

# Mary Jo's Wedding in Piedra Negras, Mexico

## June, 1968

### Leaving Canton

At 6:30 Sunday evening May 26, the phone rang; Mary Jo was at the airport. I had forgotten to bring in the mail. She spent the three days sorting out momentos, visiting and having open house on Tuesday night. Our visitor's permits didn't come until Wednesday for us to leave Thursday. The last time Mary said to me, "Don't be late at the airport." Our plane left at 9:00 a.m. - 8:45 and no Mary. While<sup>T</sup>and Mary Jo said their slushy, gushy Good-byes. I started to find a phone, and there she was. Jamie was very uncooperative, full pants at the wrong time. A very nice trip to San Antonio where we were met by Romi, a good looking, plumpish, very nervous boy, meeting his future mother-in-law for the first time. We didn't know when Mike was coming in, except he had said he would not be going through Chicago. After we checked the air lines, we decided he would be in at 9 P.M.

So off to the Hemisfair! The United Pavilion was the best we saw, ending with seeing yourself walking down the hall on a TV screen. Romi picked an Indian (Asian) because they had cold beer. They gave us a sample of the food and then we ordered, barbecued chicken (legs slashed to the bone with a different sauce), excellent cubes of beef in a dark sauce, rice curry and pan - flat bread as a huge pancake cooked on the grill and lavishly buttered. The meal was very good but the beer was warm. The Mexican Pavilion has a group of Mariachi, musicians in long tight black pants, with silver down the sides, short tight jackets and huge hats. They performed on a wooden platform in the water. Every one of the twelve had excellent voices, Romi said they were some of Mexico's best. Got lost on the way to the airport and got there at 9 P.M. on the nose only to find the plane would be 50 minutes late. Just as we were

settling ourselves for a wait, Mike walked up, we guessed the wrong plane.

A long sleepy ride to Eagle Pass, passing some roadblocks for wetbacks trying to get into U.S. and so to bed. Friday morning, Griselda, Romi's sister that lives in Eagle Pass, took us to Piedra Negras to shop and they were to see the priest. They came into the restaurant, furious just going to have the civil ceremony, no dance, no reception, no nothing. He said they could not be married without the permission of the priest of the parish where Mary Jo lived, and he had refused before. They had this all fixed 2 weeks, but this is a drinking priest and he had not written it down and had forgotten. So Griselda and I calmed them down and sent them on their way and we went to see the priest in Eagle Pass. Thank goodness, he wasn't home so we went to see Father Slattery, the head of the Diocese, who said Mary Jo had done an excellent job and he liked her. He made the phone call across the river and all went smoothly for the present.

Griselda and her husband, Edmund, took us to a very nice restaurant in Piedra Negras for a late dinner. We had cabrito (goat to you peasants). We had refused it at noon, when the waiter told us what their luncheon special was. It was tender, sweet and tasted almost like lamb. We all ate too much so we went home early and Mike and Romi went out on the town. I guess they got home all right, because they were among the living in the morning.

### **The Wedding**

On Saturday, Mary Jo and Romi had a rude awakening -- "if you want a thing done, you do it yourself." The rehearsal went badly, and nobody showed up to help decorate the hall. The other girls all got their hair done but Mary Jo had to do her own for lack of time. Confusion reigned supreme at her house and we weren't sure we would ever get her into her strapless bra. I'm sure the sadist torturer invented them. But,

she finally emerged looking very beautiful (and I'm not prejudiced). Mike looked very handsome and Mary and I were nothing to sneer at. The dress was a long empire style of crepe and lace with an illusion veil and she carried white roses. The Maid of Honor, Ada Holzauer (the girl from Washington that she has been living with) wore a bright pink flowered chiffon over pink with shoes to match and a hat with a large rose and veil and she carried a single mammoth rose with the stem covered with satin. The two bridesmaids, Mary and Julie, both girls from Eagle Pass, that worked with Mary Jo, wore the reverse of Ada's gown. Bright pink chiffon over the flowered shift. They were both very beautiful. Romi's mother is a very good looking woman, that does not look 65, and she has had 13 children. She wore an aqua knit suit and hat to match. I wore a white cotton lace (very rough like) with buttons down the front and long sleeves. We both had white roses. Mary wore a bright pink knit shift that just matched the attendants' dresses.

### **Priest Drunk**

When we arrived at the church, very old and rustic, the 6 o'clock wedding had not ended, so we waited outside and somebody came and said the kids didn't have a something I thought was a license, and it was very confusing, but it turned out to be a lasso, a double rosary they use in a Mexican wedding. One of the girls went and got one down the street, and Mary Jo was very upset when she found out 3 days that it had cost \$15.00, when normal ones are \$3.00. Romi's sister said she couldn't get out of the car, and she almost died of the heat. Finally down the aisle they came, Mary Jo on Mike's arm, looking like something from Vogue even after all the SNAFU. Mike was very serious and performed his job perfectly. I forget to mention that Romi's brother, Deede (the best man) had introduced Mike to the local bars in the afternoon. When the kids were kneeling before the priest (me weeping gallons, of course, just like an old fat idiot and I said it), he looked at Mary Jo and said, "Linda Something" and she said, "No, Mary

Jo” and he shuffled the pages of his book and looked at Romi and said “John Something.” He had been imbibing again, but he finally got straightened out and all went well, but I am glad they also have a civil ceremony down there, because the priest insists that he doesn’t need to write down the records –he remembers them all.

## **The Reception**

On the way to the hall, we stopped to buy gin for the punch. I had bought the juices in the afternoon, they also had beer and pop. The dance was to be outside and the tables and food were to be inside. Somebody, a friend, had baked a beautiful wedding cake that tasted like one of my failures, before box cakes. Then a group of women had made chicken salad (35 chickens), potato salad and their local macaroni salad. They use lard as the basis for the dressing, and I had to hide mine at another table. I could not eat it and Ada said it was excellent. As Mike says, it’s all relative.

When the newlyweds got there, we had the grand march around the dance floor ending with a dance, and, in the confusion, Mary got left on the dance floor without a partner and was very embarrassed until she started to laugh. Guess what happened next - it rained and everything had to be moved inside. I danced almost every dance with either Mike, Romi, Edmund or Frenchy, Vivian’s brother. The high point of the evening was when Mary Jo and Romi sang the song he wrote, “On This Our Wedding Night.” They sing very well together, only she said he tried to get closest to the microphone and he said she was trying to upstage him. It should be a basis for many happy hours in their marriage, both playing the guitar and singing. I’m sure if they tried they could even make a living at it. Romi tried it once but says that it is hard work. After they left, Mike took us home, because he had to catch a plane at 9:25 a.m. Sunday morning in San Antonio -- three long hours of driving away.

## San Antonio Side-Trip

We didn't even know how to get him there until Frenchy lent us a car. No car rentals in Eagle Pass. He went to the dance but it was over and the cops tried to get \$3.00 out of him for a dance license which we already had. And the manager wouldn't let him bring back Mary Jo's bicycle because supposedly they owed him \$14.00, which had also been paid. On Sunday morning, we got up at 6:00 and we were on our way with Ada (who was going home at 5:00 P.M.) and Juan, her boyfriend. About an hour our, the car started to smoke and we made a quick stop but all was well. We got to the airport at 9:05 and they were making the last call for Mike's plane, evidently we were lucky again.

Mary and I saw the rest of the Hemisfair and walked along the San Antonio River. They have an open air theater, the stage is on one side of the river and the seats on the other. They are terraced grass with stone on the seats. There are art displays, ceramics, cafes and all kinds of little shops along the river with sidewalks. We got back to Eagle Pass about 6:00 and tried to find a laundromat. Everyone spoke only Spanish. We finally found it by driving up and down all the main streets. Very poor and very dirty but it did the job. We decided to go across the river to get Frenchy a couple of bottles for lending us the car. I left Mary off and drove around the block, but because of the torn-up streets, I got lost. I went wrong on a one way street and then really was confused. I could just see me dying there and nobody would ever find me. Poor Mary - standing on the corner with two bottles in a foreign land!! Finally, we got together and then, going across the river, the car showed hot and started to steam. I was really scared. We had to first declare the booze and then find a filling station. It was only the air-conditioner. So again we were lucky. When we got back to the house, Mary Jo and Romi came by to tell us they were going to Mexico City with us, using the money the Yokes, the Worthens and T. Zettler had given to them.

So, on Monday, we moved Mary Jo's junk to Romi's house, cleaned the cupboards and ice box. We had tortillas and bologna for lunch, then rushed like mad to get the 3:00 P.M. bus. Dee took us over with a stop at Customs. When I asked, "Quanta Questa?" one man looked at the other and asked him. They were very crestfallen when Romi pointed out to them that it said "gratis" on front. If we had been alone, I'm sure there would have been a charge. When we got to the bus station, and the boys had left, we found out there were no seats until 9:00 P.M. their time, 10 P.M. our time. So, we walked the streets of Piedras Negras for 7 hours.

### **Poker With Her New Son-in-Law**

We went into a nice bar and Romi rented a guitar for \$2.00 and sang to us for an hour or so. Mary Jo joined in when she knew the song. We walked some more and then ate and played poker on the table. Mary had never played before. Romi said my gang would never believe this. Playing poker with my Mother-in-law in the back room of a restaurant on my honeymoon. Before the night was over, he wished he were back there. They assign seats in the bus and Romi and Mary Jo were on the back one, which turned to be the hot seat from the motor. They kept changing when anybody left the bus, but then would have to give the seat up when anybody came in with that no. We all slept, woke up, slept, stopped to go at the dirtiest restrooms I have ever seen. Mary wouldn't use the first one but, by the next stop, necessity reigned supreme. We finally got a good driver that gave MJ & Romi a front seat.

## Third World Shock - 1

The poverty of the natives along the road was unbelievable. Women watching 1 or 2 cattle along the road with their 1 room hovels in the background. At each station, even in the middle of the night, there were children begging. The edge of Mexico City is a good hour from the bus station. We arrived about 5 P.M. and, when we asked about accommodations, a taxi driver took us to La Rivera where we could walk to the downtown. It was a very nice hotel, very cheap - \$6.00 a night for a double twin bedroom. We walked all over the first night and the next day took a cab tour of the Virgin of Guadeloupe Church, a church that had been under water for 200 years and the pyramids of the Sun and Moon.

We got finished too late for the other tour so we hunted for an Italian restaurant and found a very posh one, very bad one for lasagna. That night we went to the square of the Mariachi. About 100 Mariachi all over a square surrounded restaurants and bars. All were dressed in the traditional black and they sang and played in groups, wherever anybody would pay. They charged \$1.00 a song. In the restaurant, they were led by a man that must have weighed 250 lbs. And he was the singer. Very romantic! We had Chicken Mole and Mary had a steak that she couldn't chew. That famous Texas Beef is nowhere near as good as Ohio beef. They sang 2 songs for us in the restaurant with Romi singing along.

As we walked to get a cab, Romi had them play a waltz and he and I were going to dance, but I chickened out, it was pouring.

On Thursday morning, we started the tour at 8:00 a.m. so that we would be done in time for the plane. We went to the cleanest zoo I have ever seen. It had just been scrubbed all over. We had never before seen white peacocks. One was evidently doing a mating dance; his tail was

spread and he was scooting around a female on light feet making noises. We then took a long trip through Maximillain's castle - they really knew how to live in those days, especially if you had a zillion peasants paying taxes. After a tour of the beautiful homes, we raced back to the hotel got our bags, paid our bill, another teary good-bye (I'm getting better - they are shorter and shorter. I may someday quit it, but I doubt it. I might have to have a psychiatrist by then.) and off to Teguci.

### **South to Honduras**

We stopped in Guatemala, where we get free coffee and then they take your money in the slot machines. We weren't sure Toby and Eleanor would meet us in San Salvador but they did and Toby had reservations in La Neuva Mondo - The New World. It was a 75 year old hotel with 15 foot ceilings, the manager told us the walls were only 1-1/2" thick because of earthquakes. Our rooms looked out French doors to the public square and it was fascinating watching the people. There was a beggar woman with 5 children including a nursing baby, native women carrying enormous packages on their heads, men sweeping the street with brooms made from branches (just like the witches in stories) - all kind of street salesmen including a man that washed the cabs with 2 gallon cans of water and an old rag, and then there were well dressed business men going to the large bank that even had a 6 story parkade.

The first night Toby took us to an elegant restaurant at about 8:00 p.m. and we were the only ones there. We wondered what was wrong because there were 6 or 8 waiters standing around. IT seems that they dine at 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. It was a luscious meal. Toby had duck with oranges prepared at the table. Eleanor had their special shrimp and Mary and I shared a paella for two. Rice with chicken, ham, shrimp, lobster, but they left the shells in. You learn something almost every day.



Friday, we went on a tour of the countryside. A volcanic lake and then to Panchimalco, where the Pancho Indians live - pure-blooded descendants of the original Pipil tribes. The road was very steep with large cobblestones and, through open doors, we could see children sitting at rough wooden desks. They were about the color of the ground that looks like the red soil of Georgia. The houses were all adobe and we could see in many. They have lived the same way for a long time. On the square was a very large Ceiba tree with a lot of the roots exposed and the trunk must have been 15-20 feet in diameter. Under it was a man in a white suite, a pharmaceutical salesman, and he took us through the 400 year old church with all the statues and stations made by the Indians. They were very unusual and included 2 or 3 in glass boxes like coffins that they use on their feast days and for parades. I think we were lucky again we got up the hill! After touring the town, seeing the embassy, we ended with hamburgers and malts, and a movie. There were no hamburger joints in Teguci. I think we were the only people in the hotel, because the girl served our breakfast and then we walked to the second and she was cleaning our room. When we came home before 11, the door was locked and we had to ring to be let in.

We started to Teguci Saturday morning taking the ocean route, very beautiful and that part of the country looked very fertile. They tell us that the whole country was brown 2 weeks ago and, after the rains start, you can almost see it turning green. We stopped on the ocean and ate on the shore and Toby & Eleanor went swimming. Toby was wearing a pair of Mike's shorts that he had left at Mary Jo's and Toby adopted. The drive up here is pretty bad, mountains, mountains, mountains and we had a good driver. The last hour was in the dark and we could see into the huts. The light, heat and cooking facilities was a charcoal fire, the animals wandered in and out of the open doors and Mary Jo, I think they could use your Planned Parenthood. Children and animals were abundant. We arrived at Toby's for a very Grandmotherly reception. All are well and it was just like Christmas!

Sunday, it rained and we went up on the mountain to see the house that the TTZ's may move into, if they can find anybody to rent theirs. On Monday, Toby stayed home to show us the town, but, in the morning, 2 Honduran children showed up at the front door with a fawn to sell. He finally talked to Eleanor into giving it a 24 hour trial. It would stay only in the living room and ate there and did his various little duties there also. She was beautiful, but, after a few cleanups, she looked a little ratty to me. Thank goodness they came after her the next day. He had given them 7 L and we weren't sure they would come back. They didn't have the money, but, by that time, they were just glad to see Faulina go. *Toby paid them to take him back.*

### **Toby Gets Foreign Service Promotion**

Big news, Toby got his first promotion today, he is now FSO 6 instead of FSO 7. It means a raise and also a raise in housing allowance, that must be used for housing or you don't get it. So, they will be moving to a larger house soon. This Friday, he takes a language test that he must pass before he can get anymore promotions, but he says no sweat. He has been reading the newspaper to us for practice (it is oral) and that we hear some of the news. More rain as Toby lusciously barbecued chickens for us and the neighbors. More rain and it comes just like somebody opened a faucet.

Jody and Toby gave us a guitar concert in the evening, and we thought it was lovely - Kirt had given us one on Sunday. More rain! Took a walk through the cobblestone streets Wednesday afternoon. The houses are built right up to the sidewalk, where there is a sidewalk, and you can see through the open doors. Lots of them have a wooden gate in the doorway to keep the kids in and the dogs out. I think there at least 1 dog for each man, woman and child. Most of the front rooms are like 12' X 12" with a little furniture and a burlap sack full of something.

Maybe beans. These little streets wind around and usually end very suddenly, they are very rough traveling for a car.

### **Omar Gets Third World Disease**

I met El, Mary, Omar & Jody as I was coming up a hill. Omar has shown up with amoeba and worms, and they were on their way to the Drs. Eleanor is angry, because she had been so tired, but her test showed nothing wrong. She was hoping for a rest cure. Jody got out and we started to walk downtown and around a corner came Kirt. So we walked over and bought breadsticks and cookies, when it started to pour. We wrapped Kirt's jacket around the food and walked home in a pouring-down rain. Typical Zettler's reaction - save the food! More rain and no lights for a couple of hours. We went next door for a very luscious meal and some drinks and, when Toby started to fall asleep, we came home. I'll bet Daddy never expected to be famous in Teguci. Erik has told everybody about the burping contests that he and Grandpa have. He even braced his legs, spread them far apart to show me how.

Toby passed his language test and is therefore off language probation forever. Saturday the big kids and the 10 year old girl, Debbie, from next door took Mary and I into town. We walked all over and Kirt got a knife and Jody got a wallet, and then we ate lunch in a combination bakery & restaurant. Eleanor made us Bouillabaisse, and then felt lousy so she went to bed without eating. We had some hot bingo, poker, monopoly, Pirate & Traveller, rummy and fish games over the weekend. Omar had been feeling badly, his tests had shown worms and amoeba.

Sunday morning about 8:00 a.m., I heard the maid calling, Senore Omar and something. Omar had started coughing and when he stopped a 6 or 7 inch long white worm had come up through his mouth. The Dr. said it wasn't unusual. He seemed to feel fine, but there wasn't much

breakfast eaten around here. This is Tuesday and he has had no trouble since.

### **Third World Shock -2**

Sunday Toby rented a Jeep from the Embassy and drove us all over the impossible streets of Teguci. They are unbelievable. Straight up and narrow with the houses coming out to the narrow sidewalk. You can see right into some of them from the car. And believe me, Girls, count your blessings! We are all millionaires! As Mike says, "It's all relative!" I'm sure there are not many women as old as Mary and I, they just can't last that long. Hard work, not enough food, too many babies, dirt, disease, and the worst living in one room with all the animals and the smoke of a charcoal fire going all over everything. Most of the children under 6 or 7 wear no clothes, and I'm sure most of the grownups wear the same clothes day and night, for a long time.

### **Dante's Birthday**

Tuesday was Dante's birthday party. Pinada, cake, presents and he almost exhausted himself trying to blow some candles out. They were the kind that relight themselves. Tuesday night Toby took us out to dinner (he wore his sneakers) to a German restaurant about 5 miles up the mountain. A 56-year old man and his wife and 18 year old daughter came on a freighter a couple of years ago and opened a restaurant in Teguci. They didn't like all the people so they bought an old home on the mountain. Now they are so busy on Sunday we couldn't get near the place. She does all the cooking, he raises the vegetables, chickens, ducks, turkeys, pigs, and is building a house. The restaurant has engulfed them, all they have is a bedroom where all three sleep plus the biggest German shepherd dog that I have ever seen. Their daughter serves you and you must have reservations. On nice days you can be served in the yard a tables Mr. Kortz has made. We had roast beef,

spinach, potatoes, gravy, chocolate pudding, cognac and coffee - all delicious and served family style. They greet you and talk to you the whole time just like you are old friends. He came to our table and told Toby to finish his meat, he speaks only German and it makes conversation difficult. It is unbelievable! Coming to a strange country at that age and starting a new business, and they are not fond of Hondurans. She won't let them do anything but the dishes. And his brother is the German Consulate in Cleveland. They are also going to smoke hams in the fall, making Toby very happy as hams are almost non-available here. The ride down the mountain is something, too. Cows, goats and horses wander all over the road and there was a mist. Toby woke up this morning looking very oriental, his face all swollen like Monica used to look when she had dermatitis. He just came home, and around his face and neck is an allergy and around his middle is some kind of bites. I think he will live. This is Wednesday and we are to start home tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. but after calling every day for a week, we are only confirmed as far as Mexico.

### **Return to Canton**

So, if you don't hear from us by Christmas, you'll know we are working as a maid and cook for Toby. He will pay us 60L a month and a day a week off. They just fired the cook because of her disposition, so I'm sure I won't last long. See you later -