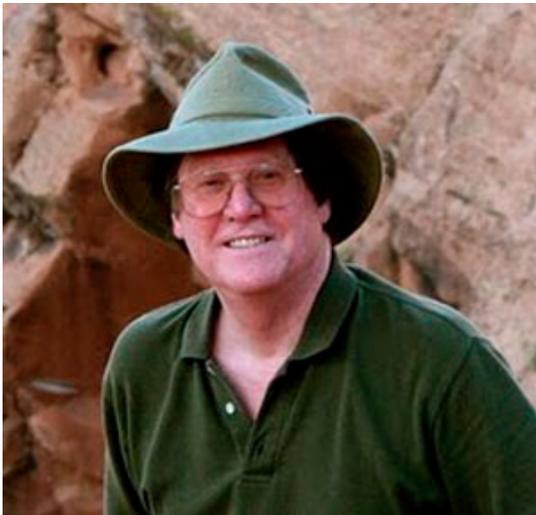


Jim Cook's Mexico Adventure

By C Jordan English



I enjoyed an afternoon with Jim Cook discussing the roots of his photo-documentary travels in Mexico with his lovely wife Carole. He mentioned an urge to retire early while still young plus juggling unaffordable health care Stateside. He had been a union organizer in Oregon.

He expressed his affection for the warmth, friendliness, and generosity Mexicans naturally exude along with their sense of freedom. Jim recalled encountering a *vaquero* in a remote area, and asking if there were any rules about camping. He said the wide-eyed youth replied with astonishment, "Rules, what rules? Do what you want. No one cares."

Jim feels this response typifies the freewheeling live-and-let-live attitude he observes in many Mexicans. On a recent trek to Zacatlan I noted his amiable demeanor with Mexican people. I wondered how Jim's life had shaped him into the man he is. Start with a Welsh gene pool, and a hook linked to the notorious Captain Cook--yes indeed.

Jim has had a long-standing love of history. "In the fourth grade I picked up a biography of Daniel Boone, and became enamored with history. It's far more interesting than fiction. I'm fascinated with how we are all connected. The story of Mexico goes back thousands of years. You still find the *mano* and *metate* in any Mexican hardware store. These grinding implements precede the Aztecs. That's remarkable."

Jim's comments elicited a smile from me. Whenever people ask me how far my heritage goes back I'll say, "As far as I can tell, all the way to the Big Bang." Jim is engrossed with the drama of history's shifting continuum, and it defines his path. He holds a special affection for indigenous people. "I'm instinctively drawn to the cause of the underdog which ties to my strong interest with indigenous people, and their ongoing struggles to preserve their unique culture. It saddens me to see the richness of their world-view fade. I hope my blog captures a sense of this."

"I see how my interest with indigenous history emerged while on a camping trip to Sedona, Arizona, when I was thirty. My topography map showed a symbol for "ruins" which turned out to be the remains of an Anasazi village. This sudden opening into an ancient world seized hold of me. Later, when Carole and I came to Mexico, I found myself surrounded by a historical richness deeper than anything I had previously experienced."

Other impressionable events molded Jim's character and sense of values. "In 1971 I was stationed in Okinawa with the Air Force as an aircraft maintenance officer. This experience created a sense of disillusionment with my life, the military, and the Vietnam War. I decided to never again do anything I didn't deeply care about. This vow continues to shape my life to this day. It brought us to Mexico. Now, I see myself as a photo-journalist and a storyteller who enjoys highlighting the wonders of Mexico. Originally, my blog was a way to showcase my pictures of Mexico to family and friends in the States, and now my blog is viewed by more than 6,000 people each month in 132 countries and territories on every continent, including Antarctica."

Thanks for heading south, Jim.

Jim's blog: <http://cookjmex.blogspot.com/>