**Aguilar Family of Oaxaca**

In December 1998, Ron and I flew to Oaxaca for the first time to enjoy Christmas holidays. While we were there, we visited Ocotlán de Morelos, the village home of the Aguilar sisters, Josefina, Guillermina, Irene and Concepcion. When we got to their small and humble home, we were invited inside, and Guillermina pointed to a room. We looked inside and there were no shelves or furniture but in the corner on the cement floor were what few pieces she had for sale. The family was busy eating a meal together and we were pretty much left on our own until we had chosen and were ready to pay.

The only other time we have been with the Aguilar family was at the Feria Maestros in Chapala in 2016 when Cathey had the honor of presenting the Van Daren Coke Award to Marianne Carlson, organizer of the event at that time over 20 years old and occurring annually. Because of the honor, all the artisans attending the Feria that year wanted to be close to Marianne and in a photo with her. We also especially acknowledged Josefina Aguilar who was there because she had come so far and wasn’t in good health and had gone blind.

**From Wikipedia**: Josefina Aguilar (b. 1945) is a Mexican folk artist from Ocotlán de Morelos, Oaxaca. A member of the Aguilar family, she is best known for her small clay figurines, an art form she learned from her mother. Aguilar uses red clay to create depictions of everyday village activities, religious and folkloric scenes, famous figures, and special Day of the Dead statues. Collectors of her work include Nelson Rockefeller, who discovered her work on a trip to Oaxaca in 1975, as well as repeat visitors to Oaxaca who come to see her latest work. Aguilar says each figurine she makes is unique. She became blind in 2014 and now uses touch to create her art. One of her major collectors quoted her as saying "It's not the eyes. It's the hand and the brain."

Josefina Aguilar was mentored by her mother Isaura Alcantara Díaz and her grandmother. She began learning her craft from them when she was six years old. In her early twenties she began to receive international press on her work. Aguilar's sisters Guillermina, Irene, and Concepcion also became accomplished sculptors, each with their own specialties. By the beginning of the 21st century, Josefina Aguilar was the matriarch of a family with nine members working in clay, including her sons Demetrio and Jose Juan Garcia. Other family members focus on painting or other tasks.

Aguilar's family dig they clay they use from a pit in a field outside of Ocotlán de Morelos. To get the quality clay required they have to dig down 10 or 12 feet. They soak the clay, lay a palm mat over it, and walk on it to press out the bubbles. While sculpting, Aguilar sits on her heels on a flat stone. Finished figures have to dry indoors for a week (direct sunlight would cause them to crack) before the family fires them in a rustic wooden kiln for nine hours. Many figures are lost to breakage. Those that survive the firing process have to cool overnight before they can be painted. The Aguilars sell their artwork on trestle tables set up in the open courtyard of their five-family complex. Josefina Aguilar's work is displayed in the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, the San Antonio Museum of Art in San Antonio, Texas, the Mexican Museum in San Francisco, California and the Museo de Arte Popular (MAP) in Mexico City as well as others.