

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Casa de las Tesoros

We stopped at the Casa de las Tesoros (The Treasure House) in Alamos, State of Sonora, Mexico. It is a charming place, situated on a narrow cobble stone street covering an acre of land and encircling two arcaded patios. One of the oldest buildings in Alamos, it was once the home of Padre Quiros, first archbishop of Sonora. Later it was a convent and school.

There are tales of secret tunnels connecting the house with the church which is fully two blocks away. There are also fascinating stories told in Alamos of buried treasure there – that subsequent owners had buried silver bars and other valuables beneath the floors when the revolution swept the country. Restoration has been done with great care by Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Gordon, the present owners. Even the furnishings of Casa de las Tesoros have been designed after 16th century patterns and the Old World atmosphere and charm has been successfully preserved throughout.

Alamos should be seen by foot travel, but for those who wish to make an exciting, fun-provoking trip about the city, the old style coach with a Mexican horse team and driver, should be taken over the cobble stone streets. It costs 10 pesos or 80 cents a person to have this experience. We can assure you that it is a bumpy ride but lots of fun.

Alvin and Darley Gordon, the owners and operators of Casa de las Tesoros, have a right to fame all their own. They became like old friends when we learned that they resided in Sonoma County, California, when they were not in Mexico, that they were the authors of "Our Son, Pablo," which we had read and enjoyed several years ago, and furthermore that they both were very fond of the Monterey Peninsula.

"Our Son, Pablo" is the true story of a Tarascan Indian boy from a primitive mountain village in Mexico, who was "adopted" by the Gordons so that he might be educated at the University of California and then go back to help his own people. Pablo first met Mr. and Mrs. Gordon in the Mexican State of Michoacan. He had been assigned as their guide and counselor in the filming of the documentary movie "Mexico Builds a Democracy."

Ms. Gordon informed us that Pablo was now an ethnologist carrying on a rehabilitation program for a large group of Mexican Indians not of his own tribe. He is now a married man and has a baby daughter who has been named "Suranda," which translated into Tarascan means "soot colored."

One reason why Casa de las Tesoros has such an appeal for the American tourist, who is either worried about eating typical Mexican dishes or just plain prefers American dishes, is the fact that Alvin J. Gordon is a true gourmet and personally supervises the kitchen.

He traveled on the continent at a young man studying in Switzerland, France and England. He acted and stage managed with E.E. Clive's Copley Players in Boston and with the Morningside Players at Columbia University. He majored in Fine Arts at Harvard and then decided to go into the production of documentary films. He produced a film in Italy and then went to work in the production department of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, before failing in love with Mexico.

Mrs. Gordon almost grew up with Columbia University where she was a guinea pig for the kindergarten department and on up. She attended Skidmore, University of Wisconsin and Barnard before beginning a career as dancing instructor. She and her husband once had a studio in San Francisco. For several years they produced documentary films independently, or for various government agencies. They not only feel sympathetic toward, but greatly admire, our neighbors to the south, they both declare.