

# *La Casita*

## Departure Day, Mexico

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I am writing this several days following our closure day, April 7, 2011, with the Peace Corps Mexico program. Before leaving we were given several despedidas, or farewell parties. I do not like good-byes; most people don't. Well, back up one minute, maybe I don't mind bidding farewell to a relative (or ex-friend) who overstays their Mexico visit in your drastically small house with one bathroom. AND, to top it off, this relative or friend continues to daily plug the toilet with TP after you have repeatedly told them that you only leave bodily products in the toilet; TP goes in the wastebasket. Of course, we have never had this experience in Mexico, everyone left when we said goodbye, goodbye, GOODBYE. But, I refuse to say good-bye to a people, a country, and even buildings we have come to love. Yes, even buildings and not just historic old churches because there are billions of them in Mexico. That's a fact and I love 'em all and I'm not even Catholic.



I will tell you one story about a small building that stole my heart, and it only had one bathroom: *La Casita*. And I'll be damned if I am saying adios, good-bye, etc. to the little place where we have spent the last three plus years of our lives. Apparently, *La Casita* didn't want to say adios to us either, and she demonstrated her displeasure just after we moved out last week and into this castle of our ex-director and friends, Byron and Margarita Battle, while they are back in the U.S. *La Casita* would fit comfortable into their kitchen. I don't want to dwell on the size of Hacienda Battle, but you need some perspective relative to *La Casita*. Let's just say that eagles nest at one end. I can barely see them with my binocs, and they prey on wildlife living on the football field length patio-garden.

The new tenants of our beloved *La Casita*, a young Peace Corps couple and wonderful people, just like us, had been cavorting on the beach during the transition week while we moved. Last week, they came back to their new home to the following (direct quote from their email the following day):

*Hi, Sonya and David. Hope you are doing well and enjoying time at Byron and Margarita's house. We got back from our trip last night and walked into a disaster area at our new casa.*

*Sometime last week the whole ceiling in the kitchen caved in. They have been working to repair it but the main level of the house is all torn up. The kitchen cabinets had to be removed and are in the living room. All the kitchen dishes, pots, microwave, etc. are piled in the main bedroom. There is a thick layer of concrete dust on every surface. There is a huge pile of old concrete out on the street by the curb. They have fashioned a new ceiling of concrete and it is drying now. We were able to sleep in the upstairs room, but it will be some time before the house is very livable again. I don't know if you heard about it but I wanted to let you know. You got out just in time!*

And, my response:

*Honestly, it saddens me to hear your story, but at the same time I have to laugh. In Mexico, that is the ONLY alternative----to laugh. And cry, simultaneously if you want, but never get mad. If you can do that under circumstances like you just described, I guarantee you will love this country. I can't say that I have always followed my own advice. I promise you that when all the dust settles (pun intended) you will be extremely happy in La Casita. I refuse to get maudlin but we are taking home with us some great, great memories, in many of which that little house was center stage. Our Mexican experience was made that much richer because we truly loved living there.*



Is there a take-home-to-the-US message here? As Chicken Little once said to a small, momentarily failing, cement, glass, and steel structure, "Yes, *La Casita*, your ceiling may have fallen but not the sky." Los Gringo Greegors will be back.

Guaranteed, so they don't want no stinkin' despedidas, but only fiestas and celebrations. *La Casita* is a spiritual and symbolic fiesta because it *IS* Mexico and it *IS* a perfect representation of our Mexican experience, or rather thousands of them in a collage of color, festivity, diversity, and love.

Love of peoples, cultures, music, food, and yes, even buildings.