

# Día de Muertos

## "MUERIOS"

## CREEPING NORTH ACROSS THE BORDER

Most people associate Día de Muertos with altars and gravesites decorated with cempasuchil flowers, families gathered around tombs cleaning and decorating them, eating meals, and perhaps listening to musicians play the deceased's favorite mariachi, band, or conjunto tunes. But, after visiting Muertos traditions in 15 different Mexican states, we have learned otherwise. It's that and much more.

In Aguascalientes, there are bullfights where the most recent deaths are those of the bulls. In Oaxaca, people with painted faces and flamboyant catrinas parade



Photos by Mary Helen Pérez

around the main plaza gleefully skipping along arm-in-arm huapango style. In Mazatlan, burros pull carts carrying beer kegs surrounded by people with raised plastic Bud Lite cups to be filled and refilled with cerveza. Sinaloense musicians follow these crowds around the main square playing loud tubas, huge drums, and other wind instruments.

We like to think that perhaps our photo exhibits in the Houston area through the years have somehow helped spread the Day of the Dead traditions across the border.

— Mary Helen Pérez

Three beautiful calacas, strolling in Market Square on this special day, when one said to the other two, *"this brings memories of family and friends, when my parents would bring us to celebrate their loved ones so many years ago."* The other two agreed and put on sad faces, remembering their own memories of so long ago.

*"Well,"* said the first calaca, *"did we come here to be sad or to celebrate our loved ones? Let's go and celebrate, make noise, make music, make joy, dance and be happy!"* All of a sudden they produced a drum, maracas, and a tambourine. They started playing their music, and before they knew it, they had a crowd following in rhythm behind them. They passed the shops and

### Three Calacas

restaurants and people lined up on the storefronts, dancing in step, yelling and laughing.

The three calacas entered Mi Tierra, to everyone's surprise, they went around the tables, making people happy with their music. They even joined the mariachis, to the delight of all!

All were enjoying this tribute to life, to the beautiful memories of all, when, all of a sudden, they noticed a diminishment of sound as the mariachis slowly looked around. The people at the tables were quiet and puzzled. The three calacas had suddenly vanished, right in front of their eyes. No sign of them anywhere! And, they had not been anywhere near an exit!

*People looked around, listened for music, but there was no sign of the three calacas. AND, NOBODY NOTICED THE MARACAS ON THE FLOOR, WHERE THE THREE HAD BEEN!!!!!!*

—Mildred DeLong Hilbrich



Artwork by Aleida

