

My Passion for Latin American Literature and Culture --the Origins of Librosylivros

David Scott – Summer 2000

My passion for Latin America began in the Spring of 1955 on a long, sultry weekend in Havana with my parents. Staying at the small, rustic hotel in Old Havana where Hemingway wrote *The Old Man and the Sea*; drinking an afternoon beer at *La Bodeguita del Medio*, then a streetside bar; and finally watching 200 stilettoed, scantily-clad, massively headdressed chorus girls take to the stage at the *Tropicana* with Billy Eckstine crooning *That Old Black Magic* in the background (heady stuff for a precocious 12 year old), led to falling in love with a city, a country and a people.

My passion for things Iberoamerican intensified in 1957, after my father's death, as my mother and I spent a mystical month driving the length and breadth of the Iberian peninsula—Portugal and Spain--from *Fado* in Lisbon to the Casino at Estoril and the beaches of Cascais, to the castle at Sintra, to Prince Henry's University of Coimbra, up the Atlantic coast to Nazare and Porto, through the inland cork forests to the Algarve and Faro, then to Gibraltar, across to Tangier and Marrakech in Morocco, then back to Spain; to Sevilla, Cordoba and the Alhambra in Granada, to Toledo, the Prado and the boulevards in Madrid, to Barcelona and then to Andorra in the Spanish-French Pyrennes. I fell in love (again) with Portugal, was intrigued by Morocco and Moorish Spain (Seville & Toledo) and the Spain of Goya, El Greco and Velasquez.

Three further months in Europe that Summer solidified my passion for travel and burnished my Western European roots (French, Austrian, German, English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish) –north from Spain to Carcassonne and the wild horses of the Camargue, to art in Arles and Provence (Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir, Cezanne), Cannes, Nice and Monaco; to the museums in Florence, the Roman Forum, San Marino, Venice's canals and museums; Trieste, Slovenia, the coffee shops and Ferris Wheel in Vienna to zither strains from *The Third Man*; then Zurich, Lucerne, Interlaken and Geneva; Paris' *Louvre* and bistros, onion soup at *Les Halles*; London's museums and theatres, cousins in Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh, Loch Lomond, Loch Ness, the Hebrides, golf at St. Andrews, R.L. Stevenson's home in Edinburgh; then Belfast, Dublin, Waterford, Cork and Blarney Castle, more cousins, Limerick, Shannon then Gander and home. The passion to travel was firmly entrenched.

I began flying single engine planes in 1957, criss-crossed the northeastern USA and eastern Canada, and got my pilot's license in 1960 not long after my 17th birthday. In 1960, I rekindled my passion for Cuba, spending three weeks in Havana in the heady days after the Cuban Revolution. Journalist friends had arranged introductions to Fidel and Raul Castro, Che Guevara and others, and I spent an afternoon drinking with Ernest Hemingway (an old friend of my parents) at Havana's *El Floridita* bar. I fell in love with Havana again, and rode up San Juan Hill outside Santiago de Cuba like Teddy Roosevelt's *Rough Riders*.

The Sixties: Mexico, the Caribbean and South America

In 1960, I began four years at Wabash College, with a major in foreign languages (Spanish, French, German & Chinese) and a minor in history. In 1961, I spent three months in Mexico, six weeks in immersion Spanish, and six weeks driving the length and breadth of the country from Monterrey to Guadalajara, to Morelia, Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Taxco and Acapulco, through Tehuantepec to Oaxaca and Monte Alban, to Palenque and Merida, then back through Vera Cruz and Tampico—not realizing I would subsequently live on and off in Mexico for the next 35 years. I returned to Wabash a Spanish major and a minor in Latin American Studies. Even at this early date, Spanish language books--whether published in Spain or in Latin America--were hard to find, hard to get, and expensive. This has not changed even with the Internet, only gotten worse. The Librosylivros concept was waiting for technology to catch up.

In 1962 and 1963, I spent 15 months in Quito, Ecuador on a Fulbright teaching fellowship. I traveled to the Pacific Coast, throughout the Ecuadorian Andes & the along the Napo and upper Amazon rivers in the Ecuadorian *Oriente* (also traveling to Bogota, Cali and Cartagena Colombia, to Panama City and then Tegucigalpa, San Salvador and Belize). I socialized with Ecuador's political leadership and polite society in Quito and Guayaquil—many friends to this day--and I read its literature. Later in 1963 and early in 1964, I spent numerous weeks flying in and out of Jamaica, Puerto Rico (San Juan) and the Virgin Islands (St. Thomas and St. Croix), immersing myself in Caribbean culture and literature. I spent the late summer and fall of 1964 traveling in Mexico, where I met my first wife, then, in the fall of 1964; I was nearly killed in a plane crash off the North Fork of Long Island.

Undaunted, in the summer of 1965, I returned, to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (St. Thomas and St. Croix), travelling down the Eastern Caribbean, threading through the Lesser then the Dutch Antilles (Curacao and Aruba) to Venezuela and Colombia (including San Andres and Providencia), then to Ecuador again (including the Galapagos Islands). In the Fall, I returned to the States via Mexico, then, following a brief Winter stint as a saloonkeeper in Old San Juan, I returned to Ecuador (Guayaquil) in 1966 to build a shrimp trawling fleet and fishery.

At its peak, in 1970, I owned and operated 22 trawlers, employed 400 and exported millions of dollars worth of frozen shrimp, fish and lobster each year to the USA, Japan, Chile and Argentina. In 1967, I began commuting to Mexico (to homes in Mexico City, Cuernavaca and Acapulco) and my first marriage, and extensive travel in Mexico. During my years there, I met prominent members of Mexico's fine arts, crafts, literary and theatre communities as well many in its political establishment—many friends to this day. I read Mexico's literature and met many of its authors.

During the late sixties and early seventies, in addition to commuting between Ecuador and Mexico, I traveled extensively in Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Guatemala and the Caribbean. In 1970, I spent a month touring Tokyo, Nagoya, Expo70 in Osaka, Kyoto and Nikko with Japanese business associates.

The Seventies and Early Eighties: The US and Canada

In 1972, I changed careers and returned to the USA for graduate study (a MA in Psychology in Florida), became engaged to my second wife, and in 1975 moved to Toronto to practice psychology, marry and pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto and begin a private practice of psychology. I became actively involved in ratepayer then municipal and provincial politics, coalescing 400-ratepayer groups into the Metro Toronto Residents Action Committee to forge important environmental reforms, and ran thrice for Toronto City Council (narrowly defeated each time). I began writing about psychology and about the environment.

The mid-Eighties; Western Europe, the USSR and South America

In 1982, I began extensive research at the massive University of Toronto libraries complex for the Metro Toronto Chairman's Task Force on Violence Against Women and Children, culminating in a defining 1983 report. In 1984, I organized (with the support of US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop) a first of its kind International Symposium on Media Violence in Toronto pulling nearly one hundred experts from across North America and drawing media coverage in Canada and the USA (including the *NY & LA Times*, the major networks in Canada and the USA with segments on "60 Minutes" and "Entertainment Tonight").

My edited 1984 *Symposium on Media Violence and Pornography: Proceedings* and a subsequent, widely publicized, best-selling (20,000 copies) monograph I authored in Washington in 1985 on the effects of pornography and media violence led directly to formation of the 1985 Frazier Committee in Canada, the 1985 Meese Commission in the USA, the US Surgeon General's 1986 Panel, and my participation in all three. However, as is the case with many federal panels and commissions, results were distorted to satisfy political expediency.

In response, after my wife's death, in 1986 I formed the non-profit *National Family Foundation* to investigate, collate and promulgate research findings of mental health professionals around the globe that illuminated the core mechanisms of addiction, perversion and violence. Over the next five years, I traveled more than 500,000 miles on 86 trips (157 individual country visits) to 28 different countries--106 weeks of travel--to help synthesize what my colleagues knew about these core mechanisms. I organized a working group (a "core" group) of a dozen of the most distinguished medical minds in the world to distill and refine these understandings. During my travels in 1987, 1988 and 1989 I made the acquaintance of the leaders of many of the medical, psychological,

psychiatric and psychoanalytic organizations in the USA, Western and Eastern Europe and Latin America. Many are still active.

Traditionally, research into addiction, perversion and violence has centered in London, Paris, Zurich and Stockholm in Europe, and in the northeastern United States. Research into the effects of institutional child care has centered in London, Ulm, Geneva, Lund, Stockholm, Prague, Budapest, Moscow and St. Petersburg as well as the northeastern United States. I visited all these centers.

Collaterally, from 1989 to 1992, during 8 trips to the USSR (subsequently Russia), foundation interests branched into research on the effects of institutional childcare on Soviet children from 1949 to 1969; the organization of pioneering teaching visits for US psychiatrists and psychoanalysts to Russia; and coordination of medical exchange visits between the USSR and USA. A side effect of these meetings was coordination of high-resolution US image output to facilitate St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum to market graphics during its traveling shows in the US in 1991 and 1992.

The Nineties: Publishing in Mexico, Business in Brazil, Africa and India

During 1989, 1990 and 1991 I renewed my acquaintance with Latin America (and its recent literature) during a series of research trips (7 trips each to Peru, Brazil and Argentina, and 5 trips each to Panama and Mexico), in part in my capacity, in 1990 and 1991 as Special Advisor for Demand Reduction to the Office of National Drug Control Policy and Consultant to the Organization of American States, Interamerican Commission for the Control of Drug Abuse (CICAD) in Washington DC.

In 1989, 1990 and 1991, I laid the groundwork and initiated pre-internet e-mail and computer file exchanges between colleagues in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Mexico and the USA. I made pioneering visits to Brazilian, Argentinean and Soviet telecoms: Embratel in Rio, Arbel in Buenos Aires and Dulce Murphy's San Francisco-Moscow Teleport in Moscow.

From 1992 to 1995, I made an additional 13 trips to Mexico to pursue a startup in high-resolution graphics and fine arts printing in conjunction with Scott Paper Company's Crisoba paper division, now part of the Accival/Banamex/Telefonos Consortium. Many of the same people are still in charge.

For the past 5 years I have been interested in Brazil, Mexico, West Africa and India, and have traveled back and forth to London & Paris pursuing this interest.

Books Hard Found

During the decade from 1980 to 1990, my niece and nephew, Robin & Al Cleaves operated a specialty independent bookstore in Far Hills NJ, catering to

AT&T headquarters two blocks away, sourcing a variety of foreign language books--fiction, non-fiction and technical--for AT&T executives being transferred abroad, a preponderance to Latin America. Faced with the difficulty in finding and acquiring Spanish-language books from Spain and Latin America, Robin and Al developed the rudiments of the Librosylivros project. Robin had majored in Spanish at Emory, studied in Madrid and then received an MA in Spanish from NYU. Despite her fluency in Spanish, getting books was tough. The Librosylivros seed was planted.

In 1997 and 1998, Robin managed Hastings' Flagship book Megastore in Albuquerque NM in the heart of the Spanish speaking southwest. Even this close to the Mexican border, there were few Spanish language titles, those she ordered were hard to get, and when they finally arrived, they were expensive.

Reading, Writing and an Inexorable Arithmetic toward Librosylivros

During twenty-two years of travel abroad over the past 45 years (almost half in Latin America), I became bilingual in Spanish, conversant in Portuguese, and developed close personal relationships with hundreds of professional colleagues in many Latin American countries and professional relationships with countless business and political leaders across Latin America. I continue to do business in Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Puerto Rico. During this period, I read voraciously, reading, at up to two books a day, perhaps 10,000 books.

I began to read in grade school, omnivorously by 4th grade, with a steady diet of the Hardy Boys and Landmark historical adventures. By 6th grade, I had devoured HG Wells, E.B White and developed a vast appetite for English language (American, Canadian, British and Anzac authored) science fiction, adventure, mystery, history and literature that continued through high school. In college, my tastes expanded to Western European and Latin American literature in translation, and in its original language (French, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese) and later on a bit of Chinese, Japanese and Russian in translation and occasionally in the original. Recently, I have developed an interest in African, Indian, Japanese and Chinese literature. I am also a mystery and espionage buff and have read, over the past 40 years, a staggering number of the extant English language titles in these genres.

I have written more than 3 dozen books, book chapters, proceedings, journal and magazine articles over the past 25 years, and been interviewed by more than two dozen regional and national radio and television networks, national magazines and newspapers in the US, Europe, Russia and Latin America.

Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Publishing—the Librosylivros Project

I have the desire, the language skills and I believe the organizational ability to attempt to integrate all of these different facets of my life into one integrated whole encompassing and driving a Spanish and Portuguese language publishing and e-commerce website that will advance Spanish and Portuguese language, literature and cultural exchange as well as advance literacy and promote interest in adult and children's fiction and non-fiction in Latin America, Spain, Portugal in the Hispanic population of the USA and Puerto Rico, and interregionally.

I believe the Spanish and Portuguese language website envisioned by Librosylivros will help promulgate Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American literature in the US to millions of elementary and secondary school students of Spanish, along with their undergraduate and graduate brothers and sisters. It will reach 15 million Spanish speaking American adults and their 15 million Spanish speaking children, with adult and children's books. The Librosylivros website, through remote teaching, can also help promote Spanish language literacy as the US shifts from a dominant European to an increasingly Hispanic heritage country. My research and political skills will aid in gathering publishers' booklists, including language, literature, politics, and scientific and technical writing – from serious fiction to history, up to and including the *telenovela*. Robin & Al Cleaves' twenty years' experience in retail bookselling particularly in the Spanish language market will be of significant help.

Moreover, I have a cadre of friends (editors, publishers and writers), each with over 40 years experience in Latin American publishing, in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. All have offered and will gladly help launch this venture. There are also my 15,000 Latin American professional colleagues (psychiatrists and psychologists) who make up the membership of the seventy year old Porto Alegre Brazil-based Federação Psicanalítica da América Latina (FEPAL) who will constitute a core market for the website. More than 1,000 FEPAL colleagues met in Oct 2000 in Porto Alegre, Brasil at FEPAL's 23rd biennial Congress--traveling from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

As with my "core" group a decade ago, I will recruit a distinguished panel of Latin American and Iberian Peninsula authors and cultural icons, university professors and researchers to create an alluring, entrancing, super "sticky" online learning experience—an online meeting place to come to learn (and, through streaming media, see and hear) about literature, history and popular culture.