

Everyone from this Durango town is never far away from home...



Roman Alarcon devotes an extensive website to his hometown of Presidios Tepehuanes in the Mexican State of Durango. Enjoy a virtual fiesta courtesy of Roman Alarcon at www.tierrademispadres.homestead.com/La_Loma.html

Metro Red Line's Roman Alarcon Cherishes Ties with Homeland

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA



Roman Alarcon

(June 11, 2002) Although being the assistant transportation manager at Metro Red Line Division 20 can consume a lot of time and energy, Roman Alarcon always finds time to stay in touch with his roots.

In fact, he set up an Internet web site so others from his hometown of Presidios Tepehuanes in the Mexican State of Durango, can keep in touch, too. That's important because, like the residents of many small towns, the townspeople have scattered to large cities to find education and work.

"I saw that everybody, when we got to the U.S., started to drift apart," Alarcon says, noting that many of the villagers now live in LA, Las Vegas, Chicago, Atlanta and elsewhere in the United States.

"I put the web site together so their sons and their sons' sons can know where they come from," says Alarcon, who left the village at age 12. "This means a lot because I help keep the town together and everybody is informed of the current events of the town."

Presidios Tepehuanes is a rural village that lies in an area of pine forests off a well-traveled road at the foot of the Durango sierra. With a current population of 1,000, the village has retained its natural setting, with dirt roads, apple orchards and corn fields, and a sparkling, blue river.

"It's a free environment," says Alarcon, who visits the village almost every year. "You could walk around and not have to worry about crime. My fondest memories are going horseback riding to the sierra. There were no roads, just forest."

A three-day fiesta

The town also celebrates its patron saint, San Nicolas de Tolentino, every year, with a three-day fiesta. This year, Alarcon is one of three members of the fiesta committee.

Starting Sept. 9, the people of the Presidios Tepehuanes will gather to watch a fireworks display. The next day, they'll celebrate a main mass for their patron saint, followed by a luncheon.

A dance kicks off the night's festivities, which culminate in the coronation of the town's King and Queen. On the third day, townspeople will participate in a traditional Coleaderas, or rodeo.

"I enjoy it every time I go there. It's a pleasure," he says. "I go back to my childhood."

Members of the committee begin fundraising for the fiesta the day after the previous one ends, Alarcon says. They fundraise through raffles, dances and solicit donations via the Web site. "This year, I hope to have more funds left to rebuild the town's church and cemetery."

If not, however, Alarcon can still walk away with a smile on his face because he instilled in his children the importance of knowing their history.

"I tell them it's fun," he says. "I want them to know where their roots are and where they came from."

Christina Esparza, a Transit Operations Correspondent Intern, graduated this month from Cal State Long Beach with a degree in Journalism. June 7 was her last day with the MTA. She is beginning an internship with the LA Times' Valley edition.

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