

**The Beach ‘Basura’ Adventure**  
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It was definitely one of those pivotal moments in time. In front of me on a cold, stainless steel table lay my husband’s back pack. And across that table stood a slight young Hispanic airport authority employee with impassive black eyes and inscrutable countenance.

I was convinced we were in trouble the moment the back pack had disappeared into the X-ray device and the conveyor belt came to a slow but ominous halt. And it was with an increasing premonition of catastrophe that I watched the resulting focus and even puzzlement the image of our pack generated. Though humble in appearance and belying any significant value, the old pack was actually receptacle to a veritable treasure trove of sea-beans of amazing variety which we had collected over the past few days—for me precious, priceless reminders of idyllic hours spent under a generous tropical sun on white, sandy beaches that stretched beside a lush Mexican jungle.

The young man motioned towards the back pack with a small wooden stick and quietly instructed “Open.” I’m not sure of how much English he had mastery, but that one word was enough to plummet my heart to my flip-flops. Beside me I thought I could almost feel my husband’s perspiration rate increase.

As Dave began to unload the pack’s contents, beginning with the outer pocket which held various vacation paraphernalia including batteries and dive lights, random impressions from the last few days flitted through my mind...

Hiking the generous wide flat beaches that were festooned with layers and layers of amazing wrack and debris – a sea-beaner’s heaven where the white coral sand doesn’t even burn your feet;

Navigating to various beach sites via the jungle road full of endless potholes and rocks that jarred our teeth even at a snail’s pace and threatened to dislodge the motor out of our tin can of a rental car;

Begging Dave to slow down the car at dusk one night as we returned from the beach to avoid smushing the bold land crabs on the road—no, wait!—no need for a close-up picture after all—the “land crabs” are huge red-bellied tarantulas!

Snorkeling the spectacularly healthy coral reef off Mayan Beach Gardens shoreline, enchantingly populated with myriads of vibrantly colored fish and invertebrates and one huge amiable spotted eagle ray;

Lying in a deliciously comfortable bed after a day of successful beach combing while the ever-present ocean breezes drift across the delicately scented sheets, the surf lulls with its melody of endless energy, and enticing moonlight spills though the open shutters of our cabana;

Driving through the Sian Ka’an Preserve and spotting massive schomburgkia orchids perched in jungle trees and sporting 5+ foot spent bloom spikes that hint of past seasonal glories;

Sitting on the sun-warmed stone steps of the Temple of the Masks at Kuhunlich ruins and contemplating the fate of the fascinating community that erected such amazingly artistic architecture in the heart of the jungle, and then vanished hundreds of years ago;

Tossing pumice stones—looking for all the world like an assortment of petrified dinosaur eggs strewn across the beach—into the crystal clear waters of a quiet ocean cove to view again the “miracle” of floating rocks;

Pushing through head-high rampant weeds glorified with flowers tinted from all of nature’s palette and brilliant butterflies of unknown varieties to find an obscured path to the shore;

Recounting the day’s exploits with Nan Rhodes and Mary and Steve Bowman over a delectable supper while soothing surf sounds punctuate lulls in the conversation and the gentle night breezes cool sunburned skin;

Delighting in the sprouted beached coconuts and endless runners of bay beans—evidence of the jungle’s relentless creep back to the shore after hurricane decimation and of an endless war with the highest tides for possession of the beach;

Musing over marooned egg cases of fascinating variety that once housed who knows what mysterious pelagic creatures in their infancy;

Stopping to examine rampant vines glorifying a rusty barbed wire fence with weathered, listing posts beside the jungle road and confirming they are indeed *stephanotis* sporting pristine waxy white



blossoms of delicious fragrance;

Marveling in the countless brilliant stars viewed from the Mayan Beach Gardens rooftop observatory on a balmy tropical night.

My attention was again riveted to the impassive face across the table after I saw another quick gesture with the little wooden stick and heard the command again to “Open.” In

response Dave pulled from the pack’s largest and only remaining compartment a plastic bag of glorious red and brown *Mucunas*, and my anxiety increased. This was only one of several pouches of hoarded booty! Here, tightly stuffed in that inner haven, were Zip-locks filled with splendid sea purses in all possible variations of shape and color, and Mary’s beans, and large-banded *Mucunas*, and Oxys, and more. Would all my carefully hoarded treasures be confiscated?!?

It was almost comical—if I hadn't been so tense—to see a slight expression of perplexity appear in that formerly emotionless countenance across the table as the bag of sea-beans was examined. It was time to act. I leaned forward, held up for his scrutiny my treasured sea purse necklace, and said the “magic words” as instructed by Marcia of Mayan Beach in case we were stopped for search: “Beach ‘basura’ (Spanish for trash).” “For making jewelry” I hurriedly added with no idea whether he would comprehend or not. His eyes flicked between the necklace and the bag of sea-beans and suddenly the change in his expression was dramatic though brief. Congeniality kindled in those formerly cold, dark eyes and—for a brief but significant moment—a warm Latin American smile transformed his face. “Beautiful” he said as he indicated the necklace, and then he gestured for Dave to re-load the pack and turned away.

I was stunned and motionless by the sudden and unexpected reprieve though Dave, always the man of action, wasted no time in stuffing all displayed contents back in the pack and slipping his arms into the straps. I noticed his shirt was soaked with sweat as he grabbed my hand and began to pull me back into the crowd of milling travelers. Later, while we sat on the terminal's hard plastic seats and waited to board the plane for home, we laughed together over the episode and delighted in our fortune—our memorable vacation was “saved!”

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### News and Notes

THIS WILL BE THE LAST PRINTED and MAILED ISSUE OF THIS NEWSLETTER; we are going green and fully digital starting in 2010—no more mailed copies, no more donations; please visit [www.seabean.com](http://www.seabean.com) for all past and future issues of this newsletter—May, September, and December of each year! If you prefer a printed copy you can do so from the website.

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We enjoyed receiving this interesting letter from Weona Cleveland, a local historian and sea-bean enthusiast:

Sept. 18, 2009

Ed Perry, Editor & Publisher  
The Drifting Seed  
P.O. Box 510366  
Melbourne Beach, Fl. 32951

Dear Ed,

I am a local historian. I do a lot of "browsing" through the old newspapers. Here is an ad from the Melbourne Times of November 7, 1923, which I thought you might be interested in. Apparently, "sea-beaning" was popular even in those days. I don't know who "Jean" was, but apparently she worked at the bridge toll booth on the old wooden bridge across the Indian River at Melbourne. The bridge was only two years old in 1923 and I am surprised that a woman was working as a toll collector!

I enjoy the Drifting Seed. I am unable, physically, to go sea-beaning now, but reading the Drifting Seed is the next best thing.

*Weona Cleveland*  
Weona Cleveland  
360 Patrick Circle  
Melbourne, Fl. 32901

FOR SALE  
**SEA BEANS**  
Of all Descriptions  
Ask For Jean at  
Bridge Toll Station