NATURAL & CULTURAL LANDSCAPES**

- ❖ **& ABOVE ALL – THE SOPHISTICATION & QUALITY OF
INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN MEXICO CITY & AT THE COLLEGE**

COLOR & VISUAL STIMULATION



**FLEETING
IMAGES**



**REPRESENTING
THE PAST**

LIVING MEMORIES & IMAGES OF "THE REVOLUTION"



Morelia, Michoacan

NATURAL LANDSCAPES AND A WORLD OF INDIGENOUS CULTURES



**CUETZATLÁN,
PUEBLA**

HERITAGE



RELIGION

PERIODIC EVENTS: MARKETS & FESTIVALS



**TAXCO
FIREWORKS**



**TEHUANTEPEC
PARADE**



**OAXACA
FESTIVALS**



OPTIMISM and PESSIMISM

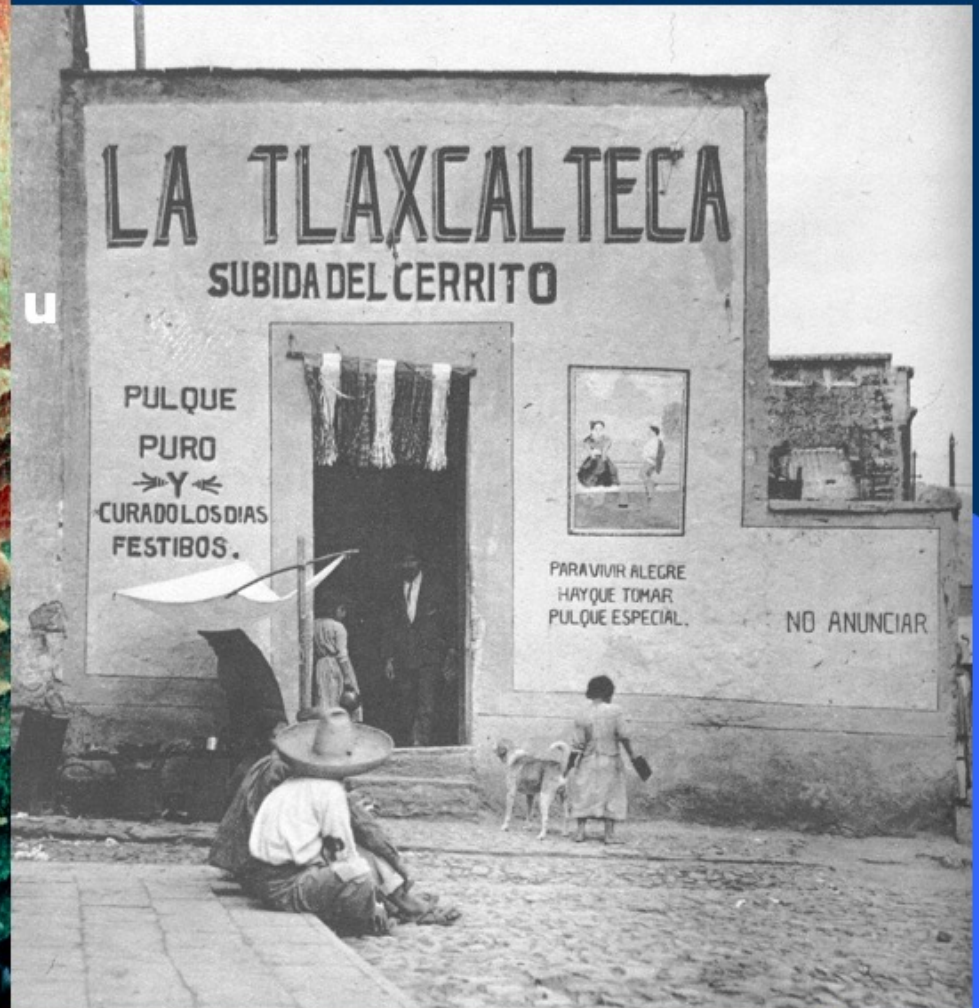
AT TIMES – A
FATALISTIC ACCEPTANCE
OF ONE'S FUTURE,
INCLUDING DEATH

OTHER TIMES –
AN OPTIMISTIC
SENSE OF HOPE AND
POSSIBILITIES FOR
THE FUTURE

**PULQUE was "King"
– in the countryside**



PULQUE FROM THE MAGUAY (AGAVE) PLANT





**THREE OUT OF FIVE MEXICANS LIVED
DISPERSED ON THE LAND OR IN VILLAGES OF LESS
THAN 2500 PEOPLE (80% in Mesoamerica)**

In 1950

**14.8 MILLION RURAL
VERSUS
10.9 MILLION URBAN**



| CENSUS YEAR | MEXICO |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1910 | 13,607,259 |
| 1921 | 14,334,780 |
| 1940 | 19,653,552 |
| 1950 1956 | 25,791,017 30,000,000 |
| 1960 | 34,923,129 |
| 1970 | 48,225,238 |
| 1980 | 67,405,700 |
| 1990 | 81,250,000 |
| 2005 | 106,202,900 |
| 2020 | 128,933,000 |

POPULATION GROWTH IN MEXICO

1910-2020

NOTE: GROWTH ALONE BETWEEN 1970--80 OF 19.2 MILLION VIRTUALLY EQUALED THE EXISTING POPULATION OF MEXICO IN 1940.

POPULATION IN 2020 IS 5 TIMES WHAT IT WAS IN 1950

+48 MILLION in the LAST 30 YEARS

Mexico City in 1950

**had a population of 3 million people.
All of Mexico had 25.8 million.**

**Greater Mexico City in 2004 had
approximately 27 ½ million* people
and Mexico had 100 million people
(more than all of Mexico in 1950)**

***Mexico City Central Land-use Planning Office, Feb. 2004**

MEXICO CITY'S "PASEO DE LA REFORMA" STILL HAD FEW VEHICLES

REFORMA -- 1910



REFORMA -- 1958

EXCEPT FOR RACING BUSES & WILD RIDES IN PESO CABS

**MEXICO CITY IN THE 1950s
WAS A COSMOPOLITAN CENTER OF SANCTUARY**

**FOR REFUGEES, REVOLUTIONARIES,
DEMOCRATS & DISSIDENTS --
ESPECIALLY FROM SPAIN (40,000), EASTERN EUROPE,**

FROM LATIN AMERICAN DICTATORSHIPS,

**AND EVEN AMERICAN WRITERS, ARTISTS, & OTHERS
WHO WERE ESCAPING THE U.S. WITCH-HUNTS
OF THE EARLY 1950s**

**FIDEL CASTRO & CHE GUEVARA LEFT MEXICO CITY
IN NOV. 1957 TO VERACRUZ, AND ON TO CUBA TO BEGIN
THE CUBAN REVOLUTION**

**SUPPOSEDLY, LEE HARVEY OSWALD PASSED THROUGH
SEVERAL TIME IN 1960-61 ON HIS WAY TO CUBA.**

THE LOCATION OF MEXICO CITY WAS IDEAL FOR EXPLORING CENTRAL & SOUTHERN MEXICO

- ❖ **CLOCKWISE:**
- ❖ **NORTH** to Hidalgo & San Luis Potosí
- ❖ **NoEAST** to Northern Veracruz & Tamaulipas
- **EAST** to Puebla & Veracruz
- ❖ **SoEAST** to Oaxaca, Chiapas & Guat. & the Yucatan
- ❖ **SOUTH** to Morelos & Guerrero
- ❖ **WEST** to Toluca, Michoacán & Jalisco
- ❖ **NoWEST** to Leon & Querétaro



Map of South Central Mexican Road Network, 1956



Red band outlines area covered by enlarged map of MEXICO CITY-VERACRUZ on reverse side

| | | |
|---------|-------|------|
| 4,321 | ..... | B-9 |
| 574 | ..... | A-11 |
| ..... | ..... | B-14 |
| 64 | ..... | G-7 |
| 390 | ..... | A-6 |
| ..... | ..... | A-13 |
| 205 | ..... | C-8 |
| 709 | ..... | A-11 |
| ..... | ..... | B-12 |
| ..... | ..... | A-10 |
| 105,056 | ..... | A-12 |
| 67,257 | ..... | B-11 |
| ..... | ..... | B-14 |
| 793 | ..... | B-12 |
| 57,377 | ..... | B-9 |
| 63 | ..... | B-6 |
| ..... | ..... | C-8 |
| 95,712 | ..... | C-14 |
| 51,889 | ..... | A-7 |
| ..... | ..... | B-8 |
| 71,485 | ..... | A-1 |
| 689 | ..... | A-14 |

CONVERSION TABLE

Gallons - Liters

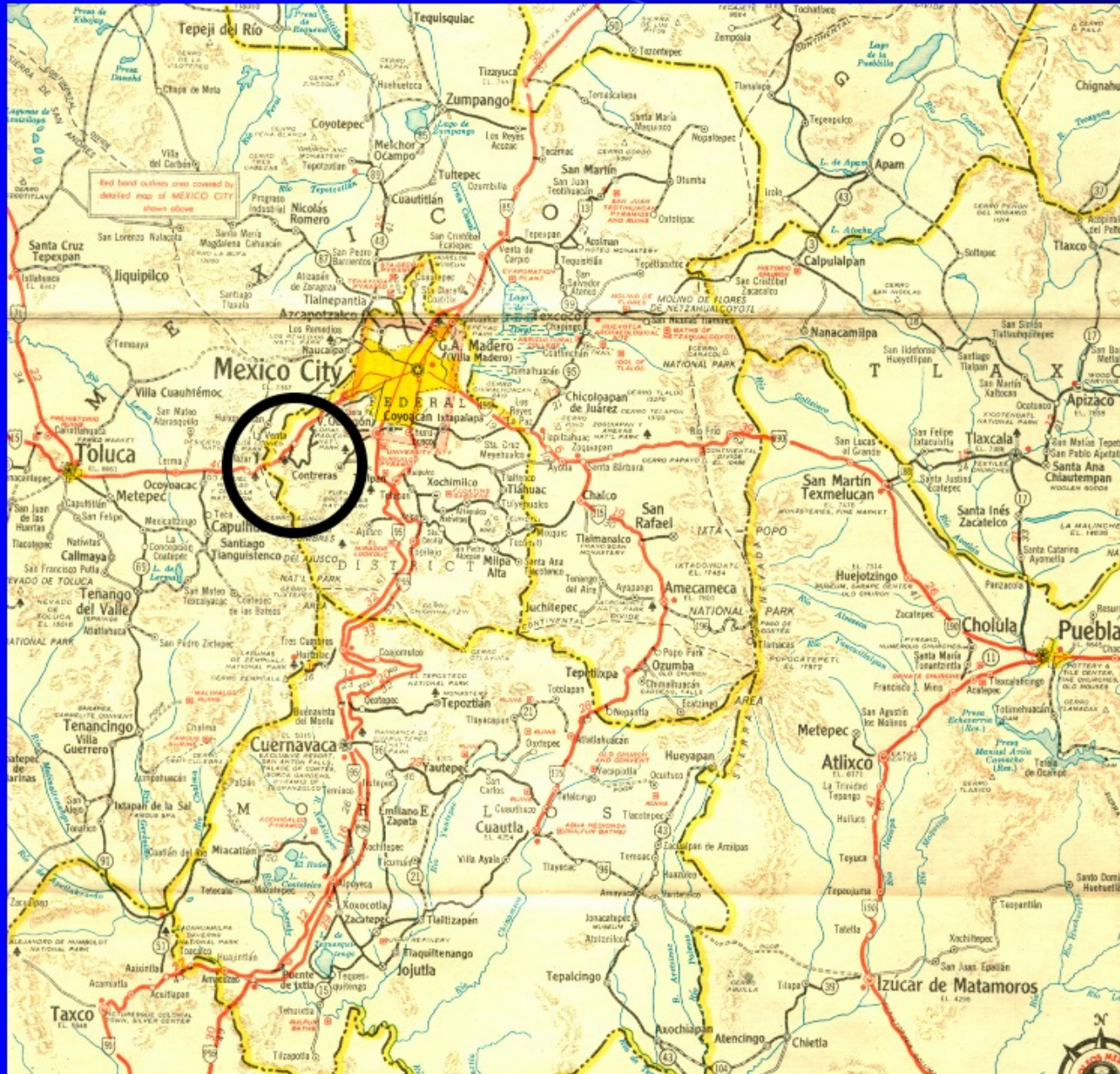
10

Miles - Kilometers

10

Gulf of Tehuantepec

MEXICO CITY COLLEGE



Located on the Toluca highway at KM.16 -- overlooking the city to the East and Popo & Ixta volcanos to the South and East



Mexico City College 1956 - walkway to upper campus classrooms

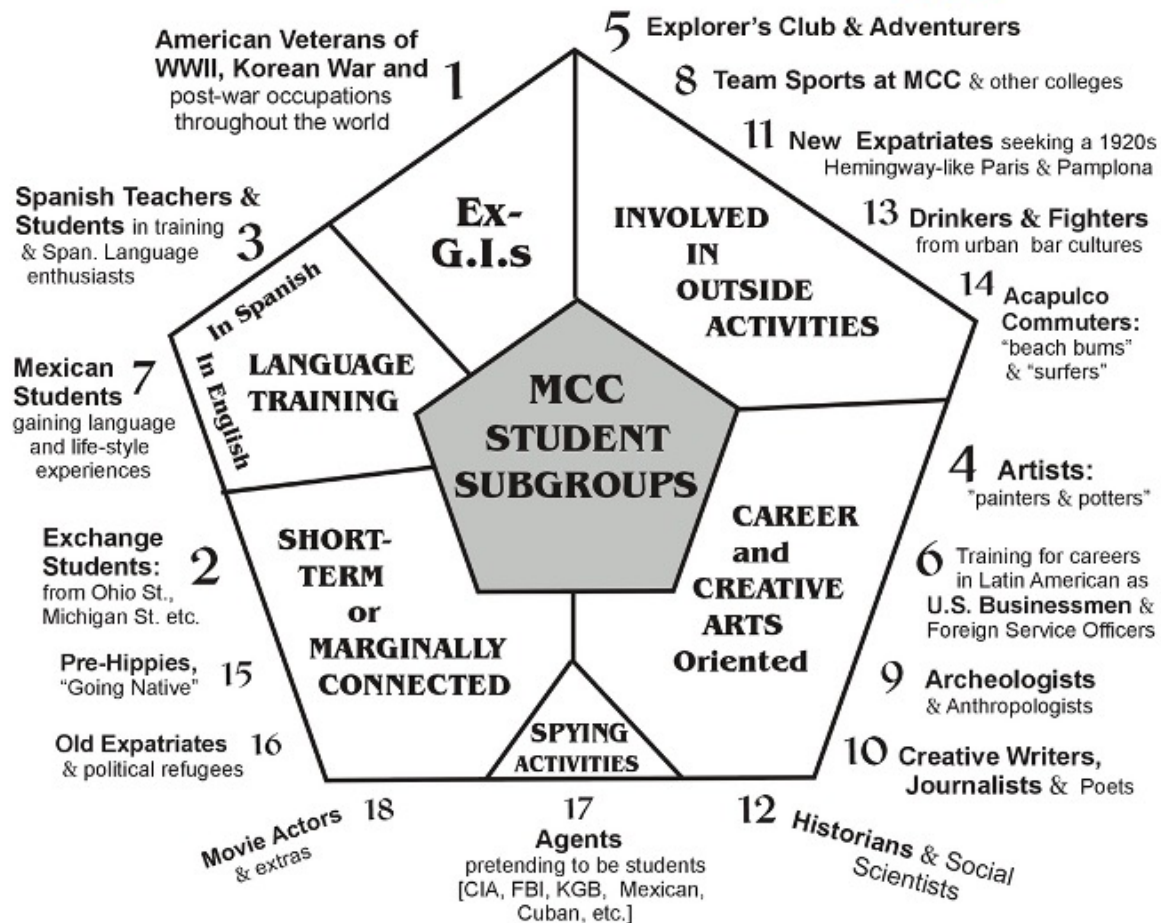


Mary Lou Pease postcard

FIGURE 1

**STUDENT SUBGROUPS AT MEXICO CITY COLLEGE
1954-1962**

BASED UPON: MODEL BY RICHARD WILKIE 2003



MCC 1956 - cafeteria patio, looking south to the volcanoes



Mary Lou Pease postcard

Note: This is a subjective interpretation that identifies the various student subgroups involved with the college and ranks them by size & importance.

**EXPERIENCING MEXICO:
American Students at Mexico City College
1954 - 1962**



WHERE THE "SOUL OF MEXICO" IS REFLECTED IN ITS INDIAN HERITAGE & PAST CIVILIZATIONS,
the SPANISH CONQUEST, INDEPENDENCE, the historical importance of "VILLAGE MEXICO",
the VIOLENT REVOLUTION after 1910 and the URBAN & INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS

RICHARD W. WILKIE
2003

**EXPERIENCING
MEXICO
AT MCC**

**MODEL BY
RICHARD WILKIE
2005**

SOME FACULTY MEMBERS AT MCC

Oriol remembers the Anthropologists

- Ignacio Bernal
- Wigberto Jimenez-Moreno
- Pedro Armillas
- Miguel Covarrubias
- Pablo Martinez del Rio
- Charles Wicke

Dick remembers

- Col. Carlos Berzunza
- Claire Bowen
- Willis Austin
- Morton Sloane
- Pablo Martinez del Rio
- John Elmendorf

**Between 1947 & 1957,
MCC confirmed 1113 BA
& 273 Master's degrees**



Mural by Anthropology Prof. Miguel Covarrubias

**MURALS BY
COVARRUBIAS**



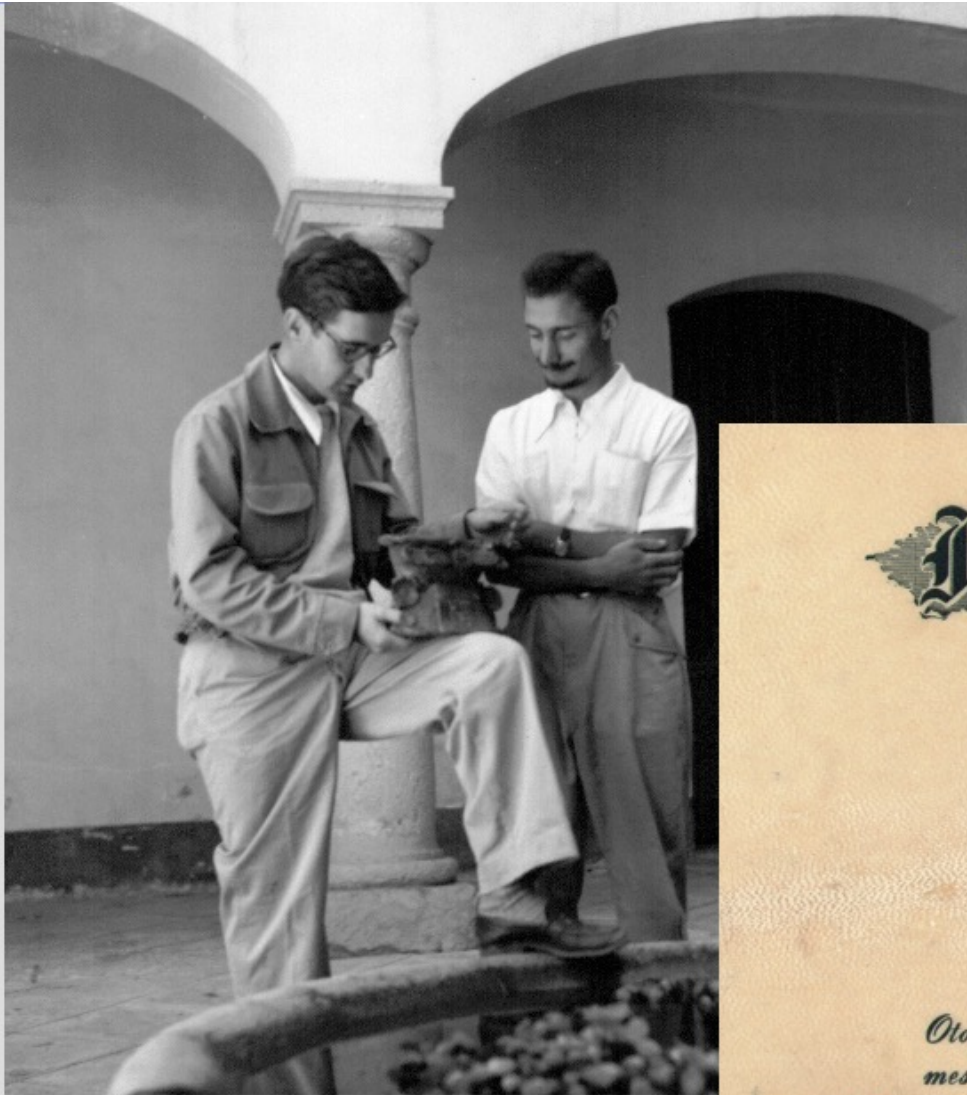


ORIOLE (ON LEFT) climbing *Malinche* with MCC friends, 1953



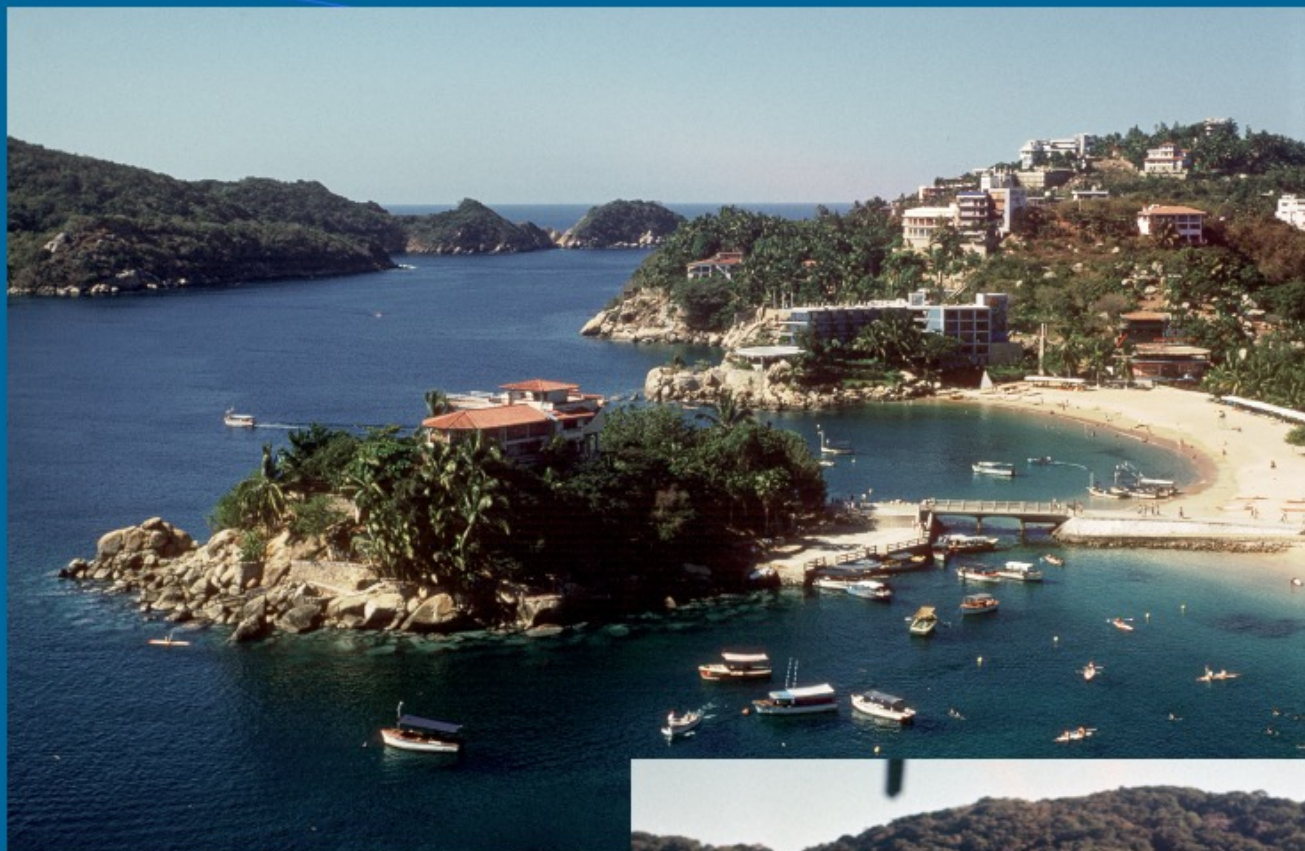


Oriol's B.A. diploma, 1954



**Charles Wicke &
Oriol Pi-Sunyer
at the Museum in
Oaxaca, 1953**





CALETA BEACH AREA

**ESCAPE TO THE
COAST in the 1950s
WAS OFTEN TO
ACAPULCO**



PUERTO MARQUES --A FISHING VILLAGE

Acapulco 1958 with parents Waldo & Lucile Wilkie, uncle Fred, and brother Jim





BILL HORNADAY on Puerto Marquez beach, Acapulco, after a long night sleeping in a hammock, 1958.

-- Bill died in 2008 at age 75 in Brenham, Texas. His obit said he had been “a husband, father, democrat, writer, paperboy, soldier, Mexico City College graduate, newspaper man, dry cleaner, gardener, fireman, beekeeper, dog lover, arborist, cattleman, chicken farmer, travel agent, art collector, traveler, wind rancher, bird watcher, dreamer, storyteller, alderman, and more. Thus he was a true MCCer!



EXPLORATION & TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES



for the Wilkie brothers:

TO 33 of 34 STATES
& TERRITORIES

GUATEMALA twice

and all of CENTRAL AMERICA
for 3 MONTHS
Dec.1957 to March 1958



~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
Panajachel, State of Solola, GUATEMALA
late November-1956

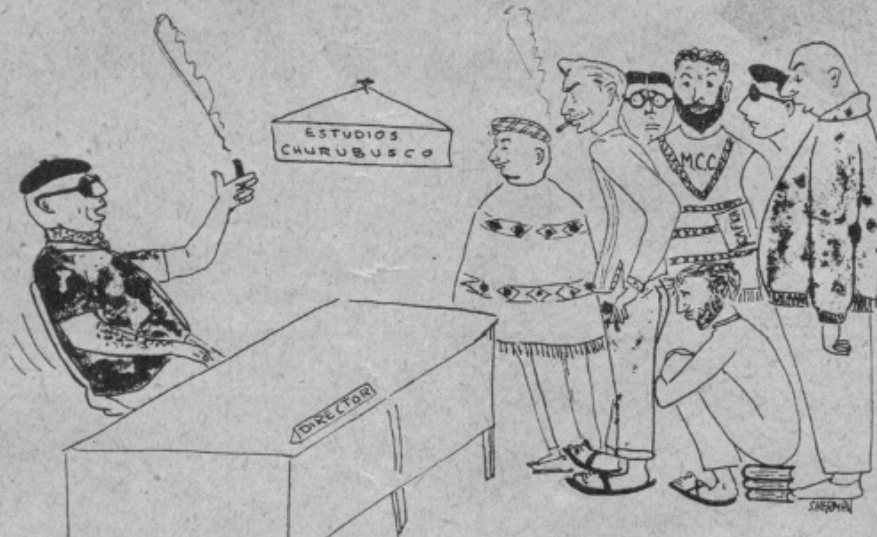
MCC Students & Future Professors at Roadside Cantina: 1958



from left: James Wilkie (UCLA), Colin MacLauchlin (Tulane), James Hamon (UNAM), & Richard Wilkie (UMASS)

ROLES AS EXTRAS IN MOVIES

Mexico City Collegian – April 17, 1958



Wilkie played the American villian – diver Gary Tobian – in the movie PASO a la JUVENTUD

Now here's the pitch. All Hollywood is buzzing about the job you boys did in **The Sun Also Rises**, **Sierra Baron** & **Paso a la Juventud**. But now you've got a whole new challenge. Like in the next scene you play the part of crazy, mixed up, real nervous college boys just along for the ride. Think you can handle it okay?

FILMED or MADE IN MEXICO



Olympic Pool where film was shot



**MCC STUDENTS PLAYING AMERICAN FOOTBALL in Mexico's
Olympic Stadium, September 1957**



Co-Captains Richard Wilkie & Ben Madrid (MCC students) with Coach Chisari, playing American football for the Mexican Military Academy in the Olympic Stadium, Oct. 1957
(photo by James Wilkie)

HALFTIME Ceremony with the Queen -- R.Wilkie on right



Starting is easy



Finishing is hard



**CLIMBING POPOCATEPETL,
17,887 ft. – twice
5 in North America**



Dangerous Journeys: Mexico City College Students and the Mexican Landscape 1954-1962

By Richard W. Wilkie
University of Massachusetts—Amherst

Mexico



Pa Mexico City College students on a four-day boat trip on a roadless branch of the Papaloapan River in the state of Veracruz: Richard Wilkie and Mike Johnson atop the boat "Sol" (photo by James Wilkie, April 1958)

Three-day boat trip -- Río
Papaloapan,
Veracruz, 1958



Up A Lazy River In Veracruz



The knocking boat's motor gets a rest as MCCers find relief from the heat in the tepid upriver waters.



Photo And Text
By James Wilkie
Layout By
Melbourne Lockey

The one-eyed boat captain doubles as chef as he prepares dinner without getting entangled in the swaying hammocks.

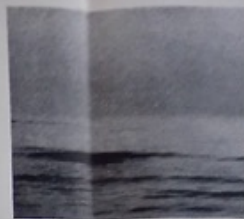


Down in Veracruz state, where the many rivers tumble out of the mountains to meander across the Papalapan plain to meet in an inland bay, Alvarado basks in the Gulf sun and sends his fishermen and freighters up the rivers in boats.

As one spreads the map before the wind, the printed lines come to life as the sun-caked boat owner bargains rental price under the roof-sky of his restaurant. The wooden dock is ronis underfoot as the details come out over a fresh fried fish and beer: "You can take that 90 footer and my crew of two," he says pointing to the dull, old, rusted-riper boat. "She's got low draft and can take the shallow waters with ease. Three hundred sixty pesos for two days is my last offer."

Alvarado's graceful palms raise plumed heads around the time-stained old church bearing the date 1779 as the outfitting for the expedition gets under way. Pedro de Alvarado gave the town its name when he entered in 1518 to enquire if for the Spanish crown, but today its fame is of the Monterey type, for as Monterey is known for its stinginess, Alvarado is known for its swearing. The foul words of the market are shocking until the buyer realizes the expressions are in good nature; the purchase of coffee, sugar, rice, beans, eggs, meat, rum, and soda pop goes on. Since there is no potable water up-river, there is a "thirsting need" for stocking up with extra bottles of drink.

The rickety 160 horse power motor starts jerkily, barely managing to stop the waves from crashing the narrow, long boat into the pilings along the wharf. All boats take off amid the fanfare of dock loafers and fisherman yelling; gringos call for added staving.



The one-eyed boat captain smiles crossly as he loads his shotgun. "Prosecco, you know, the Rio San Juan is scant traveled and we always expect raiders." The question becomes whom to fear more, the raiders or the crew which pretends to drag out a bottle for a drinking bout. Their Cuban Spanish—a common influence in Veracruz—with the end of the word *shant* off is difficult enough to understand without trying to make out the *su-quala-swelled* tongue language also.

The muddy, meandering river is wide at first, the sun white hot. Then as the banks squeeze closer together and the green, peen growth crowds down to a tangle along the water— it's time to eat.

Charcoal burns in a tin can. A stew-bowl of rice and meat heats on top of this compact kitchen. The crew drinks river water with prudent MCCers boil for coffee. As the boat dips on, the village of Tlacotalpan fades behind with the last of civilization in its grass-grown street and arch-opened sidewalk cafes.

A stop to swim invites pit washing from the craft's roof, now a sun deck in the primitive cruise. The long ungainly jutting swing over the water ends in a clumsy splash. The wind on the water-dipping body adds to the cool quiet river life and the sun tanning mix of light.

Hammocks strung kitty-corner from the roof supports are swaying to the meet's rhythm and con-



River-boating in South-eastern M

VERACRUZ CARNIVAL

AT THE CENTRAL ZOCALO

**With MARIACHI BANDS and
friends -- Feb. 1961**



SPRING BREAK to ZIJUATANEJO, March 1958
during 1st week of the "new" all-weather road,
including pushing through 8 rivers



Richard Wilkie driving, Tom Held, Bill Jakoda & John Freeman pushing

James Wilkie photo

Driving back to Seattle from Mexico City – April 1961



Visual horizons in Mexico

“My experiences in Mexico helped expose me—and I think others—to new ways of viewing our own countries. Life in Mexico helped us to develop a feeling for diversity and a belief that of because of it life can be richer and more meaningful. Living at home in the states, where everyone has to think and act the same way, generally becomes stifling, and creativity suffers. In every direction I looked in Mexico at that time, I was stimulated and inspired by art, the grandeur of the landscape, and the warmth of the average Mexican. From this visual excitement came the realization that in Mexico—during those years—the physical and human landscapes were in harmony and balance.

-- Richard Wilkie, 2006 in *Dangerous Journeys*

The modernization process and the resulting “sameness of place” can change a landscape and its people in ways that tear the soul out of the “spirit of place” that existed there previously. Fortunately, many regions and places in Mexico still maintain a strong self-identity and “sense of place,” but other parts of Mexico have lost it.

-- Richard Wilkie,
2006 in *Dangerous Journeys*

R. Wilkie's Sketch of Mexican Man
– finished in an Art Course at MCC



**IN LATER YEARS,
ORIOLO and RICHARD WERE BOTH
FULL PROFESSORS at the UNIVERSITY OF
MASSACHUSETTS, Amherst**

**ORIOLO in the Anthropology Dept. from
1965 to 2012**

**RICHARD in the Geography and Geosciences
Dept. from 1968 to 2012**

**We jointly taught several Latin American seminars,
served together on graduate doctoral committees, sailed
on Oriol's boat in Long Island Sound, and even traveled
together to Catalonia and southern France navigating a
small boat on the Canal du Midi. My wife and I once gave
Oriol a used VW Beetle in Spain that he used for summer
and sabbatical research for a number of years.
Most importantly, we have remained close friends
throughout the years, always thankful for our time in
Mexico during our formative student years at Mexico City
College in the 1950s and early 1960s.**