

Try it

Mushroom Magic

MEXICO has given the world a lot of things, like turkeys, tomatoes, tabasco and tequilla. Now a mystery mushroom which reportedly sends you out of this world is being investigated.

Some say that while under its spell, you get an insight into the future. Most settle for the claim that it produces wild dreams and a feeling that life is grand. And it leaves no hang-over, headache or nausea.

Several scientific expeditions have penetrated the tropical wilds of Southern Mexico in search of the strange mushroom which grows wild.

Mexico has long been famed for its many types of mushrooms, but this magic mushroom is something else. It could have medicinal value.

Mark T. Gumbiner, a young anthropologist, has made several trips to the remote Huautla region of Oaxaca. His research was sponsored jointly by the University of Washington and the University of Chicago.

Dr. Andrija Punarich, a California physician, has been on

other expeditions. Recently, he helped a television producer, take films scheduled for showing in the United States.

Gumbiner not long ago led a small group to the primitive Oaxaca area inhabited by the Mazetec tribe which still uses pre-Columbian calendars and speaks a far-carrying, odd whistling language. Few understand Spanish.

According to the magazine "Mexico This Month," Gumbiner had won the confidence of the Indians earlier, and they willingly produced the magic mushrooms and arranged for a midnight ritual.

The mushrooms were soaked in water and sugar. Later they were removed, heated a few moments over a flame. Participants in the ritual ate them according to their particular desires.

Some who ate sparingly said they felt nothing except a stomach ache or a desire to go to the bathroom. But one "lost in the group and entered into a rapport that was so complete as to be terrifying," says one.

An elderly woman, who denied she was a witch, presided.

"Her drum background, her chants, her rising and falling inflections, guided one's responses as much as if he were an animal whose reins she held guiding it at will. Her evening was spent completely out of this world, in discerning the depth of perception, detachment and exploration of sensibilities not ordinarily associated with the usual five."

Dr. Puharich's group included Collier Young, TV Producer, Dr. Jeffery Smith, Stanford University Anthropologist, and Dr. Barbara Brown, neuro-pharmacist of the University of California.

According to the report on this expedition, all ate some of the mushrooms, which appear-

ed to affect them differently at different times.

Dr. Brown reported hallucinations, and a general feeling that life was wonderful.

Although there was a difference of opinion, Young was quoted as saying all the mushrooms produced definite effects. It was suggested that mushrooms might have some use as a base for treatment of mental illness.

As a climax to the trip, one of the Indians during the ritual told Dr. Puharich he would have an auto accident before leaving Mexico.

On the way back to the capital, the doctor's station wagon collided with a lorry and was a total loss. The doctor escaped with minor injuries.

Mushroom magic? No one can say.

* * *