



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM



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*"Ofrendas en el
Calvario.
Cobán, Alta
Verapaz." The
painting by
David Ordoñez
presented to
Baysis
Hempstead by
her museum
friends.*



BAYSIS STEPS DOWN

"In 1947 I read a book that said that our wonderful native Guatemalan textiles were going to start to vanish in five years," recalls Lucie Hempstead.

"I was appalled and decided to try to do something to preserve them. That's what started me going." In short order, Lucie Hempstead, a tall dynamic woman whom everyone calls Baysis, quickly rounded up several like-minded people. They created a Textile Committee within the already existing Tikal Association, a private group set up to save archaeological treasures of Guatemalan culture. In 1974, the splinter organization broke away from its parent to become the wholly independent Ixchel Museum. Nine years later, the Friends of the Ixchel Museum came into being. Its founder: Baysis.

After 15 years of tireless leadership, Lucie Hempstead has now retired from the Board. It is safe to say that the effectiveness of the Friends owes much to her dedication and spirit. She pushed, she prodded, she cajoled. She would not take no for an answer.

What were the early days like? Baysis remembers realizing, in 1983, that the Ixchel Museum could raise money in the U.S. After all, North American visitors to the museum showed great interest in Guatemalan textiles, recognizing them as the unique treasures they are. But visitors' gifts would come, Baysis knew, only if they were tax-deductible. That meant setting up a not for profit arm in the U.S.

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IN THE MUSEUM

THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM will be celebrated all year long with various events.

THE ORDER OF THE RUPAN PLATO was bestowed May 12th upon Lucie Hempstead for her extraordinary, life-long work for the Ixchel Museum. The sash was woven with *cuyuscate*, native brown cotton, with the design of the *rupan plato* from the Comalapa ceremonial *huipil*-the symbol of the Ixchel Museum.

AN ANONYMOUS DONATION was given for the cases, platforms and mannequins of the regional exhibit. The exhibit of textiles made with *cuyuscate* will open in the Alfred S. Clark Gallery, October 22.

CURATOR ROSARIO MIRALBES DE POLANCO published

an article, "Threads of Time," in the catalogue of the Helsinki, Finland, textile exhibit August to December 1997.

PRIVATE TEXTILE COLLECTIONS of 200 pieces each were donated to the museum by Sylvia de Leonowens and Thelma de Willemsen.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN are being brought to the Ixchel Museum in a project "educándonos juntos" in which embassies and private schools sponsor the cost of the bus to bring the children to the museum.

A WEAVING EXHIBIT will be inaugurated in Comalapa Sunday, June 14th, by the Pro-Teje group. Prizes will be given for paintings submitted to the Carmen de Pettersen regional biennial.



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Baysis turned for advice to Joe Borgatti, then the North American chief executive of International Nickel Co.'s large operation in Guatemala. He in turn put her in contact with Scott Hand, General Counsel for INCO in New York. Scott offered to do the legal work necessary and in just six months informed Baysis that the U.S. Friends of the Ixchel Museum had been cleared by the IRS as an official charitable/educational entity.

"Our thanks go to Scott for this achievement," she says. "What a generous gift to the new foundation."

The first meeting of the Friends was held at Scott's house in Brooklyn in June 1984. Present were Scott, Joe, Baysis and Baysis' friend and member of the Pan American Development Fund, Lois Stratton. They defined the goals of the new institution: promote interest in and understanding of the textiles and other articles made by the peoples of Guatemala so that both the textiles and the skills needed to weave them be preserved; and to foster and promote public interest in the textiles by sponsoring programs on, lectures about and studies of them as well as trips to see them.

The board now consists of 16 members from all over the U.S.--all professional, enthusiastic and competent--and virtually all attracted to the organization by Baysis. She can look back with some pleasure at the group's accomplishments.

It has:

- Translated into English and published five Ixchel Museum research monographs on the costumes of Comalapa, Solola,

Santa María de Jesús, Colotenango and Zunil--with a sixth, the History of Mayan Clothing, in press. The Friends has also published an exhibit guide, *Cofradia Fiesta*, and Bibliography of Mayan Textiles, both in English;

- Produced three videos in English on the *cofradia* ceremonies, the history of Mayan dress, and the weaving villages around Lake Atitlan, and given a Spanish master copy of each video to the Ixchel Museum.

- Sponsored an exhibit in La Joya, California, and another on the *cofradia*, which traveled to three venues, and a third, just this past fall, at Longwood Gardens, Philadelphia;

- Helped to fund the start of a weaving project Pro-Teje and its extension to more villages;

- Bought a computer and books about textiles in English for the Ixchel Museum's library.



Though retired, Baysis still keeps an active interest in the Friends' doings, always ready to lend a hand--or twist an arm. To the Friends themselves, Lucie Hempstead is not only the group's mother, she is its guiding spirit, the energetic visionary who proved over and over again that even the largest obstacles can be

surmounted in time, especially if one can summon the help of like-minded people.

Characteristically she plays down her role.

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FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

THE ANNUAL MEETING of Friends of the Ixchel Museum was held in Philadelphia April 17th and 18th. Susan and Charles Davis hosted a buffet dinner party for the board and Philadelphia donors and friends of the museum.

NEW MEMBERS elected to the board were Yolanda Alcorta, Carlos Nottebohm, and Kathy Williams.

THE CUYUSCATE RESEARCH MONOGRAPH will be translated into English by Friends.

PRO-TEJE will receive additional funding to begin work in four new weaving villages.

THE SUE BORGATTI LIBRARY will be enriched with more books, a printer and scanner to go with the new computer, and funds will be allocated for data entry and cataloguing.

THE LONGWOOD EXHIBIT mounted by Friends in November was visited by more than 5,000 people.

A TRAVELLING EXHIBIT of textiles will be curated by Nicky Smith Falck and a data base started to catalogue textiles in the U.S. that might be loaned to Friends for exhibits. If you have Guatemalan textiles you would be willing to loan for exhibits, please let Friends know.

IT IS WITH GREAT SORROW WE ANNOUNCE THE DEATH OF MARJORIE STILLMAN DECEMBER 11, 1997. MARJORIE WAS A GREAT FRIEND OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM AND A FOUNDING MEMBER OF FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM.



*Women from Comalapa Thierry Del Rue.
Photo Archive Ixchel Museum.*



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The real heroes, as she sees it, are the weavers of Guatemala with their simple backstrap looms. They have passed their traditional skills down for generations despite devastating earthquakes, social upheaval and the onslaught of modern technology.

"Our challenge is to preserve these traditions," Baysis says, never losing sight of her original inspiration. "Through our efforts we must prevent these beautiful works of art from disappearing."

Philip Herrera

DONATIONS TO FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

Please help Friends of the Ixchel Museum sponsor weaving projects, bring textile exhibits to the U.S., translate textile research, and fund videos that bring to life the tradition and artistry of Guatemalan textiles.

Friends of the Ixchel Museum is an American foundation and donations are deductible by the donor for U.S. general income tax purposes. Checks drawn to the name of Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc., may be mailed to:

Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc. P.O. Box 27283, Los Angeles, CA. 90027

PRESERVING THE TEXTILE ARTS OF GUATEMALA



Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc.
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Left: Detail of the sash of the order of the Rupan Plato

Below: The English monographs and videos published by Friends of the Ixchel Museum.

