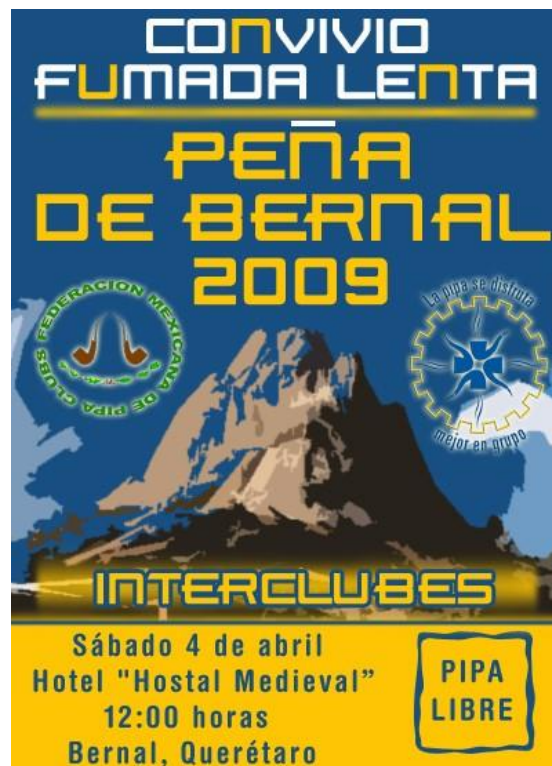


## First impressions count.

For a group of four, that never attended such a contest, the idea was tempting. It was in a near by town, Bernal, just two hours far from home and with the third biggest monolith on earth. So after our monthly meeting, three of us decided to go and see.

I had been reading about the slow smoking contest for years, and the invitation from Mexico City was a chance to give a glance to such a thing. During the meeting, we were discussing about the joy of smoking. After all, how we smoke is not important, just having a good time with friends and savoring our favorite blend is.

Anyway, after three years of meetings, the chance to travel with friends was a good idea. Near the town of destination, there are two vineyards, and we could meet smokers from other places. Pedro, the last member of our club, would pick up the other two, Arturo and I.



It was Saturday morning, a clear sky, and the three of us were heading to visit to the wine-cellar of the vineyard Freixenet. After the tour, and a few glasses of wine, we arrived at the hotel where the contest would be held. There were people from Mexico City, Queretaro, and the host of the contest, Carlos Camacho, from Ezequiel Montes.

We moved to a restaurant, facing the famous “peña de Bernal”, with typical food, beer and wine. Everybody was in a very good mood. I had the chance to see some old friends, like Joaquín, President of El Circulo de la Pipa, and Gustavo, President of the Azteca Pipaclub. But most of the smokers were new acquaintances.

During the meal, all the three of us declined the invitation to participate in the contest, arguing that we had never participated in one and were inexperienced smokers, but we were willing to see everything that happened. Joaquín told us that we have to participate, and a “no” was not possible. So we didn’t have any chance but to accept.



The time had come. We received our tobacco and matches. Got ready, and at the contest was started. We were kind of shy, trying to follow all the directions given. What we were thinking? No one wanted to be the first to abandon the competition! But there was a moment when we wanted to get to the hour, I was near that time.

After all, we were happy to be there, of having participated in the competition. We got third, fourth and fifth place (me being the fifth). The contest was fun, in a beautiful place. But it is the fellowship among pipe smokers what we liked the most.

We came back to San Luis with the purpose of organizing our first slow smoking contest for 2010, and we are in it.



*The group, I'm at the far left.*

Guillermo Ruizlimon  
San Luis Potosi, December 2009