

IN MEMORIAM

# Elsie Montiel

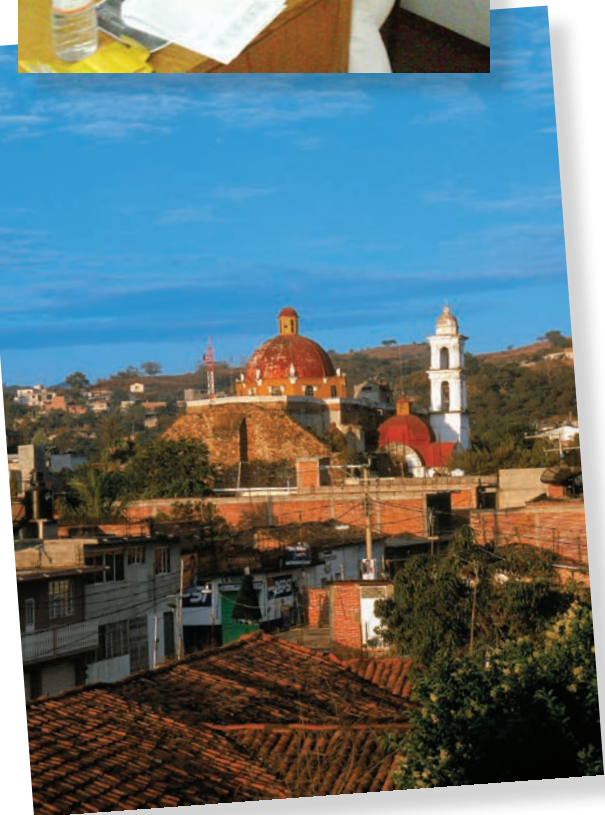
## Much More than an Extraordinary Editor (1956-2011)

Diego Ignacio Bugada Bernal\*

If anyone loved *Voices of Mexico* and gave it the best years of her professional life with complete conviction, it was Elsie Montiel. She was editor of this magazine, but she was much more than that. In its best moments, she was its soul, its inspiration. With enthusiasm and great vision, she always sought out issues, articles, and contributors for our “Art and Culture” section that were out of the ordinary, that would show us a different Mexico, far from the archetype, that would take us into other, often unknown, or sometimes little-appreciated but undoubtedly valuable, dimensions of its great cultural diversity and undeniable impetus for artistic creation; a very original Mexico, cast precisely in the manner of the lens and spirit of Elsie Montiel. And, of course, in *Voices of Mexico*’s difficult times, Elsie was also its support, the pillar that buoyed it up with a good idea, with an unexpected turn that brought it back into its readers and subscribers’ realm of preferences: an agreement with the publicity agencies for Mexico’s different states’ tourism programs throughout the country, or with the cultural officials in important cities, breathing new life into our publication and allowing us to continue to show the English-speaking public our nation’s inexhaustible marvels.

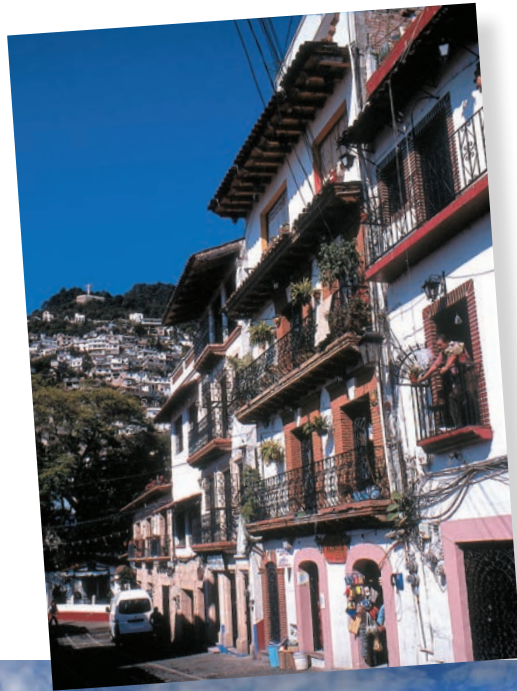
---

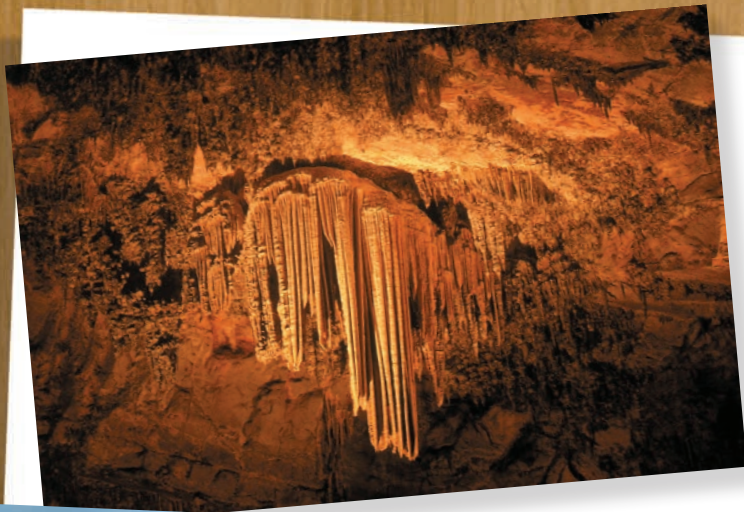
\*Editor-in-Chief of *Voices of Mexico*.



With enthusiasm and great vision, she always sought out issues, articles, and contributors for our "Art and Culture" section that were out of the ordinary, that would show us a different Mexico.

Elsie was more than a very good editor. Over her years at *Voices of Mexico*, she also trained in other essential areas of publishing. Her undoubted commitment to the magazine prompted her to take many photography courses. The objective: not having to depend on budgets and red tape to get first-class photographic quality. The result was that in recent years, with her spirit trained in letters and sensitive to the essence of things, Elsie traveled the country, capturing stupendous images to illustrate the articles she commissioned and sometimes wrote. Her love for *Voices* and her adventurous spirit turned her into an extraordinary photographer and an intrepid traveler along the sometimes stormy roads of our country. I remember some stunning issues (one, for example, about "the other Mayas," or the one about the contemporary culture of the communities living along the route of the missions in Querétaro's Sierra Gorda mountains) that were grounded in that undoubted ability so her own of seeking and finding what was parallel, what was authentic, what was original in Mexico's culture, always refusing to accept anything that smelled of commercialism or that wallowed in the archetypical. That was the editorial philosophy she defended and implemented until the end.





Her love for *Voices*, and her adventurous spirit turned her into an extraordinary photographer and an intrepid traveler along the sometimes stormy roads of our country.

Elsie also contributed a great deal to production of books by the UNAM Center for the Research on North America, the institution that publishes *Voices of Mexico*. Just like photography, Elsie became completely immersed in the graphic design and practical aspects of publishing. Her contributions were legion and her availability and talent always recognized by CISAN's researchers and the other authors the CISAN published.

One of her colleagues, Cynthia Creamer, wrote that with Elsie, she learned to see things in a different way and not be satisfied with the first impression of anything. And, in effect, Elsie was never satisfied. She thought that every product could always be perfected, and she hated faking compla-

cence with anything that was not well done. Like any good editor, she was obsessive and a perfectionist. She taught us to see beyond the obvious, it's true; and also to never take anything as a given. Above all, Elsie was a good workmate, always generous and quick to offer solidarity and help others, anyone who needed it; a good friend who would console us when some storm was devastating our existence; an upright, honest person who was always demanding, first and foremost, of herself.

The best homage we can pay her in the magazine where she worked and that she loved so much is to leave her in the company of some of the best photographs she took and that she also deeply loved. **MM**