

# eMa-Hi Times

## Spring 2009 – Class of '59

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### REUNION CORNER

Reunion Activities and Information

August 14 - 16

Those of you with an email address on file should have received your reunion schedule of activities and registration forms in the past day or so. The others were mailed out through the US Postal Service the same day. We can't wait to see everybody!

### Reunion Committee

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### My Past 50 Years...

If your write up is in - congratulations! If it is still being worked on... well no one will bug you any more. And for those who have forwarded theirs without a current photo – beware, editors' can do terrible things to blank spaces!

We'll keep accepting inputs until the time that we need to put things together for distribution prior to the reunion weekend. As of this writing we have great 107 stories to share.

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### MHS Gift – Benches for the Senior Hall



The benches(2) are being built, and funds for the costs are coming in to the Reunion Committee. If you'd like to contribute, just send a check in the amount of your choosing payable to "MHS Class of 59" to Marilyn Speidel; 63290 Everest Rd; Coos Bay, OR 97420. Remember to note that the money is for the "Benches."

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## Ahhh, the “Sailors Life” for me!

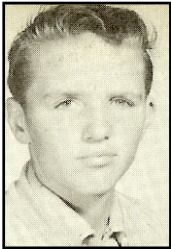
### **Early memories of those great times after Marshfield...**

My major encounters with rough seas was crossing the North Atlantic from the Brooklyn Naval yard to Newfoundland and Europe in February [23 days], and returning nearly three years later in January [21 days]. Same ride and odor of puke.

Rock and roll! Ropes, ice, and ship’s bow routinely under huge swells/waves. Army personnel remained entombed in the bowels of the circa 1912 cargo vessel. I had a job that allowed me into staff areas and onto the deck. Thanks to a Navy ally, I lived on bread and crackers with coffee because nothing else could stay down.

Slept on stairwells because the five high hammocks x 1800 troops were beyond imagination. Puke started at the top and spilled down to the lowest berth. When boarding I was at peak weight, but lost ten pounds when arriving in Bremerhaven, W. Germany. Same for the return ride.

Give me a fox-hole, rifle and bayonet any day. As far as a typhoon is concerned – forget about it!



PS: This was during the cold war.... Jets had been invented and routinely crossed the Atlantic. Never did compute.

*Martin Matheny*

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### **From Dick Kent – 3/21/09 email:**

At a beach camp near Acapulco I was chatting with a fellow traveler and found that not only was he from Coos Bay, but was indeed one of my pre 1<sup>st</sup> grade playmates from Empire Grade School. He left to move with his family to Tillamook after the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. His father was fire chief and water master in Empire the same time my Grandfather was Mayor. We related old stories far into the night, comparing notes of places and people. He has submitted to the Historical Museum in North Bend a history and pictures from the 1940’s and 50’s. Mike Eugene Fisher lived a few doors away from my grandparents (Paul and Melanie Kent) on North Market Street in Empire. There should be some more of us that would remember him also is why I am sending this along.

## The Incredible Mayan Yucatan

(...continued travel notes shared by Dick Kent)

Our clockwise circling of the Yucatan peninsula has given us a fuller understanding of the complexities that a region like this presents in creating a sustainable community for civilization. It seems that the human species has yet to comprehend its real connection to Earth. The Yucatan is a tropical, yet semi-arid plate of limestone surrounded on three sides by warm, windy, sometimes violent oceans, The Gulf of Mexico and the Mar Caribe (Caribbean) flat as a billiard table with an average elevation of 50 feet.

The older civilizations' presence in the region were sparse before the Olmec's moved by about 3-4,000 years ago settling Mezoamerica (between the tropics of the Americas). The Mayan civilization established itself on the peninsula nearly 3,000 years ago and had a run at sustainability for about 1500 years. Overpopulation strained their resources and they were forced to disperse or meet their demise.

The invading Spanish of the 1500's found a declining physical presence except for the enduring structures of great plazas and pyramids, so much in evidence today, as they are being reclaimed from the jungles. All housing structures of organic materials were long ago re-digested by the ecosystem; heat and humidity are great forces in nature's "urban re-development."



D & G Ik Kil Cenote

There are no river watersheds on the Yucatan, but many Cenotes sink holes of various sizes, some we visited and swam in are 500 feet deep and 100 feet diameter. The rain waters seep through the limestone shelf and accumulate in subterranean pockets and rivers dissolve the rock to form the Cenote holes.

The water comes back to the surface out of giant springs around the edges of the shelf at

places we camped like Ria Lagartos and Celestun on the North and West coasts. From all this background, I think the Yucatan and its challenges to establish a sustainable culture is good proof of the perspective that "fresh water (potable) has been, is, and will be the great leveling factor for human civilizations on this earth".



Swim and lunch at Cenote Azul

The Mayan culture is struggling to reconnect with the unwritten past of glorious legend and simplicity amid the influx of tourists trodding over the ancient ruins, some unearthed and restored and many more still covered by centuries of the ever increasing layers of biomass. Some Maya we connected with on a personal level indicate the culture and faith is strong enough to survive, yet they question the young moving away from the village and adopting ways of the "others" (TV, cell phones and cars). The small villages are largely devoid of vehicles; auto finance was only introduced in recent years resulting in a greatly increased numbers of cars (unfortunately driver training has yet to take hold). Oh, by the way, 60-80 MPG cars are everywhere in MX, some built by GM & Ford, these same corporate geniuses that need a taxpayer bailout to innovate better ways to build giant SUV's in the US market.

We continue to eat as locavores with fresh fruits (so many coconuts, pineapple, banana, mango, papaya) and veggies (squash, cucumbers, carrots, broccoli, tomatoes, potatoes, cilantro, jicama) , seafood (fish, lobster, conch, shrimp) along the coasts. The conditions and culture provides a diet for the local people filled with corn, beans and fruits as the basis. The scrub trees from the jungle provide the wood for charcoal fires to cook rather bland, but nutritious food to which flavoring is added by way of spice, most commonly chili peppers.

### The Maya Ruins

While the Christian religion was spreading in the old world, the Maya of the Yucatan were refining their art, developing their 1000+ character (!) hieroglyphic writing system, predicting precise celestial movements, using irrigation system agriculture to feed their growing population, increasing the religious power of human leaders to make them appear as gods, and waging war to extend their political power to control trade routes. The ten ruin sites, on and off the beaten path, that we visited had been cities of 100– 200,000 population. They rise like surreal mirages out of the tropical forests. For those of you with some familiarity, they were:

**Edzna, Uxmal, Kabah, Ek' Balam, Chichen Itza, Coba, Tulum, Calakmul, Yaxchilan, and Palenque.**



It would be hard to choose a “favorite” ruin, as we were impressed by all we saw. We will comment on just three of them: The overall experience of visiting Yaxchilan (AD 680 – 800) on the Guatemala border, accessible only by boat down the mighty Usumacinta River, has only been known to the outside world since 1996. We left at dawn to enhance birding (well worth it), and so were the first visitors to the site. The buildings rise above the steaming jungle on



the river's steep banks. To be there alone in that surreal setting was an experience we will never forget. Dick and Marilynne bought corn and bean tamales wrapped in banana leaves from a young Guatemalan girl whose family had rowed her across the river to sell on the path to the ruins. She had carried them up the stairs in a pot on her head. And we did eat them.





At the large, remote Calakmul ruin (AD 250 – 695), only the slightest fraction of the 6500 buildings of this once-superpower have been uncovered. We got there early. We climbed pyramids (as at most sites), Glenda went down a more remote jungle path to check out another structure, Dick



climbed a shorter temple. We were in the home of jaguar and leopard, and Dick had been especially focused on seeing a jaguar. All of a sudden, a fearsome roar pierced the air. We each, alone, had a reaction to the possibility of a large cat, until the roar is broken by the staccato of a “whomp, whomp, whomp” associated with Howler monkeys. Our hackles were briefly raised in a combination of fear and curiosity!



Palenque ruin (AD 300-800) sits atop an escarpment in Chiapas (at the “neck” of the Yucatan). This area receives the heaviest rains in Mexico, so the amazing El Palacio (watchtower?) and other spectacular architecture rise out of a very tall, dense rainforest with high humidity. Most of these ruins are less than 15% uncovered. Maybe it’s good that their splendors and secrets belong to the jungle.

### Biosphere Reserves

Five of Mexico’s fourteen biosphere reserves are on the Yucatan Peninsula. The success of these important reserves depends to a great extent on the cooperation and involvement of the local people, such as the income-generating projects of low-impact fishing, ornamental plant nurseries and low-impact tourism. The latter is a hard one to control.

We stayed at the Ria Celestun Biosphere Reserve (146,000 acres) at Celestun, a small fishing village, for a birding trip with a great guide that the Keyser’s arranged, through the narrow mangrove channels and lagoons. What a highlight to see a horizon of pink -- tens of thousands (they’re hard to count) of flamingos, and dozens of other wonderful birds new to us.



Flamingos at Celestun  
NW coast of Yucatan

Rio Lagartos Biosphere Reserve was a “home in paradise” for us for a few days. We parked by the fresh-water lagoon with boardwalk birding nearby, a freshwater spring to swim in, an inflatable kayak to ding around in, two local boys whose dads are fishermen to become our friends, entertained a few feet away by herons, skimmers, ibis, terns, turnstones, etc. John tested his skill fly fishing for baby Tarpon in the mangroves (catch and release). It was a hard place to leave.

Calakmul Biosphere Reserve (1.3 million acres). What an honor to be in the home of jaguars, ocelots, tapirs, peccaries, oscillated turkeys (Dr. Seuss designed?), serenaded by howler monkeys, toucans, parrots and raucous frogs as we explored this vast important ecosystem.

Last, but not least, we’ll mention the Sian Ka’an Biosphere Reserve, the Yucatan’s most diverse nature sanctuary containing over a million acres of empty beaches, vibrant reefs, tangled mangroves and lush forests...important feeding grounds for many North American species. Marine turtles, iguanas, alligators are also common residents. We drive down the peninsula to Punta Allen, famous for bonefish and tarpon.



Yet another great camp spot  
Punta Allen road beachfront



balanced for flight

### Birds, Birds, Birds

What a wondrous array of tropical birds we saw! Many varieties of parrot, toucan, motmot, oriole, gorgeous jays, buntings, so many different flycatchers, woodstorks, all the kingfishers, owls, hawks, so many shore and sea birds, trogons, rails, and the birds go on and on. We would not have spotted many of these without John and Marilynne’s astute eye and experience.

We have not had any uneasiness so far. The people are kind and friendly. The policemen and militia (and there are lots of them) have been kind and respectful, even escorting us to an elusive campsite. Our Spanish is still pretty weak, but we seem to be able to communicate the important things; we sometimes call them “heart conversations” with a little charade and laughter, a lingering warm handshake, a touch, eye to eye, a smile, that crosses culture, economics and race.