

# JKß - JOY KROEGER BECKNER - JKß

*classical realism from hounds to humans and an owl!*

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NEWS OF JOY! JOURNEYS OF JOY! :: VOL. TEN, NUMBER ONE :: FEB. 2014

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*Valentine greetings!*

*Thank you for being in my life!*

*Travel with me to San Miguel de Allende, MX.*

Before you go:

1. Get your vehicle registration papers on the Internet! Check Google about how to import a vehicle into Mexico. A \$400 deposit must be made. Learn how to get your deposit back. You will receive your vehicle sticker special delivery via DSL.
2. One week before departure, get a health certificate for each pet.
3. Take a GOOD surge protector for your computer.

DAY ONE, DEC. 30, 2013, 8:10AM. It is sunny and 7 degrees Fahrenheit as Brian, Bo and I leave St. Louis on our first day's drive toward San Miguel De Allende. At 5:23pm, we are greeted by what seems like billions of rudder tail blackbirds chirping on wires outside the La Quinta Inn in Sherman, TX.

DAY TWO, DEC. 31, 2013, TUES., 3:30PM. We arrive in Laredo after a stop in San Antonio to deliver "So Good to See You" SS to a collector who snapped it up from the secondary market.



*"So Good to See You" SS.*

"So Good to See You, MS 14/20, right, is the only "So Good to See You" Smooth that is currently looking for someone to love.

Back to Laredo, we meet Chicago and Michigan friends for dinner and retire early at the LaQuinta Inn by the airport.

RIGHT NOW, turn on airplane mode on your cell phone to avoid paying international roaming! You can write notes or letters in airplane mode - and - you can connect to wi-fi for email.



DAY THREE, JAN. 1, 2014, WED., 7AM. Laredo, TX. It is 45 degrees and drizzly. We guide our friends to International Bridge One. It's a challenge because the bridge signs are very small.



We pay \$3.50US per vehicle to cross the bridge. A few feet into Nuevo Laredo we come to border inspection booths where we must open the back hatch for inspectors to check what we are bringing. They take stuff out of the back, root around in it, and leave it on the pavement.

Getting to the immigration building is a bit tricky: out of the inspection booths turn right toward a narrow alley. Stay to your left and drive to a narrower alley that will curve around to the right and lead you to a four-lane outer road that parallels the Rio Grande. Turn right. In a bit you will see a large long low white building. Turn right into the parking lot.

Inside, go to the first window on the right and get visa papers to fill out. You will need your passport. After filling them out, return to the same window to have the papers stamped.

Next, walk right and down a couple short ramps to pay at booth #4, where someone will verify passport info and then, we pay \$612 pesos = \$45.92US for the privilege of coming to Mexico. That is for Brian and me. They staple two receipts to your visa papers and we are free to go.

Put your vehicle sticker on your windshield, NOW!

Turn right into the same road next to the Rio Grande until you reach a traffic signal where you will diagonally cross a major ring road.

Drive about 5-8 miles on the outer road and follow the signs to turn toward Monterrey on 85D, the old Pan American Highway. After about 60 miles of bad road, you will find beautiful new highway. The bad road is the Libros, free road; 85D is the toll road that is new and good.

Just after you pay the first cuota (toll - \$205 pesos) you will find a rest stop. If it is open, a little place inside has fabulous corn muffins. It is 9:33. Clouds hang low over the mountains that are all around us. They are covered with mesquite and sage punctuated by large Spanish dagger yuccas. Brian sees the free road down the mountain to the left. We are on a very good road and we are passing through very pretty country. My ears pop.

Brian is driving close to 80mph. Mexican drivers zoom by.



A blue painted plywood police car reminds drivers to slow down.

Close to Monterrey, turn right on 40D toward Mexico/Salttillo.

10:07AM. Mountaintops peek through fog. It is 52 degrees and sunlight is trying to emerge. It has rained a LOT! Tire-tracked mud skirts both sides of the road.

Halfway through Monterrey, in the middle of a field, we pass brightly painted, three story concrete houses with mountains looming above the fog. Surreal.

This cuota is \$130 pesos.

After going through another cuota, \$45 pesos, go about 20 miles through mountains and exit right at a sign that says Saltillo Libre. You will be on Hwy 57 and that will take you almost all the way to San Miguel.



Clouds pour over the mountains. Beautiful!

Oops! Somehow we are back on a cuota, toll road. Now, clouds roll over a mountain with snow, a first for us to see. It is 56 degrees. The road is wet from melted light snow.

Stay toward Mexico. (City)



It is 46 degrees and there is more snow, a dusting compared to Chicago and St. Louis, but SNOW!

Two snowmen are alongside the road and Brian saw one on top of a vehicle with branches sticking out of it! Folks stop by the road to look at and touch the snow!

Cuota: \$55 pesos.

Stay on 57 toward Mexico/Matehuala.

11:37 – It is raining and I'm going to try to sleep

11:54 - We stop at San Pedro rest stop for gas and “rest.” (Free “rest” areas are opposite the big terra cotta colored building where everything is for sale.) I buy water and am greeted by Bo Duke when I return to the vehicle. Brian returns bearing coffee and a box of “La Perlas a delicious decadence: flakey sugar covered ‘Decadas de Exquisita Tradition.’ ” In barely ten minutes, the La Perlas hit the spot. Bo licks the box and settles down. Almost.

If your vehicle is equipped with XM Sirius radio, it works perfectly here! We listen to NPR.

It is 12:36pm. In a bit over four hours, we are a little over half way to San Miguel.

I wrote this in an email on my old iPhone G3s, which, when in airplane mode, works perfectly for writing. When we get to the departamento and wi-fi, I will be able to send this to my computer to add to a word document. Hey! A place offered me \$10 for it and it's worth a whole lot more. I can still take pictures with it too, and it will sync with my new iPhone 5s. It is down to 7% battery life, so I will shut this down and start my new iPhone 5s.

BEWARE OF POTHOLES on the Libre!

Ohhhhh, a real Policia Federal pulls into the median.....

Bear left on the cuota to Matehuala/San Luis Potosí. You will still be on 57D.  
Cuota is \$20 pesos. Stay on 57D.

It is 58 degrees as we pass a pickup with two men huddling in the open bed of the truck. A real Policia flashes lights in the median.

GOATS! At least 50 goats are alongside the highway! They are getting wet; a small river has formed uphill. It is runoff from all the rain. Water stands in many areas along 57D.

It is 1:35 and 61 degrees. The road has been beautifully smooth for many miles. But, always watch for potholes and very slow moving trucks!

Bear left on Queretaro/Mexico Cuota Highway 57.

Last toll: \$50 pesos. We are about 120 miles from San Miguel, about two hours. It is 2:31pm. It's 2:54. We hit today's high - 64 degrees! We have just 90 miles to go. Bo is asleep on my lap.

SUMMARY: Eight hours drive time from Laredo. 505 pesos=\$38US+\$3.50 for bridge = about\$42US in tolls. See early paragraphs for getting through immigration.

*Two near collisions! Oh, how I wish I had pictures!*

THREE COWS cross from the right of the road to the median just in front of a truck that has slowed in front of us. Brian hits the brakes, as does a car next to us. We warily pass a bull on the right; he is eyeing the divided four-lane road and we hope he makes it safely across to be with his ladies.

A BMW passes us going at least 100 mph. We are going 80. Good thing he wasn't in front of us or he'd have hit the cows!

Brian told me about a HAWK that came within two feet of our windshield when I was trying to sleep a while ago. Whew!

Brian thinks we are on the testing road for Ford and GM suspension systems! It's back down to 58 degrees and cloudy. We learn later that our friend blew a tire thanks to potholes here.

Ahhhhhh, frescas con crema, strawberries and cream, and miel, honey. Many persons sell out of the back of their pickups or crudely built cajetas, stands.



It's 3:25 and we pass a Pollo Feliz, the Mexican equivalent to Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Exit right on Mexico Highway 10 toward San Miguel de Allende and Dr. Mora. This is a narrow two-lane paved road through beautiful farmland. Note the farmer friendly dirt road along Highway 10.



Now, prepare for Los Rodriguez, a small town with eighteen unmarked topes! Topes (toh-pays) are among the world's most effective speed bumps, especially when they are unmarked. Natives sell everything from stands along the street.

4:30ish – We drive into San Miguel on the road known as the Salida de Queratero. We turn right to drive up Santa Domingo where we find a truck cab. We pay the driver \$200 pesos to help load everything from my fully loaded Suburban into the back of his truck, and then take it to the casa, which is on Calvario, a very narrow alley way that was designed for burro traffic. Of course, vehicles are parked on one side, so getting a Suburban through that narrow space is impossible. The cabbie drives me to the casa and helps me unload into the entryway. I carry everything but our suitcases up the stairs and down the stairs to our apartment, Las Bovedas, in the back. I am tired.

Meanwhile, Brian drives my Suburban to the big covered parking garage where we parked last year, and then he walks home in 30 minutes. Then we head to El Pagaso, a favorite little restaurant that is downhill blocks from the apartment. We are at 6500 feet elevation.



JANUARY 2, the apartment is 57 degrees inside. We have a fireplace in the living room/bedroom of our studio apartment. And, there is a chiminea (terra cotta gas fireplace on a stand) in the kitchen. We also have an electric oil heater in the kitchen. In the bathroom there is an electric space heater. They all help.

JANUARY 3, Brian returns to the big garage and is told that the person who decides if we may park there for their monthly rate of \$600 pesos is on vacation until January 18! We must pay \$25 pesos an hour – about \$20US an hour through that date. The rules have changed; the rate is not retroactive. NO WAY!

Brian ordered a new power connector for his new computer. Since he'd forgotten his, he can only play Solitaire on his old computer until the cord comes.

JANUARY 6, Monday, we walk to Via Organica for good milk and goat yogurt. From there, it is not far to Dr. Ricardo's office where we buy 15 pounds of frozen raw food for Bo. This is all heavy, so we cab home for \$35 pesos, about \$3US.

JANUARY 7, today, after Brian walked around town for close to a week looking for parking, our neighbor Sharon tells us of a place she thinks will be perfect, even though it is not covered parking. Funny story. She tells us that Pablo really likes tequila. Pablo runs the parking area at this place she knows. Brian walks there, finds Pablo and asks him if he likes tequila. "Si..." Brian says he would really like to park there for two months, so Pablo goes to see the woman who owns the parking places and comes back saying we can park there for two months for \$350 pesos per month, about \$30US. Brian then walks back downtown to buy a nice bottle of tequila, and walks it back to Pablo who is ecstatic. He then walks home and falls into bed, a very tired boy.

JANUARY 8, Wednesday. Our landlord Ernest welcomes us to the First Week Anniversary of our Arrival. The casa is still cold, but what do you want with no central heat and concrete walls? Daytime temperatures OUTSIDE are pleasant!







#### A WALK ON MESONES:

JANUARY 9, Thursday. What have we done all week? Food is the fridge, and temps in the apartment have risen to 60-61 in the morning. I am typing this on the upstairs patio in brilliant sunshine. Life is good. The patio must be 80+ degrees. The warmth is lovely and short-lived. It is cold outside at night and in the casa.



Candles are lined up at the Casket Maker's shop. Do you see the casket display through the window?





The Casket Maker's Candles contrast with a child's ride in a shoe store farther up Mesones.

JANUARY 9, 2:54PM. A band plays off key somewhere in the street. Brian takes a nap. I am about to walk across town to a Pilates reformer class in a fancy part of town, Guadiana. We are settling in.



I believe this is a Cup & Saucer vine (*cobaea scandens*) covering a house in Guadiana.

JANUARY 12, Sunday evening, after dinner at a small Mexican place, El Correo, we walk half a block to the Jardin to find out what the commotion is all about. Dueling bands are raising quite a stir – literally!



Male dancers decked in long feathers move to strong drumbeats; opposite are Irish dancers. A leprechaun invites me to dance!



In the Jardin, I get my boots polished by a gentleman who is very proud of his shine. It costs 10 pesos, I give him 15, and he is *mue feliz!* Very happy! Oh, 15 pesos is \$1.12US. I should have given him 20 pesos!

JANUARY 13, 3PM. We see “American Hustle” at the Pocket Theater that is run by a former jeweler who serves a beverage of choice and popcorn with the ticket. The movie is excellent!

JANUARY 30, MONDAY. The weather is finally warm enough to rarely need fireplace heat in the apartment. Of course, there have been times when I wore five layers including woolen long underwear. It is really nice to have more comfortable temperatures inside and out! San Miguel is the only place we know where we have to go outside to get warm!

Today, Nonnie, my Mac Guru, returned my computer after working on my frozen email program. I am to DELETE the joybeckner@sbcglobal.net address and use my new [joybeckner@me.com](mailto:joybeckner@me.com) email address. I am spending way too much time on the computer to help reorganize it; next I will work on taxes..

Brian’s computer charger arrives, finally.

FEBRUARY 1, Brian and I see “Diana Vreeland, The Eye Has to Travel” a documentary about the editor of Harper’s Bazar, and Vogue and later, the director of the Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is especially fascinating since I was in the fashion business in the 60s, styling fashion shows at Famous-Barr, which was part of May Co. Diana was the self-taught Empress of Fashion for fifty years!

FEBRUARY 4. Yay! A new collector emailed his signed layaway agreement, and said his deposit will be in the mail tomorrow. Hmmmmmm..... Just two remain in the edition of Dreaming of Tomatoes, MS.





*"Dreaming of Tomatoes" MS.*

FEBRUARY 5. Brian and I see Lawrence, our wonderful, Vidal Sassoon-trained, haircutter. We are ready!

FEBRUARY 6. A friend and I see a fabulous documentary, "Vermeer: Master of Light". See it!

FEBRUARY 8, In the Jardin, before walking to Candelaria, gymnasts perform - and - this horse and his handler, wonder what that is all about.





FEBRUARY 8, SATURDAY. On our walk on Aldama to Candelaria, I turn around and snap this picture of the Parroquia.

*A taste of Candelaria, the annual plant sale in Parque Juarez ...*













*Ernest's Pride - Picks from Candelaria*

*Back to a particularly nice evening in January...*

**JANUARY 17.** Brian and I join our downstairs neighbor Sharon to celebrate our landlord Ernest's 85th birthday. Our dinners at the Rosewood Hotel are beautifully presented and excellent. It's our first time there. Meet Sharon, Ernest and his cake.



"Tis the always the season to remember what's most important.



There comes a time in your life, when you walk away from all the drama and people who create it. You surround yourself with people who make you laugh. Forget the bad, and focus on the good. Love the people who treat you right, pray for the ones who don't.

"Life is too short to be anything but happy.  
Falling down is a part of life, getting back up is living."



*Brian and Bo*





*May you enjoy goodness & peace in 2014!*

*Happy Valentine's Day!*

*Joy*

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