October 10th 1990

Hispanic News
A Courageous Lady Speaks Out

"He took away all my self-esteem, my self-worth, everything that I had worked and built for myself all my life and it was taken away by this man who raped me and crippled my mind forever." This statement was made by Mary Lou De La Torre with a deep feeling of hurt, anger and bitterness as she sat very stiffly in her chair, tears in her eyes and very vividly began to talk about the rape that occurred in April 1988, while she was at work.

"I was working by myself in the back room at a newly developed business area where there wasn't much activity. My boss had gone out and I didn't lock the doors. Someone came in and surprised me when I went to the front office. He asked about applying for a job, but I was leery because he wasn't dressed to be job hunting. He suddenly pulled out a gun and held it to my chest. My heart was pounding and my thoughts were, Oh my God, this is it, I'm going to die. My mind was on my husband and son and that I would never see them again.

The man who raped Mrs. De La Torre was caught. He had raped three other women in the area. For a year and a half, the rapist was found guilty on 22 counts. Additionally, Mrs. De La Torre will be honored for her courageous public effort in the rape prevention program by the Citizens War On Crime Commission at its 6th Annual Citizen's recognition Luncheon to be held at the Red Lion Hotel on October 19, 1990.

The following is a statement by Mrs. Mary Lou De La Torre.

"The myths and stereotypes that are attached to rape is the most misunderstood crime of all. So many women are in denial. They say it can never happen to them. That's a bad attitude because it prevents women from being aware. Every woman is a potential target, regardless of how they look. I will continue to tell people that the best protection they have from becoming a victim is to realize that it can happen to them. And I'm finding out, people are beginning to understand that rape is a criminal act and that victim's rights do exist. I don't think I'm going to change the world, but if I can make the difference in one person's life, then telling my own story has been worth it.

No one wants to admit that they could be a victim of such violence and humiliation. Yet, the fact remains, rape is America's growing violent crime. Statistically, one of three women will be raped before the age of 60.

This act of violence threw my world out of balance. I wanted to somehow reach out and help others understand the tragedy of rape, especially in my community. This is why I became a volunteer so that my message could be heard.

Mary Lou De La Torre

My goal is to educate the public on the realities of rape. There is a need for this education.

"Mary Lou feels so strongly about the Lady Beware Program, it seems to be a mission. She has moved the program from beyond it being just a presentation of tips to prevent rape. The uniqueness of a victim recalling personal events of an assault that are so heinous takes a lot of strength. People don't forget that."

Sgt. Dan Hernandez
former Director of the Lady Beware Program

Sexual Assault Service Seeks Volunteers

San Bernardino Sexual Assault Services, a county-wide counseling and support program for victims of sexual assault will begin a training program for volunteer hotline counselors.

Classes will be held from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Monday and Wednesday evenings beginning October 1, 1990 in our agency's offices. Our offices are located at 1875 North "D" St., San Bernardino. Training will be on an ongoing basis. Interested individuals may begin at any time. There is no charge for the training.

After completing the 48-hour training program, volunteers may work out of their homes five hours a week. Some local colleges and universities offer credit for this training and subsequent services. We are a United Way agency.

There is a great need for bilingual volunteers and individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

For further information call 883-8689 and ask for Kacy.
The Hispanic Family in California

BY Assemblyman Tom Bates

Assemblyman Bates is Chair of the Assembly Committee on Human Services and is Co-Chair of the Joint Select Task Force on the Changing Family.

Family issues must become a priority in California. Critical issues such as education, child care, health care and housing must be addressed in a more meaningful way by leaders in both government and the business community.

While these issues affect all Californians, they are particularly important to the fast growing Hispanic community because of its young age and the perilous economic status of far too many Hispanic families. We have a special opportunity now to have an impact which will be felt for generations to come.

Education holds the key to upward mobility. Currently over one and one-half million Hispanic students are enrolled in California's public schools. This accounts for a full one third of all students, and the total number, as well as the percentage of the total student population, is expected to grow over the next decade.

Last year 149,325 Hispanic children were in the first grade. This contrasts to only 57,460 in the twelfth grade. These numbers reflect two trends—a societal increase in the number of births, and the fact that as a group Hispanics are more likely than others to be in their childbearing years and to have young children.

Unfortunately, these numbers also reflect the fact that Hispanics tend to drop out at a rate almost twice as high as non-Hispanic whites. The current one year drop out rate for Hispanics is 10.8 percent. Of those who start in the 10th grade, 28.5 percent do not graduate from the 12th grade.

What is particularly disturbing about the dropout rate is that because of the increasing technological nature of our economy, it is very difficult to find employment without a solid education. A good job not only allows you to be self-supporting, it makes it possible to take responsibility for providing for a family.

And there are other factors making it increasingly difficult for parents to provide for their families.

Child care is a major concern to parents, most of whom have to work. In one study, more than a quarter of the people had difficulty in finding child care, and in another study, a quarter of the parents had experienced two to five breakdowns in their child care arrangements in the last three months.

Cost is also a problem for many, with the average cost of child care in excess of $3,000 a year. The cost, of course, goes up when you have more than one child.

Health care is another area where the costs have gone up dramatically. Health care is especially expensive if your employer does not provide health insurance and you have to buy it directly. Over five million people in California have no health insurance of any kind, and nearly 80 percent are working parents and their children.

The impact of little or no health care starts even before birth. Women who receive no prenatal care have babies who are four times more likely to die and three times more likely to be born at low birth weight, and the problems continue throughout a child's life.

Housing, as everyone is now aware, has also gone sky high. According to the California Association of Realtors, the price of an average home in the state is now almost $200,000. This translates into a monthly payment of $1,600 and requires an annual income of $65,000, not to mention the conventional requirement of a 20 percent down, or $40,000.

Currently only 18 percent of the general population can afford to buy a house at these prices. For the Hispanic community it is much less.

As the price of houses has gone up, so have rents. Over half of low income renters—including many single parents—now spend half their income on rent.

Families have always been the cornerstone of the Hispanic community and of a larger society. As a state we need to focus on how we can support families and help them deal with the frustrations and challenges they face in today's world. Only by looking at the ways that social and economic forces affect families can we begin to help families help themselves. In doing so, we ensure the long term health of the community and of our entire state.

Police Cultural Awareness Programs

SACRAMENTO -- Legislation co-authored by Senator Ruben S. Ayala that will train law enforcement officers in the cultural and racial differences of Californians was signed into law by Governor George Deukmejian on Tuesday.

The measure, Senate Bill 2680, instructs the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training to develop culturally-specific guidelines and instruction by July 1, 1991.

"The purpose of this bill is to better equip officers with knowledge that will help them defuse potentially-explosive racial incidents," Ayala explained.

The measure was introduced following a hearing on police procedures by the Senate Select Committee on State Procurement and Expenditure Practices, chaired by Senator Dan Boatwright (D-Concord), lead author of the bill.

Ayala explained the course will stress understanding and respect for race and cultural practices, and development of more effective, non-combative means of carrying out law enforcement duties in a racially and culturally diverse environment.

Write a Serviceman in Saudi Arabia

BY Senator Bill Leonard

25th Senate District

At this very moment tens of thousands of American service-members are in Saudi Arabia, waiting for Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to make his next move. They are there at the request of Saudi Arabia and the order of President Bush in hopes of preventing further aggression by Hussein.

They are there willingly, and they are serving with pride, patriotism and dedication to duty. Their jobs are not easy and the conditions in the Saudi desert are much harsher than what they experienced in U.S. desert training (even at Fort Irwin in the Mohave Desert).

They are far away from their loved ones, in a new environment, facing an unsure situation.

Our servicemen need two things. The first is quality political leadership and direction; I am confident that President Bush and the Congress are providing this. The second is our support. We must show them that we value their service, appreciate their dedication, and respect their sacrifice.

Reach a member of the Army or Air Force by writing to: Any Serviceman, Operation Desert Shield, APO New York 09848-0006. A member of the Marines or Navy will receive a letter sent to: Any Servicewoman, Operation Desert Shield, SPO New York, 09866-0006.
Marie Banuelos named
Bloomington High V.P.

Marie Banuelos, formerly the dean of athletics and activities at Duarte High School, was selected as Bloomington High School's new assistant principal. She takes the place of Jim Down, who was named principal of Colton's Washington Alternative High School.

Banuelos began teaching full-time in 1975 in journalism and honors English instruction at Duarte High School. She taught there for 12 years, then was named an outreach consultant for the Alternative Education Work Center in the Duarte Unified School District.

At the Work Center, Banuelos led a dropout recovery program for youths age 13 and older. "Students included gang members, pregnant minors, students on probation or fresh out of jail," she said. Through counseling and curriculum placement with computer instruction, enrollment in the program doubled and the number of graduates increased four times in the first year, she said.

In 1988, she returned to Duarte High as dean of athletics and activities. Since 1985, Banuelos also has served as a consultant and has given workshops in self-esteem, curriculum, motivation and cooperative learning. "I've helped teachers learn to work together and to perceive their job more positively. This improved teachers' interaction with adolescents," she said.

She also has conducted seminars for mentor teachers, GATE teachers, special education instructors and counselors. "They're all looking for a shot in the arm."

Banuelos is the co-author of Self Esteem in the Classroom: A Curriculum Guide, which is used throughout the U.S. and Australia. The curriculum received the 1988 Award of Merit by Curriculum Product News.

She is looking forward to putting her talents to work at Bloomington High School. "I have a lot of management skills, a lot of organizational skills. I plan to work to make Bloomington High more efficient and more effective. I also want to boost technical support to enable teachers to do a better job," she said.

Banuelos has a bachelor of arts degree and master's in education for California State University, Dominguez Hills.

She lives in Ontario with her husband, Santiago. They have three grown children and two grandchildren.

Family Service Agency Steps Up Hotline

There is now a greater capacity to respond to crises in San Bernardino County. The federal VISTA program has added a bilingual staff member to the Family Service Agency's Suicide/Crisis Intervention Services.

Lisa Haro has been placed as federal "Volunteers in Service to America" (VISTA). VISTA is the domestic Peace Corp sponsored by the federal ACTION Agency. Ms. Haro will help enlarge and improve services offered by the Suicide/Crisis Intervention Hotline which reaches people in crisis 24 hours a day. She will bring public information about hotline services to the community and increase the hotline's capacity to reach special population groups, such as teens and high risk elderly.

Lisa Haro is a student at Cal State completing a BA in Counseling. Previously, she worked 10 years for San Bernardino County in the area of law enforcement.

The Hotline is available for all emergencies and especially for those facing life threatening crises. Telephone counselors are available on the Hotline 24 hours a day. One may reach a telephone counselor by dialing (714) 886-4889.

Individuals wishing to train to become a Hotline counselor can call Family Service Agency's Community Service Division at 886-6521. Extensive training is conducted by staff, experienced volunteers and community professionals.

SBVC - Watkins replaces Smith

SAN BERNARDINO - Spencer Watkins, San Bernardino Valley College athletic director, last night was confirmed by the college district's board of trustees as the college's acting dean of students. He succeeds Steve Smith who took a year's leave to accept a post as vice president and general manager of Spirit, the city's Single-A baseball team.

Watkins' appointment runs from Sept. 28 until June 30, 1991, the length of Smith's leave. Stepping in as acting athletic director and division chairman for a year is Gene Mazzei, Valley's cross country coach.

Watkins was first hired in 1976 as Valley's head basketball coach, coming from Pittsbugh public schools, where over a period of 10 years, he coached varsity, football, track and basketball. In the latter, his teams twice won the state's Class AAA championships.

Watkins twice was named the city league's coach of the year. His team in 1971 was rated 4th among high school basketball teams in the nation.

At Valley College, Watkins served as men's athletic director and division chairman before becoming the athletic director in 1984. He received his bachelor-of-science degree in 1954 from West Virginia State College and a master's degree in education in 1970 from the University of Pittsburgh.

Locally, Watkins is a board member of the Rialto Girls Softball League.
RIVERSIDE -- A joint study between the University of California, Riverside and independent public school districts in the Inland Empire has concluded that smaller class size produces significantly higher student achievement and that class size reduction can be accomplished without costly expansion of staff or facilities.

The research, conducted by the UCR-led California Educational Research Cooperative (CERC), would end longstanding disputes over the merit of cutting class size, said Douglas Mitchell, UCR professor of Education and director of CERC.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH BY CERC, A PARTNERSHIP INVOLVING THE UCR SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, THE RIVERSIDE AND SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION, AND 21 SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE TWO COUNTIES, HAS ALSO CONCLUDED THAT THE PRACTICE OF HOLDING STUDENTS BACK ONE OR MORE GRADES WILL LIKELY RESULT IN THEIR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL. RETENTION IN GRADE IS A FAILED POLICY, SAID THE CERC RESEARCHERS.

The CERC partnership is the first in the nation in which a major university and nearby public schools have joined by contract to solve pressing educational problems in the school districts.

The participating school districts, which pay nearly half of the $475,000 yearly budget, help formulate and shape the design of research projects carried out by UCR faculty and doctoral candidates. The partnership, now entering its third year of operation, is achieving remarkable success, said Mitchell, and is being watched closely by the state legislature as a promising new development in education.

The study on class size and achievement was intended to sift through conflicting claims and arrive at a clear understanding of whether and how class size affects achievement.

CERC Director Mitchell, along with doctoral candidate Cristi Carson and Research Associate Gary Badarak, conducted an exhaustive review of research published this century on class size and concluded that smaller classes positively improve student achievement. The gains, said Mitchell, are produced through identifiable changes in the behavior of both teachers and students.

The CERC study revealed that historic discounting of research methods and misleading conclusions that have resulted in a widespread discounting of the importance class size has on achievement.

Student achievement decreases as class sizes get larger, said Mitchell. The effect can be found at all grade levels, in all subject areas, and for all types of students regardless of socio-economic status, ability, or prior achievement levels.

As far as schools in Riverside and San Bernardino counties are concerned, said Mitchell, the effect of cutting the current average class size from the current 29 to the statewide average of 23 would produce a cumulative gain in achievement of more than 16 percentage points.

That is, the average kindergartners in these two counties -- those expected to graduate from high school at exactly the 50th percentile -- would be expected to exceed the 66th percentile if all their classes were reduced to 23 students.

Students in smaller classes learn more because teachers with fewer students can use classroom space and student grouping strategies more effectively, he said. They are also able to improve the quality of time and attention given to each student, reduce noise levels, and maintain better discipline. Smaller classes engender a family-like atmosphere of cooperation, permit more frequent and beneficial use of learning centers, allow more field trips and cooking and art projects, encounter fewer discipline problems, and permit more effective monitoring of performance.

The most promising strategy for reducing instructional group size is re-deployment of existing school staff for part or all of the school day, said Mitchell. California schools have five certificated teachers for every four classes currently in operation. This means that with creative scheduling and teacher assignment, the instructional group size for at least one-half of every student's school day could be reduced from the current level of 28 students per teacher to about 15 students per teacher, claim the CERC researchers.

Creative scheduling could involve, for instance, establishing a three-hour time block for core subjects-language arts, reading, mathematics, and social studies. During that time, all certificated staff would take a class of about 15 students, protected from any interruptions.

Other activities would take place in classes up to 30 students. This type of schedule would free specialist teachers to provide help to special need children as well as provide teachers with planning time. The arrangement also allows for music instruction.

In addition, instructional techniques typically utilized in smaller classes could be incorporated easily, said Mitchell.

In focusing on the practical holding students back a year, the CERC project intended a full-scale program of empirical research. An exhaustive study of published research conducted by CERC revealed that they need go no further. Study after study, said Irving Hendrick,
AIDS Risk Reduction

By: Laura Bocanegra-Barney, MPH

Ms. Bocanegra-Barney is a Health Education Specialist II, working on the HIV Risk Reduction & Education Project, County of San Bernardino Public Health Department.

The County of San Bernardino Health Department has scheduled a series of activities and speakers for the month of October in conjunction with National AIDS Awareness Month as designated by President Bush.

One of the scheduled speakers is Dr. Raul Magaña, Director of Community Aids Education Program for Orange County Health Care Agency. He is scheduled to speak on October 24, 1990, at the Joshua Room in the County Center, corner of 21st and Valencia Avenue, San Bernardino.

The contest winner will be videotaped for the St. Bernardine Medical Center Foundation Telethon to benefit their Hospice Program. KCBS TV-3 will air the Telethon live on February 24, 1991. KCBS TV, in conjunction with Comcast, United Artist Cable, as well as other area cable companies, will join forces during the night of the Telethon.

St. Bernardine's Talent Telecast

St. Bernardine Medical Center Foundation has scheduled a talent audition for every type of entertainers on Saturdays, October 13th, 20th and 27th from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. at St. Bernardine Medical Center Education Center, corner of 21st and Valencia Avenue, San Bernardino.

Smaller Classes - Continued

The study determined that retention does not maintain integrity of grade-level curriculum; does not guarantee consistent standards of student evaluation and placement; and results in a need for additional teachers, facilities and materials at a factor approximating the rate of retention.

Additionally, it compounds existing problems of achievement and achievement standard differences that influence retention; and almost surely predicts future drop outs.

Other projects now under way through the CERC partnership include a full study of who drops out of school and why; why children do not seek help from teachers when encountering academic difficulties (such help-seeking is known to advance learning skills); planning and organizing for new schools; and year-round education.

El hogar es la primera escuela del niño

El hogar es la primera escuela del niño y los padres son los primeros y más importantes maestros del pequeño. El niño aprende más durante los primeros cinco años de vida que en cualquier otra etapa... ¡son una esponja que lo absorben todo! Es por esto que el hogar debe ofrecer al niño los estímulos necesarios para que alcance el grado de madurez físico, mental, emocional y social que le permitirá aprender y dar un buen rendimiento cuando ingrese a la escuela. Nosotros como padres, debemos proveer a nuestros hijos con las experiencias adecuadas para este desarrollo. Las investigaciones han mostrado que la estimulación intelectual o la carencia de ella durante el primer año de vida tienen una gran influencia sobre la inteligencia y comportamiento del niño tarde. Podemos decir, sin temor a equivocarnos, que el hogar es el ambiente ideal para el aprendizaje de los niños durante sus primeros años de vida.

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Watch for the Special Election Issue on October 31
Girl Scout Calendars on Sale

Girl Scouts throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties will be taking orders for the 1991 Girl Scout calendar beginning on October 2. Calendar delivery will begin on November 1.

Two sizes of calendars will be sold again this year, the wall calendar, complete with a page of date reminder stickers, which will sell for $3; and the pocket planner which will sell for $2.50.

The calendars are a combined effort of ten Girl Scout councils throughout California and will include photographs of girls in program activities throughout the state.

This year, the Girl Scout calendar has undergone some very positive changes which should help the girls sell even more calendars than before. The size of the calendar has increased this year, from an 8 1/2 by 11 inch format last year, to a 10 by 13 inch format this year. There will also be larger date squares to write in. Each council will have its own cover, so girls from the San Gorgonio Council will be selling calendars that have a photograph of San Gorgonio girls on the cover and the words "San Gorgonio Girl Scout Council - 1991 Calendar."

Although the sale of Girl Scout calendars is not as popular as the annual Girl Scout cookie sale, the calendar sale allows girls to generate troop funds at the beginning of the Girl Scout year. The Girl Scout year runs from October 1 through September 30. These funds are used to cover the cost of troop activities such as troop outings, arts and crafts supplies, badges and badge work supplies, and troop camping.

1990 Muscular Dystrophy Association Beauty Pageant

San Bernardino & Riverside County...Join us as we contribute to the "1990 25th Anniversary of the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon. Through personal commitment, We all share the dream of finding a cure for "Jerry's Kids." E.R.A. Real Estate and Shirley Rivera's Mr. & Miss American Beauty Pageants are proud to present...The "1990 Muscular Dystrophy Association Beauty Pageant," all proceeds will benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association - and all costs to you are 100% tax deductible. Your participation in this pageant will help fund research to find a cure, provide more walkers, wheelchairs. But, most importantly it means "HOPE", hope for a cure!

The 1990 MDA Pageants will take place on October 21st, in San Bernardino at the Maruko Hotel. Boys, Girls, Men, and Women...ages 0-19 years old can call Pageant Director, Shirley Rivera at (818) 964-3048 for more information and applications. The overall beauty and high point optional winner will officially present all proceeds from pageant on KTLA during the local telecast of the "Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon." Prizes include: Beautiful Trophies, Custom Banners, Fabulous Crowns, a Cruise, $1,000 Savings Bond, a Vacation for Two, an Amethyst & Diamond Ring, Toys 'R' Us Gift Certificates, and Official Pageant Medallions. Get involved, participate in the "1990 MDA Beauty Pageant."

Let's get our kids to help "Jerry's Kids." Call (818) 964-3048.

Applications for Beauty Pageant can be picked up at Barter Exchange. Submitted by the Barter Exchange which has a membership count of 240. Membership Count now at 240.

For applications and more information Shirley Rivera at (818) 364-3048 or feel free to pick up applications at the following locations:

Riverside:
Local ERA Office
Her Little Majesty - Tyler Mall
Grago's Pizzaria - 7030 Magnolia Ave.
60 Minute Photo - 3701 Merril St. #22
Alan Dale's Baby News-Riv. Plaza
Gift World - Riverside Plaza
Leather Expo - Riverside Plaza
Fantasy One - Riverside Plaza
Interch Telematcularions, 11800 Sterling Ave., Suite L

San Bernardino:
Local ERA Office
Maruko Hotel - 295 North E Street
Barter Exchange - 1678 No. E. St

Colton:
Muscular Dystrophy Association, 1027 San Antonio, Suite B

Indian Hills:
Skycon - Indian Hills Mall

Applications are also available at all Inland Empire ERA Real Estate offices.

I invite all Hispanics to come out and show our support for this special cause. Come out and take a picture with the Aztec-GT. This car will be going to Bonnville 1991 for a world class speed record. The Barter Exchange and Car Craft Inc. of Riverside are co-sponsors.
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For more information call (714) 381-6259
Mayan Civilization Re-discovered

RIVERSIDE -- Archaeologist Karl Taube doesn't consider himself another Indiana Jones, slogging through Central American jungles in search of ancient Mayan treasure. "It's a nice fantasy," said Taube, assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Riverside and a leading authority on Maya culture. "I have swung a machete, and that really feels great. But it is only part of the picture. Most of archaeology is pains-taking academic research and lots of writing."

He'll be doing much more of that in coming months as a leader in what has become one of the largest archaeological undertakings ever mounted in Mesoceramia. Taube has been appointed Director of Iconographic Investigations of the Petexbatun Archaeological Project in Guatemala's Peten jungle, working with archaeologists from Vanderbilt University.

There on a point jutting into Lake Petexbatun, near Mexico's Chiapas coast, may be the answer to why one of history's most advanced civilizations, the Maya, collapsed so suddenly and mysteriously nearly 1200 years ago. Taube, 32, a noted expert in deciphering Maya writing and art (from hieroglyphs and inconography), will be looking for clues in ancient inscriptions in the extensive ruins of Dos Pilas.

"The Maya system of writing is real writing," said Taube. "It is a phonetic and syllabic system based on a syllabary. You can either spell words out syllabically or you can write them ideographically, as a picture."

In fact, the Maya would write things two or three different ways in a single text, said Taube. For example, the sound "can" could be rendered as the number four, the symbol for sky, or as a snake. And, Mayan signs and symbols can be a sound, a syllable, or a whole word.

That makes the language more fascinating, but far more difficult to translate, he said, particularly when nothing comparable to the Egyptian Rosetta stone has been found, or likely ever will be.

Taube's work has corrected considerable misinterpretation accumulated over the years concerning the Maya language and customs.

UCR Archaeologist Karl Taube

Preliminary glyphic or epigraphic research suggests that the monuments give unusual and specific direction to the tombs of the society's elite, where it is expected major new findings will be discovered, including fine work in jade and painted pottery.

But fascinating as tombs of the elite are, Taube is using other means to uncover Maya secrets as well. He is in the forefront of efforts to learn the living habits of ordinary citizens and to establish the relationships between peoples of different regions and periods.

One of his overall goals is to pin down precisely when Maya settlements began and when they flourished. He and UCR archaeologist R. E. Taylor, an expert in radio-carbon dating, are planning the first-ever application of accelerated mass spectrometry to directly date ancient Maya pottery. The scientific procedure will eliminate many tedious and inexact comparisons to determine whether the city-states co-existed, which followed which, and which may have influenced others.

The project is expected to settle the long debate over whether the magnificent Toltec period of Chichen Itza between modern Merida and Cancun in Central Yucatan was contemporaneous with Uxmal, another obviously powerful city in the west with distinctively different art and architecture.

The Maya were a highly developed civilization, said Taube, evidenced by sophisticated astronomical capabilities, a calendar extremely accurate over thousands of years, expertly constructed stone buildings and pyramids, an extensive land and sea trade network, delicately carved stonework and beautifully painted pottery.

"The more we understand about the Maya the more they look like Old World society," said Taube. "They have extremely well developed concepts of the divine and philosophies of duality, the male and female principles that created the world, and how we are related to it. They are very much concerned with our role with nature and what we're supposed to do to create balance and make things live and thrive."

Taube may not see himself in the image of an Indiana Jones, but he finds archaeology no less exciting. "There is such a feeling of discovery, no matter what site you're working, that you are really on the edge of something really big, and that at any moment you can make a lasting contribution," he said.

The work is actually the fulfillment of a dream since early childhood when his aunt journeyed to Yucatan as a nurse and returned with intriguing photos of pyramids and other exotica.

"Often people have dreams and then grow out of them. They become adults and get real jobs," Taube quipped.