

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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House of Treasure

We enjoyed a surprise visit a few days ago from Alvin and Darley Gordon of Sonoma County in California and Alamos in the state of Sonora in Mexico. The reunion was delightful for several years ago we spent an all too short a vacation in their Hotel Casa de los Tesoros (House of Treasure), in Alamos known as the silver city of the Sierra Madre. We have never recovered from a longing to go back and experience again the beauty and antiquity of this place which is now a Government Colonial Monument.

A monument in Mexico means that the physical aspects of the city must remain unaltered. Arcades cannot give way to glass fronts, cobblestones to blacktop, nor wrought iron corner lamps to neon signs. The truly magnificent architecture, almost perfect climate, and complete tranquility are attracting American tourists who wish to escape from the stresses and strains of the atomic era. Alamos seems to be almost a shrine for those Mexicans who are descendants of the founding families. The Gordons repeat: "So long as there are miners, so long as legends of fabulous wealth persist, the fascination of Alamos will never die. Perhaps tomorrow may bring another golden era to the sleepy town at Alamos."

Alvin and Darley Gordon spent their summers in California and the winter season in Alamos. Before setting in "The House of Treasure" these two adventurous people had made documentary films in Mexico. They had set up the Audio-Visual department for the secretary of education. They had written a book about a Tarascan Indian boy, "Our Son Pablo." They had brought this young boy out of Mexico and sent him to the University of California from their home in Berkeley. He is now married and in educational work in Mexico City.

As they tell the story: "Perhaps, we dreamed, we could find an old colonial ruin on the West Coast of Mexico, restore it, and during the winter months, at least, devote ourselves to writing." But plans do change, as dreamers do, and the Gordons became innkeepers instead although writing still has a place in their busy lives.

Quoting from another bit of Gordon writing, to which we heartily agree, is this description of Alamos: "This is the first place on the West Coast that looked like the Old Mexico that everyone dreams about; arcaded streets, patios teeming with colorful flowers and tropical plants, sparkling sunlight, deep blue skies, elegant ruins silent witnesses of a romantic past . . . the big silver barons, the expeditions to found Los Angeles and San Francisco."

Alvin and Darley Gordon's latest venture is the writing of a cookbook, "Our Treasure House," beginning with the story of their arrival in Alamos, the purchase of a ruin, restoring it, and the opening for guests. We arrived soon after that big event and have eaten of Alvin's excellent cooking, sat at the handsomely set old and long table where all the guests become acquainted, and thoroughly enjoyed all the surprise menus as repeated in the new cook book.

A week or menus at the Casa de los Tesoros is mouthwatering, then follows Alvin's recipes for consommés and soups, second courses and lunch dishes, fish, fowl, meats, vegetables and his favorite Mexican dishes, ending with desserts.

We are sorry but there is no mention of a publisher or a printer, but we are sure the Gordons would love having our readers visit Alamos and eat of the food and perhaps purchase one of these delightful books in the gift shop which they also manage in an ancient adobe building, recently purchased, across the cobblestone street from the Treasure House.