

MEXICO

GUATEMALA

EL SALVADOR



NICARAGUA

HONDURAS

COSTA RICA

PANAMA

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

26 or 27 years ago I dreamed of going on a fun adventure with some freinds that I met. now we are on that adventure.

Howdy Big Underwear social tour members. This months Newsletter is similar to Novembers in that it has been a very busy month. we have been on the tour now for almost 1 month, We left Puebla on dec 6, and we are now in Monte Rico, Guatemala which is just a few minutes away from the El Salvador border. It is the day before New Years and we are camped next to Circus Hawaii... yea thats right,,, Circus Hawaii, at this very moment, most of our group is in there watching the show,, and we have plans to be in the show tomorrow. Monte Rico is on the Pacific ocean, and we arrived earlier this afternoon, and after a little bit of searching around we found this family circus.

this area is famous for turtles also as well mangrove, there is a lot of Mangrove around but I haven't seen a turtle yet.

The Garbage is less thick in this area which is a nice relief, as Guatemala has some serious Garbage issues.

we are planning to cross thru the Border here in the next few days (begin of Dec.)

if I could only begin to explain or express my feelings in regard to how the tour is going along, I cant! but I will say a big Thank You to the Brave artists that did decide to join in on this projekt. We have all learned many things so far, and have continued to enjoy each others company. We have done some fun shows, and are expecting to expound upon our shows with Big Underwear excitement.

The documentary will be something to see when it is finally done,,, some wonderful and beautiful pictures, and some very warm and friendly people we have met along the way so far.

I am happy for some of my friends and colleagues to read and enjoy the newsletter. see you next month.

-Brady





Chiapas, San Cristobal, we arrived late and I opted (wisely I thought) for the invitation to spend the night at one of our two contact's (Andreas) friend's house as we have returned to altitude and the night time temperature drops to zero, hmmm... The Mexican interpretation of 'space for three people to sleep, and a shower' is obviously different to mine, as we drove a short distance to a nice house, and then we were shown into a bare concrete shed, with a broken window, four yoga mats, and a table, at least it was clean, and we had a toilet with a seat, such luxury. I slept on the table in all my available clothes, having thought ahead I took my thermal long-johns with me, but then my sleeping bag is very lightweight 'twas a bit chilly, but a sit down morning ablute, some cheerful chickens and a hot chocolate and espresso on the walk back to the bus did make it all seem like a good day. We are now into Mexico's southernmost state, and the people are a mix of Indigenous and Latino, the indigenous folk are even smaller than in Oaxaca, now even Alfredo, a towering 5ft 6"ish is an average height, with many of the women around 4' 8" and the menfolk are similarly statured.

The cold came as a now regular reminder of the variety of climates in Mexico, we spent midweek at the beach, Playa del Cangrejo, Beach of the Crabs, warm sun, warm nights, my first experience of the Pacific Ocean, fishing at dawn knee-deep in the surf whilst Isa & Sarah are skinny-dipping up the beach, sometimes the strain of my life is just too much... We arrived to discover that the guy who ran the beach front had seen our fireshow in Oaxaca, and so we were greeted with smiles, very welcome after bringing the bus up a dirt road for 10 plus km, crawling along negotiating every hump, hole, and low tree. Next morning the village leader and a crew of sturdy fellows arrived to make us an offer, a show in the village square in exchange for beer and a banquet of locally caught fresh fish. Hard to refuse such an offer, even when we all badly needed some rest and the beach was so beautiful, but a meeting was called, a show planned and an arrangement to make ready, then 3 hours on the sand. Swimming naked (we had around 2 miles of beach to 3 people), I misjudged a hefty wave and the big surf threw me up the beach on my bare buttock, so now I have a tiger striped cheek to add to my holed right foot. Even so, I can't get annoyed; I cut my bum on a tropical beach in December in Mexico. De nada.

The fish was absolutely delicious, when a man offers me his fish in exchange for my work, I take it.

There has been a deal of sickness, amongst the crew, Nick was particularly bad with savage toilet trots, and people are taking turns at having a day being sick, my turn has yet to come, I'm very careful about which water I drink, and I think that's helping. Or maybe the large quantity of Mezcal I consumed helped. We stopped off at a Fabrica de Mezcal in Oaxaca (it's the home of the yellow nectar) you can tell when the factory is open to visitors as the company mule will be turning the grinding wheel to crush the Agave fruit into pulp, before the distillation process takes place in the shack next door, with the chickens, and the frightened looking dog which someone had painted green. The father & son team were very friendly and rightly proud of their product, 10 years matured, and a snip at 100 pesos a bottle, that's around a fiver to you and me. Bloody good it is too, strong, clean, and very tasty. Me mucho gusta.

A day off, out visiting Brady's friend Rudy Glindo, a Californian street performer who works Europe all summer and then winters his family at his house just outside San Cristobal, around 2600m up a mountain where you sit above the mist line and watch the big raptors circle the pine forest looking for dinner. We travelled there in one of Mexico's manifold forms of public transport, the colectivo. A vehicle somewhere between a taxi and a minibus which stops to pick up and drop off on a regular route. On the return trip we used an old VW transporter which had the standard sliding side door entrance, operated by the driver pulling on a large lever to crank the portal open and closed. The driver also deals with the fares whilst negotiating the compact grid of downtown, and the pothole chaos of the suburbs, and acts as mobile DJ selecting tunes for himself and his densely packed passengers. Who all studiously ignore the strong smell of petrol coming from the rear: where the engine is. We arrived back into the centre and found some internet access, then back via the Lavanderia to collect laundry, and the fruit market where children make a seasonal sideline selling fireworks from fruitbox stall-tops amidst the masses of tomatoes and avocados. I bought the loudest I could find, as James, Mantega, Nick and I have a plan to explode a Santa Claus piñata for Christmas.

-Paul

Dear Friends colleagues families, cousins, brothers and sisters, agencies and artists. We left Puebla after the three day Festival from Rodara "Circdown" what was stationed at the Complejo Cultural Universidad. A humungus european style expedition center and theater place. We drove at midnight to the Complejo and slept outside the gates to get in early in the morning to build up the construction the scenery of our Big Underwear Social Tour Show. The gates opened early but there was no place for us. Too much beaurocracy and important people who were not ready or informed. At one a clock we finally got a place and a cool one, right in front of the entrance of the slick building. The stage and the trapeze structure was built in 1 1/2 hours and we got lunch and some time to organize the surrounding, made a line up for the show, did the show, finished the show, collected dineros in the hat, packed everything on stage, put a plastic cover over it, went shopping for the night, ate some food, drove the bus to our night parking place, because we could not stay inside off the complejo property. The Circdown artist went back to Rodara for dinner and party and their hotels. We had to stay with the bus and the Minny Winny just a few people went there and partied a little or a lot, and after the tequila?... So it was not the greatest situation for to get all what you want, but hey we are in Mexico and it is hot here and the people are wonderfull and curious and intereseted and love to laugh about stupid things, like us. We had great critics in the newspaper the next day, Annaelle on the front page and a whole page inside with pictures. Everybody was and is still happy. Three days of this back and forth gave us another load of experience with our group of artists. What comes first, who does the dishes, what have to be prepared, who prepares it, who helps packing and how. After one day rest back at the Rodara office we finally really got the hell out of Puebla. After a last talk with Roberto, who released us with the trapez structure, lights, costumes and a lot of other odds and ends. Somehow our relationship with Rodara changed a little. We were not so happy with our situation at the complejo and felt like not a part of the festival and he had the feeling that we did our own thing and were not a part of the festival. So hahaha...

Sara's writing:

Mexico is full of cactus. Its true cause we saw them. Like a pack of dogs drooling with anticipation for the world outside we drove down to oaxaca, heads glued to the window, eyes on the scenery most of us have only read about. After about a month in Puebla and only imagining the bus driving, the air was thick of excitement to finally be on the road. Ok so most of us were sleeping or eating but hey, everyone has there own methods of expressing excitement. A tree supported by a brick wall among old and unused trainwagons, a train museum displaying an exhibition full of fairys, and us. Welcome to Oaxaca. We had arrived in the night and were greeted by Cynthia, a contact we had met through Rodara in Puebla who invited us for a overfeed mexican style and arranged for us to stay in the train museum where we also would perform. Since the arrangement had been on quite short notice for promotional purposes it was essential to go out and make some noise in the town, and that we did and enjoyed it too. Yes Oaxaca..... was a special place.

For the first time we had to go to under very low wires and over high speed bumps to come to the first parking for the night. Cynthia had a little apartment with shower for us and a dinner in town. We all hopped in a Pick up Trailer in the back, cold and normal. Next day we arrived at the Train Museum and used the space as much as we could. There were two special things from the old times when still trains were passing by. One was a rusty train wheel the other thing a wagon with 4 weels and a surface. We were going to use them to introduce the fire acts in the show. First I give you a picture how the whole situaton looked like. Imagine, an old train station in Mexico, (old Western style), two tracks for the audience, than the wooden stage, above our handmade airial structure, in the back the colourful underwear made by Anaelle, than our pink and blue bus, behind the old trains and than some typical huts from the oaxaka citiciens. The Show starts with the „Big Underwear Song" what we made or composed with David Cassel (Thank you David), than Bobarino gets on stage and talks about his dream what came through, interrupted by me, Fräulein Marianne Döpp, who wants to be on the tour but she has to prove it, and she will. Mantega comes on, he is a great wonderul juggler and he is from Brazil, speaks spanish and is funny. So he is the host, moderater, speaker, introducer, Ansager..... So he brings Val and Iza on stage with their duo Tishue Act, Alfredo comes on and let his puppet, what is yellow worm walk over a dangerous rope, Fräulein Döpp makes her half strip tease, Bobarino comes on and blows 2 little balls in the air. Aga and Nico come on with their french/polish trapez act. We get ready for the fire introction. Sara starts with the fire Hoola Hoop, crazy moves to crazy music joined by a crazy monkey..... Meanwhile everybody disappears to the two in 100 meter distance placed burning train-wheels. Sara stops The fire drum, hit by Bobarino under a big burning sun Umbrella to the sound of Nicos Posaune rolls slowly direction stage, on the other side, Paul plays on his tin drum set and Arnoud plays the darinette, Iza swings the firefans and the wheels roll closer closer. With 6 touches we surround the table Anaelle is doing her contortion act. The audience is in tears because of the beauty of this moment. Marie Claire Döpp'Pression comes with her fire Stick Dance to „Ne Me Qultte Pas", Bobarino and the fire Lasso, For the Final the Fire Jump rope for everybody. We are always surprized and happy howmuch we make in the hat. It gives us breakfast, snacks, lunch, snacks. dinner, snacks and gas to drive to the next place- After a saturday and sunday show we were ready to rest. Cynia invited us to go with her and a friend to a waterfall. At 11.00 we sarterd to go for a two hour ride into the mountains to end at a magical place. The water digged out of calc stone a swimming pool right on the side of the mountain. Look at the pictures Alfredo took. We spread out, explored the area, Mantega juggled, others went swimming or went around the mountain, when it got colder we gathered togehter and drove back We stopped at a place where father, sun and a horse make Mescalte, this is a higher or lower? form from Texilla. The horse was walking in a circle, pulling a wide wheel what smashed the sweet fruits of the Agave plant, Somehow they put the fruits in a big cooking pot and the destilation process began, the result is a golden shining alcoholic drink what can give you a good head ache and weard behaviers. Next stop was the biggest tree from Mexico, maybe Cetral America, maybe from the world, The tree from Tule, it is a ????????? .The circle is maybe 45 to 60 or 80 meters. Finally we arrived at home, The train station and the bus. There was the next surprice. Our italien friend,cook and spontaneous fire jump rope jumper who lives in Oaxaka brought us a big Pizza and a great Salat. We slept good this night and this was important, we agreed to go to a school a little outside from Oaxake to do a show in a School, the director was able to pay us 3000 pesos and we let the hats go around. An early show so we can make it to the Pacific. We arrived at 12.00 built the structure, the show, took showers, did the show, packed kissed and hugged, fotos a last shower and start to drive around 5.30 pm direction south/east.industrial Oil refining City, we got up early to do a final big shopping before

After 10 hours driving we spent the night 15 km before Salina Cruz a industrial Oil refining City, we got up early to do a final big shopping before the beach. And like everywhere we go with the bus also in Salina Cruz the people noticed us, by waving, wishing us luck and honking when we block the road going around a tiny corner. Around midday we found our way to the beach, to the Playa Cangrejo. Sure everybody jumped out and in the water..... than food. The magic moment at this place is, that the owner of the Restaurant , „La Palma" was in Oaxaca and saw our show so he asked if we do a show at the Parque Municipal in the little Pueblo 4 km away and they would make us a nice fish dinner for us. We said yes for the next day. In the morning everybody went swimming and did what artists have to do. It was also Val's birthday so we shared one bottle of Champagne and a little chocolate cake. At 5 we arrived at the Placa de Municipal, Momo who joined us in Oaxaca whipped her little street-open-air-cinema out and showed some cartoons for the kids and some grown ups who start to gather around. A peaceful and ambience was created. We set up, Val and Iza decided to go in the tree with their tissue act..... more and more people came, thanks to the practical advertisement system the mexicans use. They drive around the village in their car and tell through their megaphone what ever they have to tell or to sell. This audience was kind of quiet, they laughed when they saw some underwear. What was sometimes in not really funny moments. Underwear is more tabu than to be naked somebody told us. After the show they came closer and showed how much they liked it in buying t-shirts. We packed and drove back to our fishdinner. We could eat as much fish as we wanted and we did, except the vegetariens, they had as much salad as they wanted. Val was happy for her birthday banquet and showed our new mexican friends a scottish folk dance. Next day we had to leave again to our next destination, San Christobal de las Casas. Back into the mountains and the cold nights. and shopping for the hungry artists. After shopping i got sick, throw up was building up in my body so I did. Until we arrived in San Christobal where Andres (a friend of Momo) showed us a first parking. More I can not rember from this day. Next morning i was still tired and bitchy.... I tried to find a place to sleep. But my bed is the living room in the daytime. And on this special day everybody wanted to stay in the bus on my bed. So I try to sleep outside but there the sun constantly moved the shadow away, and in the other corner was to much piss and garbitch. Finally Brady came back with his friend Rudi Galindo who find us a place in a comunity where they school teenagers in different vocational skills. we could plug in to energy, have hot showers, after 3 weeks of only cold showers, and a good taxi and bus system to get into town. Andres organiced us an inside job in the Cafe and Disco Mama Africa at 11pm. I was still kind of tired and sick and wanted to stay in the bus. But when \they all were ready to leave I decided to jump in the car as well. With my fire stick and my costume. The Mama Africa was empty but we could see it is a potentiel good place. Andres by himself has a Cultural Centre p? ???, so Val, Iza, Alfredo and me went there to bring the people who are there to the other place. The trick: Val and Iza did their Tishue number and Alfredo who talked through his Grandmother puppet "Gorgonia" to the people. When we came back to the Mama Africa, the show their was already going. I jumped inmy costume and did my number as well and my sickness was gone. We came home late. We got up early to prepare the bus for the Zocalo in San Christobal. Another tight ride through the small streets. Without permit we have to wait talk to the police, do some little shows, bring the laundry to the Lavenderia, talk more to the police, buy some chocolate finally james and Alfredo made us stay. And another show was on its run..... with trapez and all the other numbers, in between Jesus on his cross and a big church we got a big audience around us. Also we could do another show in the Mama Africa, it is only 800 meters from the Zoculo away, we transported everything there and did it again. This night we met Koen from Belgium, he works in Guatemala and had some contacts their and in Honduras and he was on his way back to Guatemala. Guatemala was our destination for Chrismas evening the 24th. Next day what was a monday, we took it easy. Brady and i tried to do some Christmas shopping at the market, there was to much stuff, no way to find anything special. Later Rudi Galindo invited us to his house and family a bit up in the mountains. Nick, Paul, James Brady and me went the rest of the gang followed Andres invitation to go to a Mescalle Sauna what was as well in the mountains, they came back freazing because the sweatlogs were gone and they had to build new ones. And it was cold in the mountains Around 10 pm we all were back in the bus, eating and sleeping. In this night the moon eclipse of the moon, thats when the moon and the earth has a threesome. Another day with hot showers and as well cleaning the props the bus and repairing things. Sara made more progress on painting the front of the bus. One last night in San Christobal, with food and drinks and fireworks. In the early morning we start to go to the Lagos de Colone a recomendation by Koen, our new belgium friend, right by the border to Guatemala. We arrived in the night because early is a word what is used in very different meanings..... we crossed a bridge, than drove over a river on the street to park on a football field. First the citizens wanted 200 Pesos for the bus and 100 Pesos for the minnii Winny. We said ...NO.. Mantega offered to play in a school next day. 23. of December, Meetingtime. Meetingtime is something nobody likes, as well Brady and me not. The reason is, we talk about things what bothers us (Brady and me). This morning we started with the good things. Than the other causes, comon sence, awareness, helping, work together, spread out but come back to see what is going on. And--and...and...and..... Final Question was: are you afraid of Brady? The answer was: YES Our Artists are not sure what they can do and what not..... when to eat and when not, when to prepare for the show and when to play around..... Mantega and Momo went to the Bürgermeister and aranged a show time for tonight. The meeting was over and we all went swimming in this greatful lake. Than everybody spread out again. At a certen time we moved the bus on the Basket ball court, where we decided to do our espectáculo. We stopped the engine just when the brother of the Bürgermeister came and said: No good to put the heavy bus on the concreat surface. So we start the engine and drove down and it broke on two places. Now the discussions: repair or pay. We had to pay. After going around with the advertising megaphone-car most of the village people came, to watch Cartoons with Momo and as well our show..... we made 600 Pesos, counted 400 Pesos out of our hats into the hands from the cement workers and from the rest of the money we bought some beer. Than dinner and packing for the next morning to fulfill our plan to go to Guatemala. Schwupp Diwupp there was the border, first you have to check out of Mexico: There is an office with one older man, who serves the computer and his profession in the old german postofficer way. With patience and time. In front of his office are 20 people waiting. After one and half hour we could go to the next border. The Guatemalen border was in the middle of the most colourfull shopping taxfree zone i ever saw. Our bus was to big for this street, the police stopped the cars which came downhill what took 20 minutes because it was like 1 km long line. Than we payed each 10 Quetzal (1 Euro) to get in. Than the cars and the trailer, what is in Robertos (Rodara) name. Problems: At this moment our musiciens and jugglers go outside and start to do a little performance. Iza in negociating and the result is, that the Border officer dictates her the permit from Roberto so we can use the trailer.... James signed it and we are through the border.

No extra pay, just love and peace. Meanwhile we have the papers from Roberto and we are fine. After two hours (it was 2. 30 pm) Guatemala is better to ride through in the daytime, so we drove over wonderful mountains and through greasily built cities. And it is Christmas evening, it is getting dark, we found a place behind a gas-station on a big grassfield. Our new neighbours, a guatemalteka family came over and invited us for hot chocolate and caffe with them. First James went shopping with some girls from the group, and paid for chicken, beer and wine for the evening. During cooking more neighbours came and gathered around the fire we made, some took a guitare and sang or just sat there with us to share the christmas evening. After Santa Claus (Arnoud) give little presents away, we walked over to the neighbours house and get surved the promised, chocolate and cofe and cookies and sweat bread. A Guatemalen tradition is, to shoot a lot of firework in the air, at midnight. So we did, we also had a Piniatta what Alfredo splearched on us to hit, so we did this as well. Than we went back to bed, tired and fat and cold. Another day of driving was coming up Susanne knew from 14 years ago, Panajachal, a city by a lake called Atitlan. This was one of the most beautiful and most dangereous rides so far. We had to go up to 3000 Meter over a pass. On roads which were damaged by the heavy rainfalls in the summertime. A lot of curves and dropped off streets on the one side and steep rocks on the other side. At one moment, we just came around one of these corners a car drove right into our line, Brady steared to the right, but there was not too much space as well a gab for the water. He also jumped into the brakes and everything in the bus moved 30 cm forward, Paul even more. He fell over the barstuhl and hurt his leg, Momo had a stiff neck. The crew who rode at this moment on the roof of the bus were fine. The guy in the car, got back on his line just in the right moment. We were shaking. You have to know, in Guatemala, there is no driving test you just drive and you can also drive drunk nobody cares. Maybe the friends and family from the people who died innocently in these kind of accidents. We arrived in Panajachel in the night, after dropping 1000 highmeters in 8 km and smoking brakes a Guatemaltaka showed us for 25 Quetzal a place right by the lake Atitlan. This was scary as well, when we got stuck for 30 minutes on a very very tight corner, people told us that the guy who is leading us to the lake has a very bad reputation we should watch out, he maybe has a gun. At the same time some guys from the city built their own security for the night. They protect their living aerea with guns and they wear masks. These guys protected also us and stayed all night and as well the other nights. The next morning we discovered how beautiful it is where we stranded, 4 Volcanos surrounding the lake, elevation 1600 Meter. Surrounded by a lot of garbage, we went swimming in a very clean lake. There is no stable garbage system in this country, the trucks come three times a week, but nobody knows when. So the garbage waits outside and the dogs who live a good live their go through it all night. The dogs are everywhere, They lay around and under the bus. Just the birthcontrol is not very popular under them. Here it was Iza's birthday the 26. of december, so we bought a cake and had a nice meal. And sure we met Alexandro a streetperformer from Costa Rica. He knew Regine from germany, who has a discothek called Chapiteau and a restaurant called Circus Bar. She has a collection of original Circus posters and pictures from famous clowns and artists. In a few hours she organiced that we could do a show in her Bar, we got a big crowd together and made 1200 Quetzal and she payed us 500 Qutzal as a guarantee on top of that she invited us in the restaurant for dinner. A la carte, everybody was happy happy. So we decide to do it again, the next day. We arrived in Monterico a black sandy beach, warm water, waves which are a little to low for surfing but high enough for having a lot of fun. Here we park at another socker field from a school. Next to us is the Circus Hawaii a four generation circus family who invited us to be a part of their show. Very wonderful and funny people, who live life We watched they're show after having a great meal and beer. In the morning a german woman walked by, from the Zeugen Jehowas and talked to me. I said, that we have our own religion, the Religion of the Big Underwear. This religions contains a lot of comedy and tolerance for other religion and we do not try to convince people we just enjoy live how it is. And so she said: Yes I can see because you are nice to me a lot of times people just throw me out. She wished us luck and said come to me for real german coffee. Tonight we will do a show with the Circus Hawaii We did it and it was another extraordinary evening, with a giving audience and another dinner and an invitation for breakfast from Claudia, the Partner from Regine, an italien woman. A last swim in the lake Atitlan and on the road to the next place where we are right now. We climbed up the mountains again and the first time all of us had to get out and push the bus in high elevation over a very steep section on the street. Wow!!!! Nice pictures. Than we got escorted by the police, they thought it is much more safe for us, we had to stop a few times to let the breaks cool down. Even Nick invented a cooling system for them with two coke bottles which hang inside of the bus and a small tube goes and let water run on the tires in intence braking situations. Darkness came and we stopped driving, hanged out right 500 Meter away from the Pan American highway what goes to the Pacifik. Another night of food and beer. We arrived in Monterico a black sandy beach, warm water, waves which are a little to low for surfing but high enough for having a lot of fun. Here we park at another socker field from a school. Next to us is the Circus Hawaii a four generation circus family who invited us to be a part of their show. Very wonderful and funny people, who live life We watched they're show after having a great meal and beer. In the morning a german woman walked by, from the Zeugen Jehowas and talked to me. I said, that we have our own religion, the Religion of the Big Underwear. 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