

# Fresh From The Jar

## LRC Newsletter



### Adventures in Oaxaca, Mexico

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There are moments in life when we are called to greatness. We are commanded to abandon our comfort zones, desert our steadfast beliefs and move in the direction of our highest aspirations. Such opportunities appear in the form of obstacles, and if they are endured and mastered, they catapult us to personal transformation.



**Indigenous couple on their way from the market**

During the spring 2007 semester, while enrolled in the Intermediate Spanish class, a handbill on the door of the ladies lavatory beckoned me to the culinary capital of Mexico to immerse myself in Spanish. The words on the flyer summoned me to study in a 19th century estate house, to visit cultural exhibits, to explore archeological sites, to live amongst the indigenous people, to haggle in colonial markets, to relish the cuisine of Oaxaca (Wa-hah-ka), and to walk in the footsteps of the conquistadors. The invitation haunted me because although I wanted to go, I questioned the adequacy of my language skills.

On Friday, May 30, 2008, Dr. Jim Romer, Cheryl Wilson-Sprinkle and I boarded Delta flight

293 for Oaxaca, Mexico. The first leg of the voyage was uneventful until we arrived in Mexico City. Suddenly, all signs and announcements were in Spanish with English subtitles. Not a word of English emanated from the vocal cords of anyone. My brain made an instantaneous paradigm shift in order to incorporate each nuance. Every phrase, vowel, conjugated verb, and consonant learned in class reverberated against my cranium. And this was only the beginning!



**Santo Domingo Church in Oaxaca, Mexico**

### A Mother's Smiling Face Anthony Karkoska (student)

Oaxaca is located in southern Mexico in the middle of an area surrounded by four valleys. The valleys are encircled by three mountain ranges with peaks reaching 10,000 feet high, and the climate is spring-like year round. The nights are cool, and the rainy season begins in July and ends in October. The inhabitants are friendly, creative, and artistic. The city boasts archeological sites, pristine beaches, and a never ending array of activities. You never know what's around the next corner. The city is a feast for the ears, eyes, and digestive system.

We arrived in Oaxaca, Mexico that evening and Professor Romer made arrangements for transportation to the posada. A posada is an inn. We resided with a family in their luxurious private home, with a vibrant garden of fruits and fresh vegetables in the rear. The hosts escorted me to my spacious, immaculate, beautifully designed room and I began to unpack. This was when I discovered that the brand-new digital camera, which had never been removed from the antitheft plastic package had been surgically removed with a razor.

(To be continued)

The most important person in my life was my Mother. Through all adversity there was always a smile. A smile only a mother can give, one of love, nurturing, and care. When the season of Fall approached, the aroma of apple pie permeated the house and as one entered there was that smile of love and compassion.



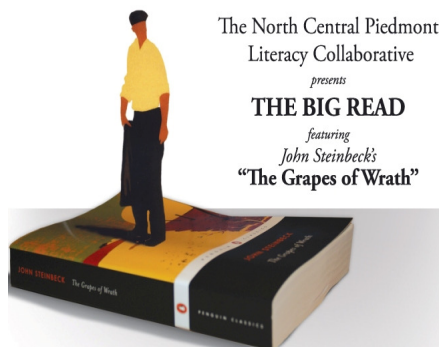
**Woman walking down the street**

## The Big Read

### Vanessa Bass, Reference Librarian

#### What is The Big Read?

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The program provides citizens with the



Picture and artwork by Kevin Tyburski, Graphic Designer/  
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opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their communities. The NEA presents The Big Read in partnership with the institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. The Big Read brings together partners across the country to encourage reading for pleasure and enlightenment.

#### Who is the author and which book has been chosen?

John Ernest Steinbeck (1902-1968), American author and winner of the Nobel Prize in 1962, built his career on stories based in Northern and Central California around his hometown of Salinas. John Steinbeck's most praised work, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), has become a classic work of the Depression era. The book was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1940 and made into a motion picture by John Ford that same year. Steinbeck depicts the lives of ordinary people. It is the struggle of the Joad family of Oklahoma who are tenant farmers forced to turn over their land to the banks and journey across the vast plains to the developing land of California. *The Grapes of Wrath* is a portrait of the conflict between man's reaction to the injustice in the world and a woman's quiet strength.

#### Who are the Contributors?

The North Central Piedmont Literacy Collaborative composed of Piedmont Community College, Learning Resources Centers (Person and Caswell Counties), Hyconeechee Regional Libraries (Caswell County, Orange County, and Person County Public Libraries), Person County, Caswell County, Orange County, and Chapel Hill-Carrboro Public School Systems, Person County Partnership for Children, and Durham Technical Community College Orange County Campus would like to invite the community to participate and enjoy activities to encourage reading and learning about John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and how it is relevant to today's events.

#### The Kick-off:

The kick-off for The Big Read community project was at the ROCK of AGES Winery and Vineyard on September 13, 2008. Participants enjoyed the keynote speaker, Dr. Susan Shillinglaw, Scholar in Residence—National Steinbeck Center, musical entertainment from the 1930's era, old cars, and a tractor show. The Big Read community project will run through September 13—October 31, 2008.

#### Selective activities:

##### Caswell County

Thursday, September 25—4:00 p.m.

The Big Read—Playing the Game

Location: Gunn Memorial Library, Yanceyville, NC

Saturday, October 11—2:00 p.m.

*The Grapes of Wrath* at the Vineyard

Location: Carracino Vineyards, Pelham, NC

##### Orange County

Wednesday, September 17—6:00 p.m.

Kick-off Family Program

for The Big Read

Location: Orange

County Public Library,

Hillsborough, NC

Tuesday, October 7—

4:00 p.m.

Book Discussion

Location: Durham Tech

Orange County Cam-

pus, Hillsborough, NC

Thursday, October 30—7:00 p.m.

Closing Events

Location: Gravelly Hill Middle School, Efland, NC

##### Person County

Friday, September 19—7:00 p.m.

3-D, Desserts, DeCaf and Discussion

Location: St. Mark's Episcopal Church Parish House,

Roxboro, NC

Monday, October 6—7:00 pm

Community Book Discussion with Dr. Elliot Engel, Professor of Literature

Location: Kirby Theater, Roxboro, NC

Tuesday, October 21—5:30 p.m.

Storytelling & Reception for Children

Location: Piedmont Community College Auditorium,

Roxboro, NC

Visit the Web site at <http://www.bigreadnc.org> for more information on The Big Read and other events in the three counties

**“How can you frighten a man whose hunger is not only in his own cramped stomach but in the wretched bellies of his children? You can't scare him—he has known a fear beyond every other.” — John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, Chapter 19**