

On the 16th day of September, Mexico's Independence Day, I was in Mexico City. Until Congress made working unpapered aliens illegal, I had to stay at the ranch every fall during that holiday while the Mexican hands went off to attend outbreaks of sick grandmothers and ailing mothers that would've made the busiest Monday morning Mayo's Clinic ever knew seem like sick call at a Boy Scout camp.

Close to 25,000 policemen and the major part of the country's armed forces were mustered to see that the crowd's exuberance didn't overflow out in front of the Mexican President's motorcade; or worse, weren't struck down by the big military motorcycles that were racing back and forth every few minutes..

City employees had placed thousands of wooden crates along the curbs to seat the spectators. But after I saw how casually the policia were handling their automatic rifles I chose a park bench that was serving as a backdrop for a couple of Indian women's hat and basket business.

When the President did roll by in an open car, the two Indians rolled themselves and their babies up tighter in their greasy blankets and the man shouting "tacos juvenes" (fresh tacos) put more steam in his sales presentation. Close by, a girl pushing a wheelbarrow so loaded down with unshelled peanuts that she stopped to take a better hold. A short fat citizen cranking on hurdy-gurdy for all his might started on his box/s version of Cielito Lindo.

I'd been hearing and reading about what a hotshot Mr. Salinas was as President. Seeing how little support he was arousing in my new precinct, I decided to remain silent. If he wasn't able to make the crowd roar in a city that they guess may have anywhere from 16 to 20 million citizens, then maybe he'd better be looking over the private sector for a job.

I was careful when I left not to disturb the Indios or overtip the hurdy-gurdy man. I thought they could have at least looked up when their chief executive went by. But presidents, I suppose, don't do much for people living in the streets.