

Manzanillo

March 2016

SUN

Manzanillo's Lifestyle E-Magazine

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R.I.P.

You Are Always In Our Hearts

Freda Anne Vickery-Rumford

24 May 1934 - 27 February 2016

A Manzanillo Sun Founder and Editor,
loving wife, mother, grandmother
and a friend to many everywhere

photo courtesy of Kirby Vickery

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A Lucky Escape... and a new car door mirror

by John Chalmers

We don't regard driving in Mexico as dangerous, but I have always felt that one can't be too careful and defensive driving should be practiced. I sometimes feel that a driver should spend almost as much time looking in all rear view mirrors as time spent looking through the windshield! Sometimes a car will come from behind, seemingly out of nowhere and pass at high speed, quite unexpectedly.

Just like in Canada or the U.S., a single or double solid line on a two-lane highway means no passing – unless you can get away with it! Often we will see an oncoming car passing on a solid line as it comes towards us, and caution necessitates giving it room to go by. On the other hand, slower vehicles will often pull over to let vehicles pass, even though a solid line is present.



Miguel, left, and John at the auto wrecking yard – new friends with matching beards!

Some practices take getting used to, as they are not seen at home. In some urban areas, the retorno lane for a left turn or a U-turn is a third, and far right lane. When cross-traffic is stopped, a left turn green arrow indicates permission to make that turn, which feels a little odd, passing across two lanes of stopped traffic on the left, facing the same way as driving in the retorno lane. On one occasion, we had the green arrow for a left turn and while one lane was stopped, a local bus ran a red light. As per my usual practice, I had made a shoulder check to ensure safety. Had I turned just

when the light changed, I wouldn't be at my keyboard writing this account!

Nevertheless, having driven extensively in Mexico on urban roads, two-lane highways and the excellent divided four-lane "cuotas", or toll roads, we have had no misfortune. Until now.

On February 13, Linda and I were driving home in our little Nissan Platina from a day trip to Colima, the capital city of the state of Colima, in which we are located. It's an hour and a half drive. Our condo is in a development right on the west coast, a little north of Mexico's port city, Manzanillo. Colima is about 135 kilometers from where we spend our time when it is winter in Alberta. After leaving the urban area here, the highway is an excellent divided four-lane cuota for the entire drive.

Coming home on the 13th, a strange set of circumstances occurred that could have led to disaster. As we were driving, we saw a parachutist descending from the sky a little ahead of our position. It looked like he might be landing very close to the highway.



The door mirror is gone!

As we got closer, we saw a large, all-purpose vehicle had slowed down to a dangerously slow speed in our lane and had its tail lights flashing but never pulled over to the side of the road. We thought it may have been a chase vehicle for the parachutist, or maybe just a curious motorist.

It was not safe to follow that vehicle at a slow speed. I checked my mirror to see if anyone was behind me, then checked the outside mirror on the driver's side, then made a shoulder check as I turned on my signal light to indicate I was going to pass the vehicle.

In a split second, things changed. Suddenly there was a crash as another car sped past us. We were hit, and parts went flying through the air. The passing vehicle swerved ahead of us in the other lane, straightened out and continued on to stop ahead of us.

We immediately pulled off the highway and got out to check the damage. The left outside mirror was gone. Above the left rear wheel well there was an abrasion in the paint where the other vehicle made contact. Fortunately there was no damage to the driver's door or any windows. We could see that the other car stopped well ahead of us and four people got out to check their vehicle.



Treasure at the auto wrecker's!

For a minute or so back in the car, we sat there rather stunned, already grateful that the accident wasn't more serious. Then we could see the driver of the other car walking towards us. We knew we should meet him and see if anything was to be done. We drove up to the young man and put the window down.

He said something in Spanish, to which I replied, "No hablo español. ¿Habla usted Inglés?" He replied, "Yes, a little. Are you okay? Is anyone hurt?"

"No. We are okay," I replied, "but I have lost my mirror." To which he said, "Yes, and I lost the mirror on my car." He had passed us so close that his outside right mirror hit our left mirror and both were knocked off.

"Is anyone hurt in your car, and are you all okay?" I asked.

"Yes, we are all fine," he answered. The last thing I wanted was to call the police or get involved in a discussion about damages and responsibility. "So is that all?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "Where are you going?"

"To Manzanillo," I answered.

"Me, too," he said. "That's where I live."

Then he offered his hand. I shook it. We drove away and he walked back to his car. Soon we were up to highway speed, about 90 or 100 kilometers per hour. Two or three minutes later I looked in my main rear view mirror and saw his car approaching rapidly. It passed us at an estimated 130 kilometers per hour, was soon out of sight, and we never saw it again. In the remaining 45 minutes driving home, I kept watch for other vehicles, looking in the rear view mirror, the right door mirror, and from force of habit, at the missing left mirror, which reminded me repeatedly that it was gone.



At the wrecker's, waiting for the mirror



Installing the mirror

It took a few days for the replacement mirror to arrive. When it did, it was a new mirror, not a used one, and Miguel's cost was considerably more than the price he originally quoted me. Miguel apologized, said it was his mistake, and we settled with him being reimbursed at his cost. One of his workers installed the mirror for me, just a small job, but appreciated.



A security rooster on patrol!

Fortunately, there is a roadside auto wrecker less than 10 minutes away from where we live, just a kilometer from where our access road meets the highway. There I met the proprietor, Miguel, who soon found a replacement mirror in the shop, but it was one that is adjusted manually. Our car has power mirrors. So Miguel phoned to order a mirror for me, presumably a used power mirror from one of his contacts.

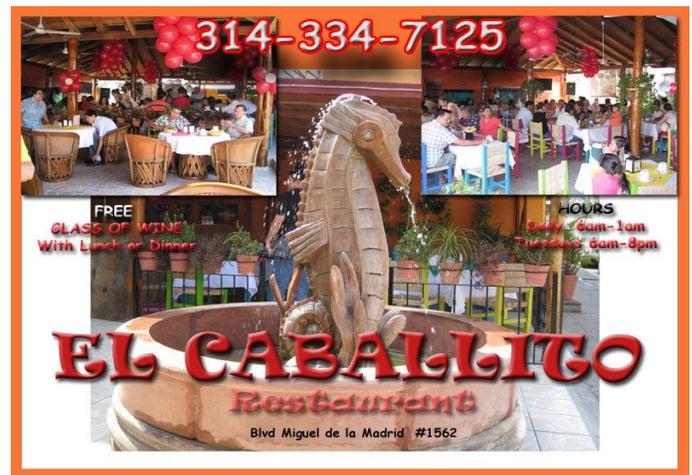
Now we are driving more defensively than ever! What did I get out of this experience, besides escaping what could have been a very serious accident? A new mirror, a new friend, and another story about México.

Meanwhile, there was only some white paint from the other car on my fender where the two vehicles made contact. A few minutes spent with a rubbing compound removed all traces of contact. There was no body damage – either to us or the car!

Gotta love México... and drive safely!



At the wrecker's waiting for the mirror



March

by Kirby Vickery

March is a busy month¹. Mardi Gras and Ash Wednesday visit from year to year. Saint David's Day is celebrated on the 1st. Saint Patrick's Day comes on the 17th, and Saint Joseph's is observed on the 19th. The Vernal Equinox arrives from the 19th to the 21st of the month. This is one of two times during the year that the night time hours are equal to the day time hours. Daylight Saving Time is turned on in the United States, and in several other countries, to allow more use of the morning hours for the summer. Its use and uniform implementation aren't there. Arizona does not use it because it keeps the outside workers out in the hot sun an extra hour in the summer (and you thought it was political).

Most of the countries in the tropics don't use it because it doesn't make any difference to them. This means that if we ever give appliance service support to places like Guam and Tahiti then we possibly wouldn't have our hour shift change twice a year.

Most people think that the United States first acknowledged daylight saving time in the 1960's under President Kennedy. Actually, the first American to be involved was Ben Franklin, in 1784, when he published an essay suggesting that the people of Paris get up earlier in the summer to avoid burning so much candle wax in the summer.

The first person who was serious about it was an Englishman in 1907. Mr. William Willett couldn't get the British government to pass it. In our country, Congress established the four time zones we use today on March 19, 1918. Daylight Saving was initiated at that time as part of the same bill but was repealed in 1919 because it was so unpopular.

Mexico established their daylight saving time in 1996. The people in the Yukon not only observe daylight saving time but skew their clocks an additional hour, doubling it. There are still many places which don't observe daylight saving because of the difficulties incurred with its passing every year. Some people don't like the darker mornings. Others say the energy peak in the morning is too high while still others show financial loss because of it and still others point to sleep disruption caused by the change has a

significant increase in fatal accidents the weekend after the change.

Because my afternoon time is a lot more valuable to my personal life than the morning times, I am happy that Arizona doesn't recognize it. Maoist China had one time zone for the entire country without any daylight saving.

I counted 19 presidents' birthdays in March. I also counted 39 other people whom I recognized as popular names who also had their birthdays in March. I wonder if this is a result of all the June brides we used to hear so much about. That could be something to think over for awhile.

The word "March" for this month comes from the Roman god of war, "MARS." It's the same name used for the red planet. This month, named after the god of war, was "Martius." To the Romans, this was the first month of their calendar before the winter months of January and February were added about 700 BC.

March in Arizona is a month of changing weather and the beginnings of spring. The plants that made it through that three-day freeze will bloom and you will start to see daylight earlier in the morning and later in the evening by four minutes each day. Enjoy!!!!

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¹ Most of the information in this essay was obtained from:
www.wikipedia.org



AT THE MOVIES

Suzanne A. Marshall

THE EXPERIMENTER (Netflix)

Starring: Peter Sarsgaard, Winona Ryder, Taryn Manning
Director: Michael Almereyda

"In 1961, famed social psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted a series of radical behavior experiments that tested ordinary humans' willingness to obey authority."

The art direction for this film really makes it seem like you are back in the early sixties. The wardrobes, lighting, sound and graininess of the images have that older quality (some of us may remember) lending to the feeling that you've stepped back fifty plus years in history. And of course you have. There are even some short scenes that are shot with black and white mattes in the background giving the impression of watching a stage play.

The essence of this true story is Milgram's experimentations with human behavior and volunteers who are literally asked to proceed through various project phases even though they believe that they are causing another person discomfort and pain. They are caught between being good volunteers helping with a study, while going against their own moral values simply because they



are being asked to do it. It's like a test of obedience. In one instance the behavioural comparison was likened to the Nazi death camps during the Second World War where so many people obeyed orders as part of the extermination process. They seemed compelled to do it for a higher authority.

Understandably, these experiments and the results were subject to great scrutiny and moral debate among the academic community. I found this movie both interesting and disturbing to say the least. The roles played by the cast were top notch.

IMBD rated this movie as 6.6/10 based on 5,832 + viewers.

monkey's

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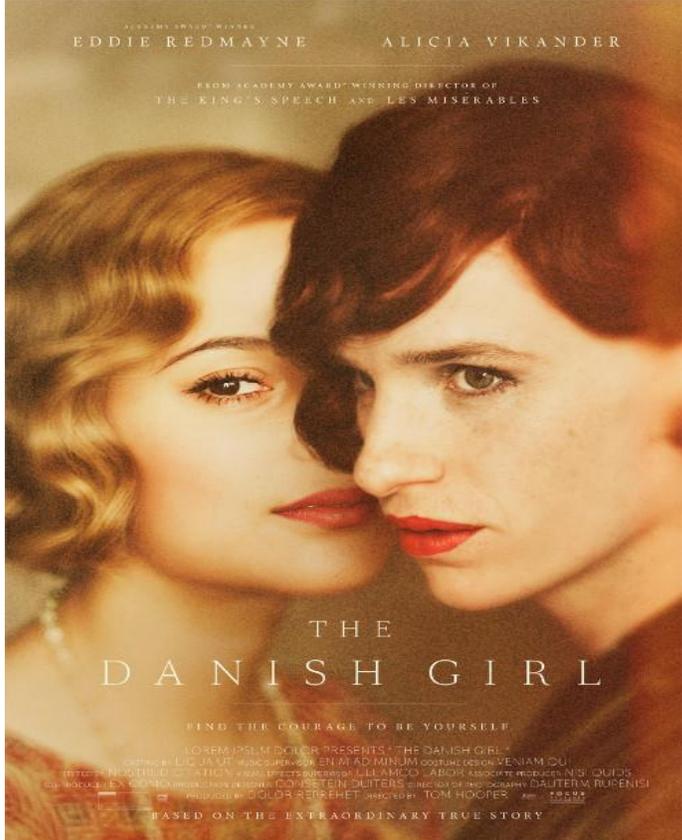
THE DANISH GIRL

Starring: Eddie Redmayne, Alicia Vikander, Amber Heard
Director: Tom Hooper

“A fictitious love story loosely inspired by the lives of Danish artists Lili Elbe and Gerda Wegener. Lili and Gerda’s marriage and work evolve as they navigate Lili’s groundbreaking journey as a transgender pioneer.”

Beautifully filmed on locations in Denmark this story takes us back to the nineteen twenties and thirties. The cinematography and costuming are equally as elegant and alluring as the performances. Alicia Vikander is simply amazing in her supporting role and is nominated for an Oscar. Eddie Redmayne ‘in this truly challenging role as ‘Lili’, is nominated for an Oscar yet again this year.

This is an amazing story. Based loosely on the diaries of ‘Lili’ it represents the emotional conflict of an individual born as a physical male yet feeling completely female from an emotional and psychological perspective. Or, one might say a female trapped in the body of a male. We are shown the intimate lives of these two artists as they struggle with the traditional aspects of a heterosexual marriage and friendship. As the story progresses, we watch “Lili” transform from play acting a female character for fun, to the evolving need to be the ‘woman’ being portrayed. Gerda herself, is caught between the loss of her ‘husband’ as she knows him, her love and compassion for ‘Lili’ as a friend and a human being whom she loves unconditionally.



These are tender complicated portrayals by these actors and quite gut-wrenchingly sad as they rearrange their lives and support each other until the bitter end.

IMDB rated this movie as 6.9/10 based on 35,800+ viewers. It’s better than this.




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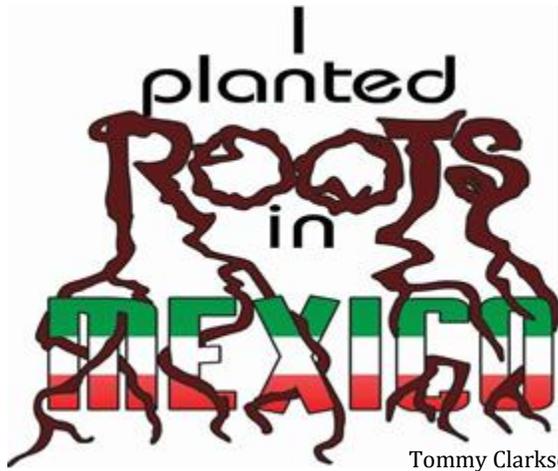
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Tommy Clarkson

Ptychosperma furcatum No Common name
Family: *Arecaceae*

How embarrassing! Early on, for no little time, I told folks that this beauty was a Fishtail Palm. “*Wrongo palm wine breath!*”

In reality, this delightful clustering palm, from southeastern Papua in New Guinea, isn’t even in the *Caryota* family! So my gaffe’ was somewhat similar to introducing your Ulster born and raised, Irish cousin Sean O’Brien as Dylan Davies from Ammanford, Wales!

For correction of this mistake I wish to thank my pal, Dr. Felix Montez – retired cardiologist, collector of palms from all around the world and owner of Tropical America outside of Puerto Vallarta.

Suffice it to say that I am more than a bit chagrined at this misidentification and incorrect information disseminated. I’ll salve my abraded ego with the recognition that there is substantive confusion even among the professionals as to the specific identification of this palm but, honestly, at least they have it in the correct genus. So I will simply have to console myself with the old saw that “To err is human” and the recognition that, accordingly, I am a superlative example of the species!

Mea culpas complete, allow me to state that few are those who seem to have much of any awareness – let alone specific information – on the *Ptychosperma furcatum*. Extensive, studied perusal of volume after volume of my tropical plant and palm books netted little.



With no common name, this delightful clustering palm comes from southeastern Papua in New Guinea.

Were it not for the botanical greats such as Robert Lee Raffle and Paul Craft – regardless of the fact that two specimens happily grow on our International Terrace – one might think this palm variety did not even exist!

In the broader context, the twenty-eight known pinnate-leaved, genus members – both solitary trunked and clustering – *Ptychosperma* – come from a similar geographical locale to those fishtail palms, being native to the Caroline Islands, Moluccas, northern Australia, Solomon Islands and New Guinea. All like the wetlands, be they lowland swamps, rain forests of low mountain valleys.

Perhaps two of the most common and better known of this genus are the Solitary Palm (*P. elegans*) and the Macarthur Palm (*P. macarthurii*).

The reason for my misidentification are those notched (or toothed leaflets.) Many of the *Ptychosperma* varieties – even more than the eight members of the *Caryota* family of palms – have leaflets that truly look like fish tails!

All members of the *Ptychosperma* family have slender, ringed trunks with prominent crownshafts. The foliage of some emerge pinkish, maroon or bronze in color – not, however, this one. Their round or ellipsoid fruits are orange red or black. Those of the *P. furcatum* are an almost reddish orange and produce in great quantities. All of these species readily hybridize if grown in the same locale which will really confuse ensuing botanists striving to identify them! (I feel their pain!)

Now, as to the *Ptychosperma furcatum*, it is a popular one of the many visitors touring *Ola Brisa Gardens*. And, in a modicum of support for my confusion, many voice their surprised observation of how very much the leaflets look like fishtail (a bit of vindication there!) That may well be expressed further in recognition that the epithet is Latin for “two-pronged”, “forked”, “divided” or “cleft” – something certainly seen upon examination of those leaflets!

Ours are of the clustering nature, but I have read that, supposedly, it can also be found in a solitary trunked form. H’mmmmmm, see preceding comment regarding hybridization. One wonders . . .

By way of description of the *P. furcatum*, its stems reach heights around eighteen feet (5.5 meters) with a diameter up to two inches (5.1 cm). The one foot (.3 meters) tall crownheads bulge slightly at their bases. Leaf crowns are hemispherical with four to five foot (1.2 – 1.5 meters) long arching leaves atop petioles of one foot (.3 meters) or more. Those glossy, deep green wedge-shaped leaflets are unequally bifid (split) at their apices (tip) and regularly spaced. Its fruits are about one inch (2.5 cm) long.

Accordingly to *Genera Palmarum, The Evolution and Classification of Palms* published by the Kew Royal Botanic Gardens and the veritable “bible” of the International Palm Society, its uses by natives include, “uses of the wood for bows, arrowheads and spears and the fruit of some species has been a poor substitute for betel nut.”

Lastly, the genus name is a combination of two Greek words – “folded” and “seed” - but given my track record and lack of explanatory documentation, I won’t venture into that!



Now look me in the eye and tell me if those leaflets don't look like fishtails!



This shows all stages of inflorescence - emerging buds, opening flowers, bees germinating mature flora and ripe fruit!

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Finally, They're Back!

by Suzanne A. Marshall

As the fallout from the severe El Niño weather patterns continue to ravage the globe, most of us look forward to the return of something we call 'normal'. Given that the scientific age of the earth is estimated to be between 4.5 and 4.6 billion years old, I find it humorous to think that we can even conceive of some sort of 'norm' in our very short lifetimes. Even considering the centuries of weather records, the span is barely a blip on the radar pattern of life on earth.



Brown pelican feeding

But still this is how we all try to put perspective on our lives. Here in Manzanillo, the passing of Hurricane Patricia almost four months ago rarely comes up in conversation as everyone settles in for the winter months. Yet, for the past three months, it's been noticeably quiet on the beaches of Manzanillo. Having become accustomed to the cacophony of seabirds soaring and skimming over the surf along the shoreline, it took me a while to pinpoint the change.

Living on the shores of Manzanillo Bay in Salagua, we are blessed to be enjoying the beautiful mountainous coastline. Sitting on our terrace, we watch the tankers, container ships and cruise ships coming and going into port. The bay is very large and deep, so we are entertained by the spectacle of thundering surfs brought in from storms far out at sea. They can be so dramatic and forceful that we can literally hear the windows rattle and feel the vibrations as they crash

against the beaches. The storms dissipate and the seas become calmer again, having rearranged the beach from sloping expanses to 8 foot dunes and cliffs that creep up the various seawalls along the beach. The landscape will undoubtedly change again with the next storm passing by. It is constantly changing.

So the quiet we are experiencing this year is quite specific. There have been almost no pelicans. We were missing them and their squawking entourage soaring and diving like missiles into the surf for fish after fish. It is difficult to describe the theatre that this spectacle can provide. Of course the birds follow the schools of fish and, given the unusually warm sea currents brought into the Bay via the El Niño currents, the fish have not arrived either. Still the local fishermen attempt to catch fish with spools and rods while others throw nets from shore, but the catches are paltry. Fishing skiffs with 8-10 men aboard circle and drop their nets and the men dive into the waters to pull the catch into shore. Alas, only a few stray fish are netted.



Pelicans diving

The local fish markets are suffering, too since they rely on the local fisherman for fresh supplies. Some of the restaurants are even resorting to ordering seafood from elsewhere or heading for the freezers where back-up product has been frozen and stored. I found myself worrying a bit for the hardworking local industry and hoping that the tides of fortune would

soon change and give them the livelihood they so greatly depend on.

About three weeks ago, a dramatic change took place. They finally came back. In deafening numbers, the strangely beautiful, brown pelicans arrived by the hundreds. Add to these numbers the entourage of sea terns that scavenge the leftovers and you can triple the number of birds in flight, diving, swooping, plunging, squawking and gulping. It was like nature's symphony and truly music to my ears.

Now we watch life on the beach like theatre we've never experienced before. The fish are literally roiling in the surf and flapping on the water! As the waves heave skyward we can see the silvery images of the fish backlit by the sunlight. It's a bonanza! Up and down the miles of beach, the local fisherman are running with rods and buckets and bait. They follow the flocks of birds as their chaos above the waves pinpoints the schools of fish darting up and down the shores like synchronized ballet troops.

I just can't help feeling that things are normal again. Actually they are better than normal because I find myself truly appreciating the event like never before. Sometimes you don't realize how powerful the ways of nature can be until something goes missing. I see the whole fish migration now with fresh eyes and ears and wonder at the bounties of nature.



Bringing in the fish net

Today, we were caught by the screams and whistles of sheer joy from a young fisherman down in front of our beach. His timing had been perfect when the birds had signaled a large school of fish darting back and forth very close to shore. He had tossed his net out into the surf and been rewarded with the best catch of the day, no doubt.

The joy in his whoops and hollering had us on our feet so we could better see what was happening. He was stumbling out of the surf, soaking wet, with a gathered net full of fish he could barely carry. I estimate he netted about 8 fish in the 7lb range. Later, as he strung the fish on his line to haul away over his shoulders, we hooped and hollered for him with thumbs up in the air.

He responded in kind as he happily tramped his way back up the beach destined for the local fishmongers markets and home for a good rest so that he could undoubtedly return to shore the next day. What a happy ending to a story about life at the seaside in Manzanillo. Ya gotta love it!



Fish at the surface



Brown pelicans fishing



**Wandering Jew, *Tradescantia zebrina*
or *Zebrina pendula***

Family: *Arecaceae*

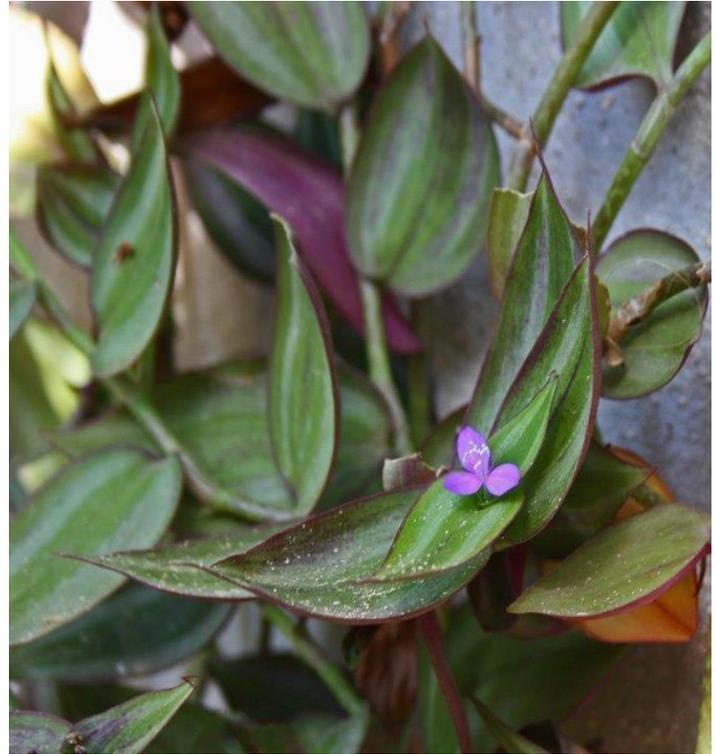
(Also known as Purple Wandering Jew, Inch Plant, Cockroach Grass, Creeping Jenny)

This great plant - thought to be a Mexican native - is quite versatile. They can be enjoyed in a hanging basket, window boxes, planted around the base of larger specimens, allowed to cascade down low walls or used as dramatic and efficient, erosion-controlling, groundcover.

(In fact, in that last consideration, I recently undertook a major - and very fun - landscaping project on an exceptionally steep hill dropping from high on a ridgeline with a spectacular bay vista to waves crashing on huge, craggy rocks far below. To tie several score plant varieties together and ensure we effectively thwarted erosion, several hundred of these plants were employed. I gotta' admit. It's stunningly beautiful!)

"But wait, before going further, why this name?" Well, "Wandering" is what no little part of Jewish history has been all about. Remember Moses and that long desert trek? Hence, this plant - like the Jewish people - has a great ability to adapt to varied environments and conditions!

There are several cultivars of the *Tradescantia zebrina* including one of my favorites, '*Perpusii*' which has wine colored leaves. Another cultivar, '*Quadricolor*', has green, white, and pink stripes on the upper sides of its leaves and may be a hybrid between *T. zebrina* and *T. fluminensis*.



Now that's what I call a cute, petite flower!

Virtually all look great, alone or planted with its - equally easy to grow and maintain - kin, the Oyster Plant, *T.a spathacea* (also called Moses in the Boat) and Purple Heart, *T. pallida*.

The ovate-oblong, fleshy leaves of the Wandering Jew are a dark green with two silvery-white stripes on top and a rather dramatic purple coloration underneath. They are ¾" to three inches (two to seven centimeters) long. Its small, pink three-parted flowers - like the *T. spathacea* - are enclosed in boat-shaped bracts that are 3/8 inch to 1 5/8 inch long. These flowers are a delightful, year around occurrence but prefer to show themselves only in the cool of the morning.

Spreading rapidly by rooting stems, the Wandering Jew requires sun to best develop its colors - though too much of old Sol can cause the leaves to become a bit faded. Moist, well-draining soil is definitely its preferred growing medium. It can be as much as a foot (30 ½ cm) thick or, as one writer described it, a "succulent-stemmed plant that creeps and sprawls and trails all over itself to make a dense groundcover".

Its only down side consists of weak stems that easily break off. But merely put these back in the soil and voilà, soon you will have another healthy plant!

The Wandering Jew prefers rich organic soil and will be appreciative if you mulch it – it need not be kosher! But even under the most ideal and attention giving conditions, potted ones tend to get leggy with age.

This is no problem when grown as a groundcover as new branches cover the bare stems. However, container plants gradually become a “mass of ugly straggling stems” with only little bunches of leaves at their tips. To make this worse, when one cuts them back, they don’t promptly produce bushy fresh growth. A peer correctly groused that, “Those bare stems take a long time for new shoots to cover their nakedness.” But, the solution ain’t that difficult! Just grow new plants from cuttings and then start anew every once in a while. . . Problem solved.

The Wandering Jew enjoys occasional light feeding which encourages its growth and general health. It is seldom afflicted by pests or diseases. However, it is susceptible to an aphid-transmitted virus that can cause stunting and malformed leaves.

How might you best propagate this plant? It rarely reproduces from seed. But cuttings readily root in soil, sand, or water as long as each piece of stem includes at least one node. After keeping them well watered for a week or so, set them into mulched soil. In a shady area, you’ll quickly have a luscious new groundcover.

This guy is also very easy to transplant. Merely plant the root ball in good soil, spread out the trailing stems and then partially cover them with organic mulch.

I have read that Wandering Jew sap can cause a skin irritation in humans and that dogs kept in yards covered with Wandering Jew have developed rashes, but have never experienced any of these problems myself.

If seeking a low maintenance, attractive, multi-use plant, the Wandering Jew is for you!

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Some old guy - woops, that would be me - shows the top underside of the Wandering Jew's leaves.



Driving in Mexico

by Ken Waldie

I consider myself a competent driver, but when I first went to Mexico, I was blissfully ignorant of how different driving this fair country could be. Only a few miles down the road, I became very happy that my guide and partner, with years of experience driving throughout Mexico, but especially in the Manzanillo area, jumped behind the wheel of our rental car. Besides, this was my golden opportunity to sit back, enjoy the ride and take in the sights, so I did.

The first thing I became aware of was the signage. It's different; for a start all the signs are in Spanish. OK, yes it was a bit naïve of me, but I expected the signs to be more... well, more English. In part signage is obvious, international symbols are used sometimes, but familiarly-shaped stop signs say Alto, and red lights at intersections mean stop, but green arrows on a one-way street mean you have the right of way, and a red arrow means yield.

Driving through Manzanillo, you'll find that the left turn lanes, called "laterales", are to the right of the main traffic lanes. You can turn right from a lateral. Best to check if a right turn is permitted on a red light and be cautious, and there is a designated left-turn light if you wish to turn left. Many signs are small, only 5x24 inches. Sometimes road signs are posted on buildings, especially street names and one-way arrows and they blend in to the scenery.

Some of the pedestrian walk and stop lights at major intersections are amusing. They're animated and the green walk symbol doesn't walk, it runs with a countdown to the dead-looking "red, don't walk" light. It's good to note that pedestrians are not afforded the same deference as we are used to. Be more careful than you are used to when crossing roads. Good to note also is that a blinking green light means that the light is about to change to yellow.

All differences aside, a road trip anywhere in Mexico is well worth the time. It's a sublimely marvelous country. You are likely to find an outrageously decorated bus, car, a pickup truck with grandma riding in the back on a lawn chair, or even a whole family hanging out in the back, but do a bit of homework before you start so you don't end up in a pickle.



Here are a few suggestions of things to study up and a few resources I found:

Mexico privatized the maintenance of their major roadways for which tolls are charged to pay for the upkeep. Known as Cuotas, these roads your best bet to travel on but plan to pay cash at each toll booth as there is no provision for debit or credit cards. The Ministry of Transport website Traza tu Ruta, a very handy trip planner (in Spanish and in English) that will calculate the distance, driving time, expected gas consumption, and tolls. The link below should give you the English version, a great resource, so check out the Traza tu Ruta at:

http://app.sct.gob.mx/sibuac_internet/ControllerUI?action=cmdEscogeRuta&eligeldioma=si

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Green Angels. An initiative of the Ministry of Tourism, los Angeles Verdes are a brigade of helper/mechanics who travel every major highway twice in 24 hours stopping to help travelers who have breakdowns. You can't miss

their distinctively-marked, green trucks. They carry gas and a variety of parts. If you have cell reception, you can reach them at 078 or just pull off the road and put your hood up. They will stop. The help is free but expect to pay for parts and supplies.



Free Highways or Libres, are often 2-lane roads that wind through the country side. Usually, they're more scenic but do keep an eye out for the unexpected changes in traffic or obstacles, which often pop up. Two common obstacles require particular attention:

Topes, or speed bumps, are legendary; they may only be indicated by skid marks and can rearrange the underside of your car if you're travelling any faster than a snail. Usually found around towns and villages, it's not unusual to find canvassers for the local hospital or charity at the village tope asking for donations. You could drop a peso or two in their coffee can, but if you choose not to, just say, "No, gracias."

A bache is a pot hole. Baches are definitely worth watching out for because they are often deep enough to cause damage if you happen to hit one.

Watch out also for highway shoulders. Often there are none or there is a drop of several inches, enough to rip out a tire sidewall, and possibly suck your car off the road. This sounds extreme, I know, but I once dropped my car off the edge of a no-shoulder road and the result was not pleasant.

Pemex is a nationalized gas company, the only one you will find in Mexico. They are not as plentiful as what you will find to the north; therefore, it's advisable to work off the top off of your gas tank rather than the bottom half.

We are used to calling gas stations by name, Shell or Chevron, but if you ask a local for the nearest Pemex you'll get a strange look because gas stations are called, "gasolineras". At the gas station, you can expect the attendants (all gas stations are full-serve) to offer to check your oil, check tire pressure, clean the windshield and check other fluids. The gas station attendant will show you that the pump is reset to zero before beginning to pump again. You may wish to have the replacement fluids on you as they'll often offer to sell you their items but they'll use yours if you have them. It's a good idea to tip perhaps 5 pesos for the fill-up and another 5 pesos if they go beyond. If you want regular, ask for Magna, premium, ask for Primo and Diesel is diesel. And if you drive a diesel, check your water filter often as the water content tends to be high due to the humidity.



Don't leave your car unattended to go into the store while getting gas. Instead, wait till they've finished your service and then move your car to the store and lock up. You are not allowed to use a cell phone at the gas station. Expect to pay cash though you will see more gas stations accepting credit cards these days.

And as a tip, it's a good place to use a larger bill as they typically have

change. It's not easy to cash large bills in Mexico in most places.

In researching this article, I found many informative blogs, Facebook groups, and web sites full of useful information. One resource in particular worth mentioning if you are planning a cross-country trip are the Bell Road Logs. Bill and Dot Bell have been travelling Mexico in their RV for decades. They've logged their road trips as a step-by-step guide of resources and what to watch for.

Take a look at:

- Alto (stop)
- Alto total (complete stop required, usually for military or other inspection)
- Area de descanso (rest area)
- Autopista (improved highway, toll road)
- Autopista de cuota (toll road)
- Basura (garbage, trash)
- Camino (road)
- Camiones (trucks)
- Carretera (highway)
- Carril (lane)
- Carril izquierdo solo para rebasar (left lane for passing only)
- Caseta de cobro (toll booth)
- Ceda el paso (yield)
- Cinturon de seguridad obligatorio (seat belt required)
- Con niebla/lluvia encienda sus luces (with fog/rain turn on lights)
- Conceda cambio de luces (consider dimming your lights)
- Conserva limpia la carretera (keep the highway clean)
- Cruce (crossing)
- Cruce de escolares (school crossing)

<http://www.ontheroadin.com>

The Bells also have a Facebook page called Travel Buddies. It's a free match-up service where novices to Mexico driving can connect with experienced travelers who act as guides and mentors.

Here are a few other useful sites:

<http://www.motormexico.com/service/drivetips.html>

<https://www.esurance.com/info/international/guidelines-for-driving-in-mexico>

<http://dilworth.org/all/driving-in-mexico>

<http://www.bajaamigos.net>

Travel safe, and keep the shiny side up!

- Cruce de peatones (pedestrian crossing)
- Crucero (intersection)
- Cuota (toll)
- Curva peligrosa (dangerous curve)
- Derecho (right)
- Desviacion (detour)
- Disminuya su velocidad (reduce your speed)
- Encienda sus luces (turn on your lights)
- Entrada (entrance)
- Entronque (intersection)
- Esta carretera no es de alta velocidad (this highway is not for high speed)
- Este camino no es de alta velocidad (this road is not for high speed)
- Ferrocarril (train)
- Frene (brake)
- Guarde su distancia (keep your distance, don't tailgate)
- Ingreso (entrance)
- Izquierdo (left)
- Lateral (side road)
- Libre (free/no toll)
- Lluvia (rain)
- Semáforo (stop light)

Is that a Purple Gallinule in your pocket, or are you happy to see me?

by Señor Tech

Birds, bees, mammals, trees; at some point we want to know more about them. On my phone and tablet, I have a number of apps that provide such information.

The National Audubon Society has a number of apps that deal with specific topics; Audubon Trees, Audubon Insects and Spiders, Audubon Wildflowers, Audubon Butterflies, Audubon Reptiles and Amphibians, Audubon Mammals, Audubon Mushrooms and the list goes on. Each app is a field guide complete with photos, habitat, range, season, and discussion. Once purchased and installed, the app does not require internet access to research the data. For example, Audubon Mammals features in-depth information on 273 species with a gallery view for easy search and species comparison. The app has drawings of animal tracks, high quality photos, sounds and range maps. The user can track and annotate personal sightings using the "Journal" feature.

If you are connected, then there are a number of additional options. NatureShare allows you to post photos of Flora and Fauna or view other members' posts.

The Audubon Bird North America Field Guide (free app) lets the user identify 821 species with information on appearance, habitat, seasonal and migratory range maps and behavior. Over 8 hours of recorded bird sounds are included. A word of caution: this app is under 100 Megabytes, but if you choose to download all the data for offline use, the app will take up close to 1 Gigabyte of space on your device.

Now the good stuff. If you allow the app access to your location, it will list birds seen nearby in the past 30 days. When I activated the feature, 144 different species sighted in the Manzanillo area were listed. When I clicked on the American White Pelican, there were 2 posted sightings. One was in Barra de Navidad and the other Cuyutlán. The Brown Pelican, on the other hand, listed 50 sightings, a number of them just down the beach from our condo. Of course, we have seen hundreds from our terrace, diving in the water for fish.

As an aside, there were even a couple of Purple Gallinules sighted by the ZLO airport. When I started this article, I had never heard of a Purple Gallinule, but they apparently are close by.



I also have the iBird Pro Guide to Birds which I purchased years ago for \$0.99. This app currently sells for \$20.99. It has information on 940 species. What the app lacks is the journal feature, which they sell separately for \$21.99. Or you can spend \$27.99 for the iBird Ultimate Guide which also includes all the information included in the Pro Guide, the journal app and a "Birds near me" feature. The Audubon Bird Guide

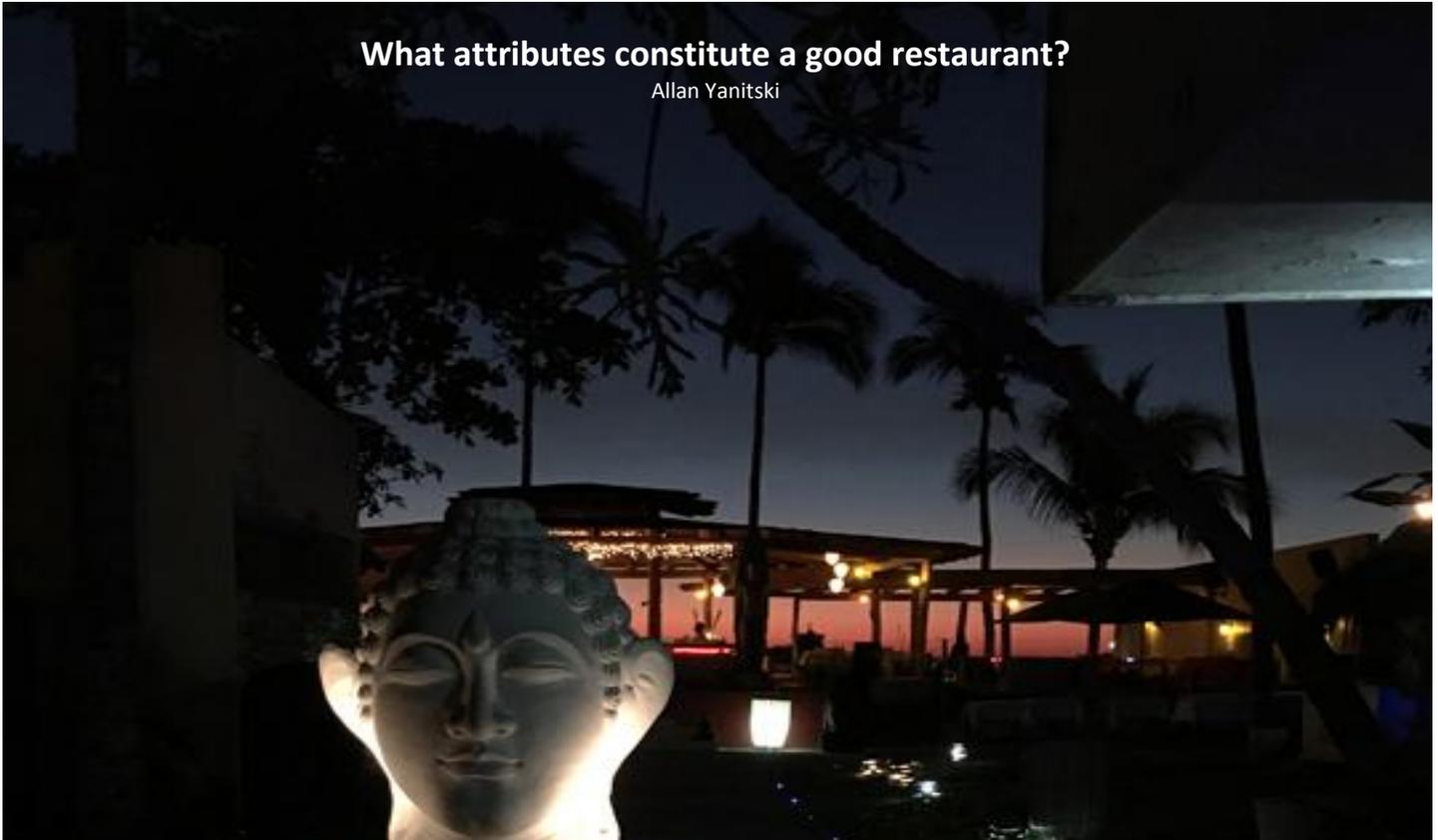
discussed above has all of these features, for free. The iBird Pro Guide to Birds presentation may be a bit more polished, but not worth \$27.99.

There are currently 12 field guides published by the Audubon Society. Most sell for \$6.99 (\$4.99 US). They offer their 4 Bird Field Guide apps at no charge. There is no reason that you cannot have a field guide for topics such as Wild Flowers, Fish, Butterflies, Insects, Mammals, Birds, Reptiles or Trees with you at all times on your phone or tablet.



What attributes constitute a good restaurant?

Allan Yanitski



Our beachfront condo is fantastic on all fronts but for a full kitchen. We are not concerned, as Manzanillo has numerous eateries that do. So after an afternoon of playing Mexican Train on the terrace overlooking the bay, my wife and our guests were ready for a good meal. A friend recommended Rock Food in Las Brisas. Since it was a Sunday evening, we felt confident reservations were not required.

My wife always teases me about my ability to get a parking spot at the door, and true to form we parked and our first experience of Rock Food was the large Buhda backlit by the Manzanillo sunset. As we walked up the path, wonderful aromas wafted in the air from the kitchen.

We were greeted and escorted to our seats with a magnificent view of Manzanillo Bay and Centro.

Our host turned out to be the owner, Rolando. On finding out that this was our first visit to his restaurant explained how he personally selects and purchases the fresh ingredients used to prepare the dishes on the menu including the fish from the fish mongers at the Cinco de Mayo and Santiago Mercados. He told us that his prime

objective was to serve a high quality meal at fair prices, but most important was the patron's enjoyment and satisfaction.

A platter of fresh tostadas and salsa were delivered as the waiter took our drink orders. The salsa was slightly spicy with no after burn, just the way I like it.

Our friends decided to start with the Tempura de Calamares. Bea was a bit disappointed as the Calamari was overcooked. When Rolando came by to check on our progress, he tasted one and agreed. He removed them and said he would return with a properly cooked order. A few minutes later, he returned with not one, but also an order of the Calamares a la plancha (Calamari done with garlic). Both were superb.

I am reluctant to order mixed platters; I cannot remember a time when one of the items was not either overcooked or cold. Rolando said the if we wanted the Pescador Parillada (grilled fish platter including 200 grams each of Tuna, Salmon, and Snapper, and large Shrimp on a skewer), the fish would be grilled to our liking. I asked for the Tuna to be seared, and the Salmon moist.

The round wooden platter arrived with the fillets surrounding a generous serving of fresh greens in a vinaigrette dressing and fries. All of the fish was excellent! Cooked to perfection and to our liking.

Our friends ordered pasta, Espagetty Bolognesa and Tagliatel Carbanara. They both said that their food was delicious and the only complaint, too much food! Of course, Rolando offered to package the leftovers for home.

The waiter brought a basket of buns with our meal which I did not try one for fear of spoiling my appetite for the fish. After our meal, I split a bun with my wife and wow, ended up eating another as my dessert. The buns are baked fresh daily and are infused with herbs. We detected a bit of rosemary. They are so good, I will have to be careful when we return, as I may end up having the buns as my meal.

The other patrons were made up a table of 8, 2 sets of couples, and another group of four. It was a Sunday night. I suspect it is much busier later in the week. A restaurant this good has to be.

To answer my question about a good restaurant. Rock Food is excellent!

Atmosphere - Rock Food exudes it from the kitchen aromas, to the open air beach front seating and easy listening music in the background, and of course the Manzanillo Bay as a background.

Service – We had three waiters and the owner, hard to beat.

Food – Excellent quality and taste.

Extensive Menu – Rock Food offers a selection to satisfy most palates

Price for two with drinks and 20% propina was \$668 pesos.



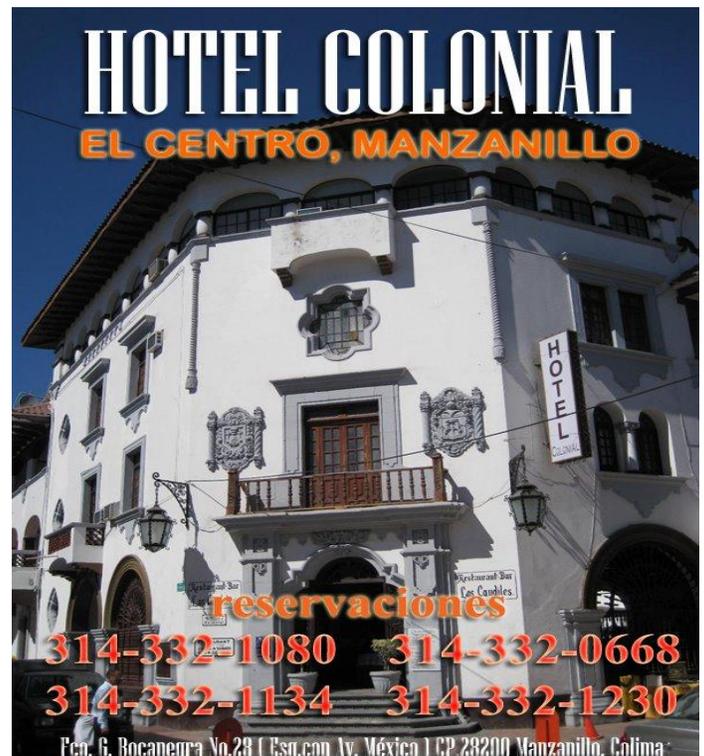
If you are looking to be pampered, consider a Sunday evening visit.



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How to Leave IRA Assets to a Beneficiary

by Yann Kostic

If the income from your individual retirement accounts (IRAs) turns out to be more than you actually require in retirement, and you're looking for ways to pass on some or all of your IRA assets to your heirs, you'll need to make some choices.

The first required minimum distribution from your traditional IRA must be taken by April 1 of the year following the year you reach age 70½, and annual distributions must continue to be made by December 31 of that year and in each following year.

The calculation to determine the required minimum distribution can be based on your single life expectancy or the joint life expectancy of you and your beneficiary (either spouse or non-spouse). So first, consider and designate a beneficiary.

The single life expectancy method generally provides for the largest distributions and highest potential taxable income. In general, it is most appropriate if you plan to withdraw most of your IRA during retirement, because it increases the potential that you will deplete the account during your lifetime.

The joint life expectancy with a spouse beneficiary method can reduce your required minimum distribution and current taxable income, and can increase the potential for tax-deferred growth. Also, when you die, your spouse generally has more options for timing distributions.

The joint life expectancy with a non-spouse beneficiary method may reduce your required minimum distributions even more than when your beneficiary is a spouse-but because the beneficiary may be a child or grandchild, it may be most appropriate if you wish to maximize tax-deferred growth and leave a legacy for your heirs.

The choice you make will affect the size of the distributions, your taxable income, the amount left in the account to continue growing tax-deferred, and the amount the IRA holder or beneficiary may leave to heirs. Your advisor can help you decide which choice is best for you.

NOTE: The legal and tax information contained in this article is merely a summary of our understanding and an interpretation of some of the current tax laws, and is not exhaustive.

Yann Kostic is an investment advisor (RIA) and money manager with Atlantis Wealth Management who specializes in retirees (or soon to be), self-reliant women and expats in Mexico. Atlantis is working with an international custodian, so firm clients are allowed to hold multiple currencies in a single account including Canadian & US dollars as well as Mexican Pesos. Yann is splitting his time between Central Florida, Lake Chapala and Manzanillo. Comments, questions or to request his newsletter, "News you can use" contact him at yannk@atlantisgrp.com in Mexico, (376) 106-1613 or in the US (321) 574-1521.



Salpicón de Res



Photo courtesy of Kiwilimon

- 3 pounds brisket
- 2 onions, 1 halved, 1 chopped
- 1 large carrot, quartered
- 1 stalk celery, quartered
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 12-ounce can whole tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- 1 4-ounce can chile chipotle, drained and chopped (reserve liquid)
- ¼ cup light olive oil
- ¼ cup vinegar
- ½ pound Monterey Jack cheese, cut in ¼-inch cubes
- 2 large avocados, sliced length-wise

Oven: 325 degrees

Place brisket in a heavy pot and cover with water.

Add halved onion, carrot, celery, garlic, ½ cup chopped cilantro, canned tomatoes, salt and pepper.

Cover and cook in the oven approximately 4 hours, until very tender.

Remove from liquid, cool slightly and shred thoroughly with a fork. In a large bowl, combine shredded beef, chopped onion, chopped tomato, remaining cilantro, chile chipotle and liquid to taste as well as oil, vinegar, salt and pepper to taste.



Photo courtesy of Kiwilimon

Let cool in the refrigerator at least 4 hours.

Before serving, toss with cheese and put into a decorative bowl. Garnish with sliced avocado. Serve with warm corn or flour tortillas or tostadas, pinto beans and guacamole or a tossed green salad.

For a spicier flavor, use more chile chipotle or pickled jalapenos or chopped or fresh green chile strips.

courtesy of freeallrecipes.com

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Our co-founder, writer, editor passed away, after a long battle with cancer. She fought bravely, but it is always a losing battle. Watch for a special edition of Manzanillo Sun, featuring some articles from Freda Vickery-Rumford.

R.I.P. Freda Anne Vickery-Rumford,
a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother and a friend to all who knew her in Manzanillo.