

Sombrero Technology

Just as I turned into Sepulveda Boulevard to get into some serious “look ahead” eightball” at the Castle, my favorite neighborhood bar in Manhattan Beach, California, I saw something that made my jaw drop.

Down the street it looked like a Mexican fiesta line dance, dozens of people hand clapping and guess who was leading them? My Chicano buddies, José and Josb, identical twins, boogieing in front, José with a big tuba, Josb with a horn. A miniature mariachi band leading a posse of people to the Castle.

I stood aside as the entourage entered the bar dancing, ordering, the bartenders of the Castle ecstatic with the Hose brothers’ assemblage, as always. Finally, the crowd all safely doing some strange Aztec dance the Hose brothers taught them, ordering beers and margaritas, I sneaked in and sat in back to watch the spectacle. Eventually José spotted me as he deposited his tuba in the corner.

“*Hola* Donald,” he shouted over the noise. Josb waved from the front, horn in hand. The Hose brothers always were a happening in this little bar. They met in the middle of the room, did high fives, high tens, jumped high in the air, bumped chests to the cheering of the entire bar and sat next to me.

“¿*Qué pasa, hermanos?*” I said. “I didn’t know you could play instruments.”

“Jes,” Jose said with straight face. “All *Mexicano hombres* play tubas and horns. Is mandatory.”

I didn’t believe this for a minute, but they were so serious, I didn’t want to hurt their feelings. So I said, “What’s your latest con game, *amigos?*”

“Kong game?” Josb asked.

“Never mind, Josb. Has the Mexican government hired 200,000 soldiers to patrol the border yet? Is the ‘yadder’ business over for good?”

“Jou must be yoking,” José said. “We jear from berry high sources, no big draft in U.S. No wall, so no yadders. Too bad. *Mucho* pesos be made with walls and National Guard big draft.”

“It be pronounced ‘ladders,’” Josb said solemnly to his brother with perfect American pronunciation. He had been taking English lessons.

“Jes, I know. Yadders,” José said with a straight face, a big high five with his brother punctuating his comment..

I love the way these guys talk in English, especially since they make no bones about the eccentricities of my Spanish. On their birthdays, I made the mistake of wishing them a *Feliz compliano* instead of *compliaño* and got nothing but Hose brother laughs for about fifteen minutes, later getting a lesson in posterior anatomy. Apparently the “nye” is pretty important in this salutation.

José, very serious, explained. “No more yadders, no more big National Guard draft, so now big deal be tower power,” José said, high fiving his brother.

“Towers?” I asked, completely baffled.

“Jes,” Josb said. “US new border strategy be towers.”

“For God’s sake, Josb,” I said. “What in the world are you talking about?”

“We read in papers U.S. build *grande* towers on border. Bery high tech stuff to stop Mexicanos from coming across border to help economy. Use dumb planes, heat stuff, ...all kinds of science junk.”

“So?” I asked. “You mean ‘drones’, infra-red sensors, motion detectors, things like that”

“Jes. We make big pesos in invisible sombreros,” he said with a straight face, high fiving his brother.

“Oh, come on,” I said, laughing so hard my Negra Modelo nearly came out my nose. “You guys probably can build ten million yadders....sorry, Josb, I mean ladders...to go over a wall on the border, but you guys don’t know beans about advanced electronics. What are you talking about?”

“Jes, we not need be techie whizzies. Little brother, Josc, got PhD from MIT and be genius. He yest invent gadget to make *hombres* invisible *y* no body heat. He put in hats then towers not find squat,” he said solemnly. “We manage money, make millions sombreros, Josc do techie stuff. Sell to *Mexicano hermanos* to sneak through tower border. We make Mexico economy huge.”

“That’s impossible, José,” I scoffed. “If it could be done the military would have done it. No way it can work,” I said. “I’m an electronics engineer. I work for Martin Marietta military division. I know this area of technology cold.”

Joseb looked furtively around the bar, glanced at José who nodded. Then he put his hand inside his serape pulling out a little Mexican doll. “See *hombre?*” he asked.

“Joseb, it’s just a damn doll,” I said, exasperated now.

“No stupid doll,” Jose said. “It be like *poco* real hombre. Joseb make to show off.”

“Watch,” he said as he pulled out a tiny sombrero. He put the little hat on the doll and.....it disappeared.

“My God,” I said, flabbergasted. I couldn’t believe my eyes. He reached out in mid-air, pinched his fingers together and took the tiny sombrero off the doll. It reappeared. “Does it work on people?” I stammered.

“Jou bet,” Jose said. “Want me put on you *cabeza?*”

“Hell no,” I shouted backing away in terror.

They both laughed so hard their eyes watered, then Joseb put them back in his serape, got up, did a little dance step, whacked his brother on the back, the two jumping up and bumping chests, corralling the mob they brought with them, did a quick Aztec dance number, the whole damn bar doing it with them like Rockettes at Christmas, the brothers playing their unlikely instruments, oom-pa-pas from José, tweedle-dee-tweedles coming from Joseb’s horn, somehow managing a two step hat dance even with all that equipment. After five minutes of major chaos, they came back to the table, all sweaty, happy as only the Hose twins can be.

While they were performing, I looked up the latest announcements by the Department of Homeland Security on my multi-purpose mobile phone and sure enough: two billion dollars to build these towers. I could see the aerospace industry credibility going into the tank. If not a single Mexican would ever be caught because of the amazing high tech sombreros while the

Latino population of the southwestern states doubled....well, I thought in panic, I've got to get out of my Boeing stocks.

“Sorry, jou guys,” I said after the celebration, *mucho Dos Exxis*, and *Negra Modelo's* finally converting my syntax to theirs as usual. “Must yump to broker to change investments. *Hasta luego, amigos*,” I said as I staggered my way out on Sepulveda Boulevard, while the oompas and tweedles were blasting from within.