

The Corona Project

It was the hot spring of 2015 after a very long hike. Walking into the Six Mile Pub, one of those old and big public houses clinging to a different time and place. My group was a bunch of happy, thirsty and sweaty guys. Among the guys, there was a cute girl, also happy, sporting half a smile. Someone spoke to the hostess and we were all placed at a table by the window, overlooking the patio and then the inlet below.

We were all chatting about the trail, elevations, and conversations split and joined as they do. Then the waitress came and we all grabbed our menus, remembering we had to get busy choosing. Someone asked about the dark beer, someone else ordered a pint of Dark Matter, and while we were all still deciding, I noticed that cute girl said she'd have a Corona. Then I said that why not, that I'd always liked the "feel" of that beer. We engaged in a short conversation about why she liked Corona and why not ordering one. For me this was about the choice of the new, unknown experiences vs. the comfort of the known. Whether to try the local beers I don't know or the known flavour of Mexican beer, which is familiar even since before I could legally drink. At this moment, something sunk in my mind: It's great to choose comfort.

Then a few months later I was traveling in Mexico with my 2 sons from Puerto Vallarta to Guadalajara. If there is something I remember about the trip it would be people's smiles. Especially, as a tourist, people always serving with a smile on their face. Reminiscing of The restaurant at the hotel we had stayed, as soon as I tried the fried tortilla chips and the salsa, I realized how starved I had been for the authentic flavour. (Café Chapultepec. A set of tables next to the beach-side swimming pool. No luxury but comfort, authentic Mexican food and, of course, typical Mexican service: first class and served with a smile. As much as we are spoiled in our great Pacific Northwest city, nothing in Victoria resembles this). Then I ordered the Arrachera beef and, of course, a Corona; smile included.

Then it was time to go to Guadalajara. As we reached the bus station, I was worried about the timing. It was now 25 minutes before departure (not 30 as advised in my printed boarding passes). No matter. We reached the air-conditioned VIP lounge ushered by a young guy in his late twenties, very keen to help and radiating joy. "Welcome, just come in and make yourselves comfortable. Yes your passes are OK". Then one of my boys (Boris and Mort) deer-eyed, a bit reluctant to come in "Are we very important people?" I told them that yes, and to take a sit as we waited for our bus. Boris pointed to a poster of a very modern-looking bus, asking if that was what our bus looked like (the boys are going through a car-make awareness phase). I told them I didn't know, that we should wait to see it, but that surely it would be similar and comfortable.

Minutes later we were boarding the bus. The happy guy asked to inspect the bag where I had my food for the trip. Standard security procedure. He picked a can of Corona Light and said that was not going to be possible and removed it from the bag. Then he kept inspecting to find a second can. "I give these to you" I said. He looked happy and set the cans aside, most likely to have them later in the day. Then he said to have a good trip, looking at me with a big smile.