

HOW TO READ ATENAS TODAY

Many of the pages in Atenas Today are in two column format, and the default “view” in the *Adobe Reader* will present these pages in a large size that requires you to scroll up and down to read the whole page.

By changing the “view” to “**Full Screen**” you can fit the page to your screen and avoid the scrolling.

When in “Full Screen” view, left click to advance to the next page, or right click to go back a page.

If the text is too small for your taste, push the “escape” key to exit the “Full Screen” mode, and change the “zoom” level to get the size you want.

THE NEW YELLOW PAGES

Don't forget to download and save the latest version of the Yellow Pages. Many new businesses have been listed. This section will help you find the goods and services you need.

ATENAS TODAY



Blue Flag Waving in Güisaro - photo M. Arce

ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 400 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Marietta Arce at atenastoday@gmail.com.

Compositions from back issues are archived on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, www.atenascatuca.com. Click on the English version and then Atenas Today on the business page.



DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

New names and numbers have been added to the directory. With each issue Atenas Today subscribers will receive an updated file containing the names and contact information of people who have chosen to be listed. Simply download the PDF file attached to this Atenas Today email and print it or save it on your computer.

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to atenastoday@gmail.com

Issue No. 90

June 23, 2012

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Publisher's Note



Here we are at the end of a June that came bursting in with lots of activities reminding us of the importance of our environment and the need to protect it. I was present at the celebration in Güisaro on June 1st when the Blue Flag was raised once again in that community. Güisaro continues to be a worthy example in its efforts to improve the quality of life and health of its residents. They invite us to become part of the Blue Flag program in our own communities.

June is one of my favorite months. June marks the end of the school year for our family and we look forward to enjoying the many lazy days ahead of us. My love of bright, bold colors is satisfied when my eyes behold the multiple rainbows in stores and markets everywhere. I am energized by the creative displays and enjoy walking around our town leisurely appreciating the colors of nature.

The last couple of days have been busy for Atenas. We hosted a television crew from Sinart's program "De Pueblo en Pueblo". The action-packed days found the crew interviewing and filming just a fraction of the interesting people and places we have in our town. The program will be televised in July or August; look for updates in next month's issue.

We were all a bit nostalgic when the crew was taking their leave. We had developed a strong bond with them which we know will endure and we urge them to return in the future. I was exhausted but very satisfied when I returned to my neglected family, pets and home, knowing that bounty that the crew found here is ours to enjoy in Atenas today and every day.

Happy reading!

Marietta Arce
marietta.arce@gmail





COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

This space is available for posting community activities for the following weeks. Please provide information about your activity or event to atenastoday@gmail.com by the 15th of the month.

June 25th , 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. ART CLASSES with Mary Park. Please call or email

July 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th to: mandgpark@shaw.ca; 8330-3274

June 26th, - Atenas Bridge Club meets at the new, renovated Don Yayo's Restaurant.

July 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st Noon-3:00 p.m. No partner required.

June 27th (Please confirm with Sara or Kay 2446-0664) and

July 4th (all are welcome this day to celebrate U.S. Independence),

July 11th, 18th, 25th

Atenas Wednesday Women

informal get together at Kay's Gringo Postres
every Wednesday afternoon at 12.30 PM

June 27th, July 11th, 25th: Recycling in Atenas from 7 a.m. to Noon at the Plaza in front of the Central School, near the volleyball court.– Recycling of aluminum, metal, plastic, paper, cardboard NO ELECTRONICS, STYROFOAM or EGG CARTONS Please rinse and separate your recyclables before dropping them off. Thank you for your continued efforts in this campaign.

July 1st: Canada Day Celebration (see flyer following)

July 4th: U.S. Celebrates Independence Day at Cervecería (See Flyer following)

July 8th: GRECIA

2nd Annual Independence Day Fiesta!

Everyone is invited to come and join the fun! All profits will go to Asociación de Amigos Griegos Hoy por Ti (Friends of Grecia Association – For You Today!), a local Grecia charity which serves our less fortunate neighbors.

Time: 10:00 am

Location: Quinta Real, San Francisco de San Isidro de Grecia

Map: <http://www.webquintareal.com/>

More info: <https://www.facebook.com/IndependenceDayFiesta>

Contact: Sheron Bloom (azbelle72@gmail.com)

July 10th - Writer's Club meets at Colinas del Sol, at Noon. Contact L. Michael Rusin @ crcaseyboy@gmail.com (2451-8063) for more information.

July 10th 3 p.m. Abandoned Animals of Atenas Foundation meeting at Kay's Gringo Postres. Please contact Virginia 2446-5343 or Sylvia 8868-1386 for more information. Volunteers are needed and welcome.

July 16th - PLEIN AIR - A group of people with curious minds who meet the 3rd Monday of every month at a different location to explore and express their creativity through visual art and writing. Contact Jan Yatsko at 2446-0970 or janyatsko@ice.co.cr to find out where we have been and where we are going.

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT www.atenaslife.com FOR OTHER REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES.

Join us for
'Canada Day 2012'



MENU:

Pinchos de Carne
Pollo Desmenuzado
Pinchos de Vegetales
Frijoles Molidos
Pico de Gallo de Tomate
Pico de Gallo de Mango
Tortillas tostadas, de maíz
y de trigo
Lechugas
Natilla
Queso rallado

Brownie Sundae con Salsa
de Fresa

Cash Bar

'Canada Day Celebration'
at Zamora Estates,
Santa Ana.
Sunday, July 1st, 2012

Join us for our annual event, with a
Latin inspired lunch and great
music.
10 am until 4 pm

\$25/ adult,
\$12 per child (12 & under)

Tickets on sale now until Tuesday,
June 26th

NO tickets will be available to
purchase at the door.

TICKETS AVAILABLE IN ATENAS

CONTACT RON FINDLAY

2446-0936



This year's picnic is on **Wednesday, July 4, 2012, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.**, on the grounds of the Cervecería, just off of the Autopista General Cañas, near the San José airport.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This year, all U.S. citizens are encouraged to bring a Costa Rican friend to the picnic, to share in the experience of a good old fashioned 4th of July celebration. COST: 5.000 colones per person. **More info:** <http://www.americancolonycr.com/>

Parking along nearby roads is no longer permitted! Violators will be towed. Parking, with free shuttle service to and from the picnic site throughout the day, will be available at the OLD ExpoMovil site. Directions to the parking site and a map are below:

Take the Pan American Highway (Rt. 1) . . .

From San José going towards the airport (west)

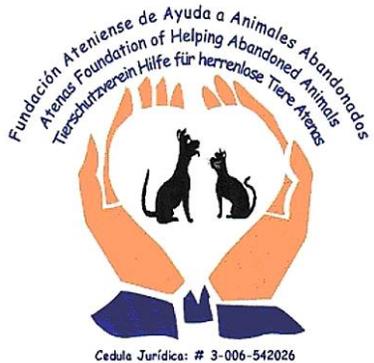
1. Take the exit to Real Cariari (San Antonio de Belén).
2. At the stoplight, turn LEFT, crossing the highway.
3. At the 2nd street to the right, turn RIGHT.
4. Go 300-400 meters to the 4th of July Parking area at the OLD ExpoMovil site, next to AVIS RENT A CAR, in front of the Jehovah's Witnesses Assembly Hall.

From the airport, going towards San José (east):

- Take the exit to Double Tree Hotel/Cariari exit
- At the stoplight, turn RIGHT.
- At the 1st road to the right, turn RIGHT; follow #4 above.



A Plea for Help!



"I have always held firmly to the thought that each one of us can do a little to bring some portion of misery to an end." - Albert Schweitzer

by Sylvia Spix
AnimalesAtenasCR@aol.com

We are pleased to inform the Atenas Today community that we had another massive spay/neuter clinic in Rio Grande (Calle Oratorio) on May 27th. Fifty-three (53!) dogs and cats were neutered that day. We plan another clinic at the end of July /beginning of August in Barrio Mercedes.

Although we do not have a shelter, last week we counted twenty-two (22) dogs and twenty-one (21) cats in Dora's private tico-house. Most of these animals were discarded mothers with newborn puppies and kittens. It is extremely time-consuming to care for them, especially keeping them - more or less - clean and getting all of them fed (some orphans need expensive special baby food or, if there is a mother, she needs high quality food).

We are in desperate need of foster homes and volunteers. Generous and permanent financial support would be also highly welcome.

We have our next monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 10th at 3 pm at Kay's Gringo Postres in Güisaro. We know that people are busy with their every day activities but we urge you to help us in any way you can. We are sure volunteering will bring you unexpected rewards; the least of which will be to know that you have made a difference in an animal's existence and have contributed to the collaborative efforts of a group of like-minded friends.

We can be found on Facebook. Our name there is **Animales Abandonados Atenas**.

Our website <http://www.costa-rica-live.com/AnimalesAtenas/index.html> is currently being revised. Unfortunately progress is slow - resulting also from lack of man power ...

Our contacts:

Dora Tel. 8855-9822 (Español)
Doritrebol@hotmail.com

Virginia Tel. 8896-5937 (Español, English) umavik@gmail.com

Sylvia Tel. 8868-1386 (ES, EN + Deutsch) AnimalesAtenasCR@aol.com

* NUESTRA CUENTA PARA DONACIONES *
* OUR ACCOUNT FOR DONATIONS *
* UNSER SPENDENKONTO *



Banco Nacional de Costa Rica (BNCR):
Cuenta Colones = # 200-01-021-021644-8
US-\$ account = # 200-02-021-003233-4
Fundación Ateniense de Ayuda
a Animales Abandonados

GRACIAS !

TeenSmart International: Changing the Lives of Central American Youth, Virtually



By Gabriela Díaz

With UN studies showing that poverty in Latin America has hit its lowest levels in the last 20 years and growing crime rates, it's fair to worry about how the region's youth are spending their time. All around the region, teenagers lack the resources, personal skills and guidance to make informed decisions about the risks they face.

Almost a decade ago, a growing concern for the region's youth and the risks that threaten them led Dr. Cathy Strachan Lindenberg, a former nurse and public health educator and her colleagues, to develop an innovative system to give teenagers access to information that could save them from harm and empower them to lead healthy, productive lives.

In 2004, with the support of many generous donors, Lindenberg founded TeenSmart International (TSI), a non-profit U.S. tax exempt organization that works with existing youth and family development organizations to provide interactive online services and counseling for youth 10 to 24 years of age.



Through its philosophy of self-empowerment and self-care, in its first year, TSI provided services to two youth development organizations, serving 167 teens in Central America. To date, TeenSmart has partnered with more than 40 youth and family development organizations - including schools, community and church-based groups - in Costa Rica and Nicaragua and more than 10,000 youth are registered on its online platform. These teens are among the poorest 40% in Central America.

TeenSmart tackles six public health issues that affect teenagers: sexual risks that can result in pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases, violence including bullying and suicide, tobacco use, alcohol and drug use, poor nutritional habits and lack of physical exercise.

"These risky behaviors represent the highest morbidity and mortality rates among youth in the region. For the most part, these behaviors are established during adolescence, persist into adulthood and are all theoretically preventable," says Lindenberg.



TeenSmart offers its services through its online platform available at www.jovensalud.net. By teaming up with youth development institutions, TSI is able to secure computer laboratories and Internet resources for the at-risk teens it serves. With the assistance of TSI staff, they learn how to access and use the free online adolescent health promotion services, starting by registering and completing baseline health, risk and resilience web-based profiles and getting immediate feedback as to their personal levels of risk.

Teens then gain access to a team of virtual counselors who address their questions regarding sexuality, nutrition, and many other topics in an anonymous, private and respectful manner. In 2011, TSI staff, including TeenSmart psychologists and volunteer university psychology students responded to almost 5,000 virtual youth consultations.



With financial support from public and private sector donors, students who receive TeenSmart's available scholarships are invited to enroll in TSI's web-based e-learning courses. TeenSmart's 14-module course CRECER para SER focuses directly on skills development and prevention of the six risk behaviors identified by TSI. The course CRECER por la PAZ specifically addresses violent behaviors that can lead to crime.

To deal with these behaviors, in Nicaragua TeenSmart has partnered with three Juvenile Justice Courts and is currently delivering its online courses and providing its services to delinquent youth.

TeenSmart also conducts in-class activities, workshops, trainings and holds an international conference held in Costa Rica or Nicaragua every year with youth volunteer leaders from each country.

Teens who completed the pilot test of the CRECER para SER courses last year, reported pre and post test improvements in levels of communication with their parents, less depression, less fighting and a greater use of condoms among sexually active teens.

"I consider www.jovensalud.net an excellent service because I can ask and express myself without feeling fear or embarrassment. I can ask about medical, psychological and sexual matters openly and of course, respectfully," reported one teen anonymously.

With a staff of only 15 full and part-time employees and a growing number of volunteer youth leaders in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, TeenSmart is always on the lookout for helping hands.



Right now, TeenSmart International is seeking Volunteer Translators to translate Spanish adolescent health promotion information into English. TeenSmart hopes to make its websites bilingual so that all the teens in the Spanish/English speaking Americas can have access to its services. If you are interested in helping with translations please contact Cathy Strachan Lindenberg via email at clindenb@u.washington.edu or at 2433 1023. To learn more about TeenSmart or to make a donation please visit www.teensmart.org.

Enjoying the view from down here



by Suzanne Mark
Suzanne@thenowtechnique.com

Now that I am in Costa Rica and without a car, I have been biking everywhere. My bike is what we affectionately call "the grunter"; a heavy, red Schwinn on which I have placed saddlebags for trips to town and to pick up organic produce on Saturday. It is a serviceable "utility bike". My husband's bike, on the other hand, is a state-of-the-art Bianchi Hybrid. This bike is a pleasurable, light ride that is much easier to get up hills, and to lift up steps, but unfortunately, it is just a bit too tall for me. His legs are about a meter and a half long, and even with the seat in its lowest position; I touch the ground on tippy toes. Irrespective of the technical details, I have been riding his bike around as it is just plain nicer and, ok, I admit...I feel "cool" on it.

Well, the other night, my friends brought me and my husband's bike back from Atenas in their minivan as the road is not safe to navigate at night. They dropped me at the start of my road with my helmet (on) groceries on both handle bars and a computer backpack on my back. Even with all of this baggage, I boldly decided to pedal from where they left me to the end of the asphalt, or about a hundred meters. Just before the very gravelly part of the road began, I stopped on the asphalt and was ready to swing my leg over the too-high bike when, most probably due to my faulty center of gravity, I realized that my foot was stuck and I was suddenly falling, in slow motion, backwards.

Creeeeeeaaak, CRASH!

I found myself flat on my back in the middle of the road, with a bike between my legs.

My backpack had broken the fall and my helmet had only lightly hit the pavement. I flailed about momentarily like an overturned beetle trying to get up, but could not as I was still wearing the backpack and my left leg was pinned under the bike. It is challenging to ride while horizontal.

So, I lay there for a minute just allowing the shock of being suddenly horizontal to wear off. I saw the humor. I laughed. I looked at the upside. To no one in particular, I said, "Gee, good thing I was not carrying EGGS!" And then I saw it. The most beautiful night sky, full of sequin-like stars. Resplendent. I lay there for a minute or two contemplating and admiring the beauty. "Wow! If I had not fallen I would not have seen this!" Costa Rica is full of moments like this. Moments when you fall on your ass (literally or metaphorically) and suddenly you have occasion to notice the staggering beauty around you. This beauty is blessing you constantly, but you had not noticed until you were abruptly afforded a change in perspective.

Although I was cut and bruised a bit when I got up, I got to thinking that I could switch to a higher perspective any ole' time. Look up. Look into the distance. Take a walk. Notice a blossom, bird or lizard. Take some time. Sit and contemplate rather than hurrying off to the next thing.

It was the best of all possible falls.

Suzanne

Leah MacLauchlan: A Yogi in the Garden of Eden!



by Dennis Easters easters3@msn.com

Yoga and pura vida go hand in hand. Simply put, yoga is an ancient Hindu discipline that strives to unite the mind, body, and spirit. Literally translated, pura vida means “pure life”. To Costa Ricans, “pura vida” is more than words; it is a way of life. This way of life has many similarities to the philosophy of yoga in that it teaches us to live in the moment, be present, enjoy the simple pleasures of life, and take advantage of the abundance that our surroundings have to offer. In this hectic, modern world that we have created for ourselves, many of us have forgotten the importance of this unity and what is a pure life. Life becomes unbalanced and unnatural without these elements. I wanted to explore the idea with someone who teaches yoga and lives the pura vida, so I sat down with local expat and fellow yogi Leah MacLauchlan to talk about yoga, pura vida, and life in the “Garden of Eden”.

I am always curious as to what motivates people to make the move to Costa Rica. Leah and her husband Jim moved to Costa Rica from Canada

11 years ago and settled in the little mountain village of Atenas. I asked Leah, “Why Costa Rica?” Leah said, “My husband Jim and I liked taking exotic vacations and Costa Rica was one of those destinations.” While at the beach in Playa Ventana, Leah asked Jim, “Why don’t we create a life in a warm climate like this?” That is where it began, with a simple question. In making the final decision to move to Costa Rica, Leah continued, “We chose Costa Rica for the lifestyle, the people, flora and fauna, fresh fruit and vegetables, and spectacular scenery. There is something magical about Costa Rica. We also had started a mini storage business here that was doing well, so it made sense to be close by to run the business.” Why Atenas? She continued, “We specifically chose Atenas for its location since it is close to the city (San Jose) and beaches. Atenas has everything we need like shopping and banks, clean, pure mountain air, and great people.” Leah says Atenas is her “Garden of Eden”.



The experience of living in a foreign country and the impact that it has on

lives is different for everyone. I asked Leah how living in Costa Rica changed/impacted her life. She said, "Living in Costa Rica has taught me to slow down and realize the value of what is important. Here I can watch the sunrise and enjoy it, and not feel guilty about not doing something else. Back in Canada no one has time to just watch the sunrise. When we are in that rushed lifestyle we don't take time to see what is around us. There is beauty in simplicity. It's a simple life here in Atenas. Costa Ricans thrive on simplicity and tranquility. They accomplish everything we do, but in their own time. They are also very peaceful and I have learned a lot from them."

Leah is a yoga instructor and self proclaimed yogaholic, who offers local yoga classes and retreats throughout Costa Rica. I myself discovered yoga years ago and personally know the value of the practice in all its aspects. Also, I have known the privilege of a yoga session on Leah's platform. I left completely recharged and inspired. The setting is stunning with winding trails, lush plantings, and the sounds of nature that lead you to a yoga platform set in a heavenly paradise. I wanted to know more about Leah's experience and what she has to offer. Leah told me, "When I first came to Costa Rica I was into jogging and aerobics. I was introduced to yoga by a friend and I loved it. I tried to find a teacher here in Atenas but at the time there was not one. I met a teacher from Orotina and she came to Atenas to show me and a small group the basics of the practice. I also learned from books and like-minded women.

Then I decided to go for my teacher training so I could spread the good word and benefits of yoga."



Leah is trained in hatha yoga, which is physical and focuses on the muscles, yin yoga that is a slow meditative practice where postures are often seated and held longer (3-5 minutes), and restorative yoga that is practiced with props to support the body. Restorative yoga is good for those with special needs, injuries, and illnesses.

Other than the physical, what are the benefits of yoga? Leah said, "What I love about yoga is that it is personal. Your practice is your yoga, where you are at in that specific moment. There is no competition in yoga. The practice is truly in the moment. It is the mind, body and spirit in union. Once off the mat, you take that out into your community and make different choices. You become more in tune with yourself and others, sensitive, and you open your heart. That is what yoga teaches us."

Leah offers classes at her home in Atenas on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 7-8:30 a.m. The price for

walk-ins is 2,500 colones or 20,000 per month. She also offers classes on Tuesday and Saturday at Ana's Place in Atenas from 8-9 a.m. and on Thursday, Anna Hunt teaches a class from 8-9 a.m. Those classes are 2,000 colones each



Self improvement retreats with an individual focus are becoming more popular everyday and yoga is no exception. The idea of a yoga retreat is very appealing to many so I asked Leah to talk about the retreats that she offers here in Costa Rica. "I have done many retreats throughout Costa Rica with our local yoga community. We try to keep the retreats to 3 days, typically in the low season (May and October) for better rates. We also try to always choose a different location for each retreat to create a new experience. Costa Rica has everything from mountains, beaches, rivers, volcanoes, jungle, and hot springs. It's important to choose a location where we can also see something in the area. We have done retreats at Rio Chirripo, the Osa peninsula, and El Silencio Lodge, to name a few. The retreats include room, healthy meals, meditations, yoga practices (5-6), and some type of tour (hiking for example) during the stay. The beauty of the retreat is that you are

removing yourself from your everyday environment and discovering new places along the way. You eat, sleep, and breathe yoga. It is truly beneficial because you are there on retreat and only focused on yourself. It's your time. You are surrounded by love, and love is healing." In addition to offering these retreats to her local yoga circle, Leah has recently partnered on a new venture with fellow yogi Anna Hunt, called Pura Vida Yoga Vacations (www.puravidayogavacations.com), where they will organize retreats for groups, taking care of all the logistics. The teachers will come to Costa Rica with their students and only focus on yoga.



I wanted to know how Leah felt about the "pura vida", particularly in its relation to her yoga practice and experience in Costa Rica. I could see the spark in Leah's eye when she said, "In Costa Rica we can practice yoga outside. I have a yoga platform outside (covered) so being close to nature, its sounds and vibrations, is a real privilege. Here in Costa Rica practicing in the outdoors is obtainable 365 days a year. It's fantastic You pick up on the energy of the surrounding environment. Now when I

practice yoga in an enclosed space it is a bit difficult.” How does “pura vida” relate to yoga? Leah continued, “Pura Vida is living in the moment, not looking back at the past, or looking forward to the future. It is being in the now. Also because you are in NATURE, completely surrounded by nature and that is PURA VIDA, pure life. There is no outside influence or the rapid pace of the external world. When you are in nature you connect because that is your true self. Nature is the natural healer. Nature heals! Costa Ricans know all these things; they are rich in knowledge with things like using natural medicine and medicinal plants. With a plant you can heal yourself. In Costa Rica we have the chance to live a pure life, PURE VIDA.”



changed, that what will happen tomorrow is the future and cannot be controlled, then what we do today in the present is what matters because it is all we truly have for sure. Focus on that, live in the moment, and soak up every drop of joy and pleasure that life has to offer and then you will have discovered what Costa Ricans have known for many years as pura vida, the pure life. Namaste.



I asked Leah if she had one thing to say to everyone, what would that be? Without hesitation Leah said, “I truly believe if everyone practiced yoga the world would be a better place.” I asked why she believes that to be true and she said, “Because it brings you peace, therefore we can share peace. It brings inner peace and compassion.” That is a sentiment that I can agree with. If we can all remember that what happened yesterday is the past and cannot be



For more information about yoga classes, retreats, workshops, and even mini storage, you may contact Leah at: nomosno21@gmail.com, www.puravidayogavacations.com or 2446-3150.



Mexican Fandango and other myths...

How to ride through Central America

Part I of II

by

Paul Furlong

"Not all those who wander are lost." – [J. R. R. Tolkien](#)



Across from the main square, San Cristobel De Los Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Mid price, old, a work of art in itself, one of the hotels I use in my tours. FuzzFoto.

Changes come in many flavors. Sometimes we're hurled through an open window, other times it's a daring escape.

My first trip to Mexico on a motorcycle was about twenty years ago. Painted into a corner, I waited; brush in hand, for the last coat to dry. One day my wife left with the kids and most of the farm. Sometime later with a case of lingering blues, I found myself on the Mexican Border in McAllen, Texas. I made it across. So can you.

I met Rich Knowlton outside 802 Motor Sports Kawasaki in Brownsville, Texas a couple years ago. I'd brought a tour up from Costa Rica, where I live now, and was waiting for another tour to take me home. Waiting for riders, waiting for parts, I was in neutral at the border. It was just the two of us, Rich and I shuffling our feet in the dealership, it seemed rude not to say something.

"Where you heading?" I asked.

"Guatemala for Spanish lessons and then down to Panama", he said in his distinctive New England accent.

"Well then," I asked. "How about lunch?"

The need for shade and something cool moved us toward his motorcycle outside. My experienced eye assembled the pieces as his trip began to unfold...

Like a swaybacked mule, his overloaded KLR¹, leaned heavily on her stand. With Rich standing close, it was clear that he and his bike "went together." In the world of motorcycling, it's like that... a multitude of styles; cruisers in chrome, rockets in race paint and BMW mobility with matching pins in earthy contrasting colors... there is a man and his motorcycle that stand alone; the "no-style style."



Rich Knowlton, an individual man without a mission or an axe to grind...out there with the billions of stars that each of us is...never to be duplicated or repeated... isn't there a star in you? There must be fifty ways to walk out of your life. Fuzz Foto

Dour and suspended to a utilitarian "T," Rich stands square in the middle of his class. He made an extra tool kit from 4" plastic tubing and attached it to his front engine guard... something I've always been tempted to do but didn't because it looks funky. Not Rich, his bike abounds with funk. Red, sun faded plastic gone pink with age, his bike makes a statement as profound as his deeply furrowed face; together they make a sober pair headed south to Guatemala for Spanish lessons. Can a Gringo bike learn to read Kilometers? Will Rich find truth and happiness in the land of Mañana?

We started our bikes and rode to a spicy Mexican Restaurant just down the road. Over Tacos and beer, we talked about routes, people, their customs and if he could pick up the lingo in a month or so. There was a familiar air of unresolved sadness about him. In the course of conversation I learned he'd been married once, rode a Kawasaki Concourse and lived a quiet life, raising two daughters while working for General Electric. One day his wife died. There it was, his life laid in a linear pattern for easy inspection. Moving makes sense for many of us with overstuffed blues, there's often no choice in the matter.

Later in the shop, I noticed Riche's bike on the lift waiting for a tire. The mechanics were astonished by the weight he carried. Dan Walsh, another traveler and journalist, once told me that long distance riders carry what they need to feel comfortable. Maybe, these creatures of burden are made for crossing vast deserts, not racing through traffic. The ones I'd ridden felt shaky and uncertain from their load. I used to say something to that effect to their owners, who'd smile a thin smile of patient understanding. But Rich was struggling; I knew he'd lighten his load soon or later.

I went about my southern preparations and totally forgot about Rich till his emails started coming in. He was documenting his travels and the reading was good. He'd found a Spanish school in Guatemala and was there when I finally got home to Costa Rica. He was frustrated that Spanish wasn't coming to him as advertised.

"It never does," I wrote, smug in my own painfully assembled street lingo. Some things can only be learned through the skin. Rich would learn once he started moving again.

And move he did. Here's an excerpt from one of his emails...

"Day 2 The \$10 map I bought in Xela showed a paved road for the next fifty miles of my chosen route. A few miles after leaving Jababaya it turned to dirt and got progressively worst until reaching Rabinal. I did really feel like

switched back in the opposite direction. There was a bike approaching from the other direction. I heard his horn before I saw him. He was signaling that he was approaching this dangerous curve from down the hill. I stopped on the steep incline about ten feet before the curve. He passed with a rider on the back without a problem."



The Mule. One might be fooled by the dirt underneath, but the muck on his pannier says he's been down in the mire. Note how low she rides... not slammed, just heavy. Months later, in my shop, we adjusted his bike and his load... much of which is still in my garage. Rich Foto

The pictures and text that came with Rich's emails tell a more intimate story. He has an eye and sees magnificence when it's staring him in the face. How it is that age and course knuckled men often converge with beauty where none ever existed before?



Beauty passing by. A Rich Foto

Thus ends part one of a two part tale...

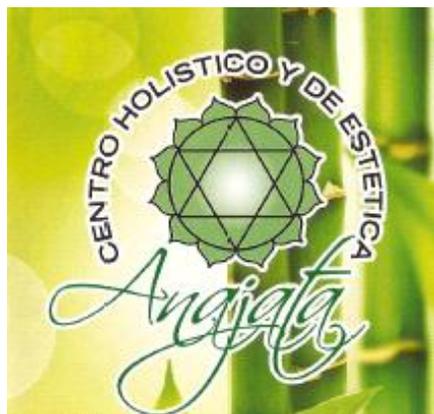
...a story of stubborn will and homespun romance.

Comments welcome. Fuzzlong@gmail.com

i The Kawasaki KLR is a "Dual Sport" motorcycle used for on and off road traveling. This particular model is known for its reliability and long range capabilities over the earth.

Atenas Today Interviews

Kattia Méndez H. - Massage Therapist



AT: We recently visited **Centro Holístico** located 75 meters east of AyA in Atenas. (just down the block from Plaza Central) where we chatted at length with Kattia Méndez, owner and massage therapist.

AT: Kattia, are you originally from Atenas?

KM: Actually, yes, I am from Atenas, and although I have only had my practice here for the last three years, it is what I always wanted: to set up my center in my hometown.

AT: It's very nice that you are able to live your dream like that. Our readers will be interested to learn what your training and specialties are.

KM: I am a licensed massage therapist. I received my diploma from CUNA (Alajuela), and I am accredited by Saint Thomas University in Florida. In addition, I am a member of the Association of Massage Therapists in Costa Rica because I think it is important to stay up to date on the latest trends in my chosen profession.

AT: What made you decide to go into this profession?

KM: I have always enjoyed working with people and helping them feel better. When I realized that I could bring the gift of healing to others, it made me seek the training and experience necessary to do it. I worked for four years in

Turrucares. I obtained a great deal of experience but after the birth of my daughter, I found that staying closer to home was more important to me.

AT: Well, congratulations on that. You have a beautiful setting here, the music is soothing, the lighting and the colors in the room are muted and very appropriate for the kind of work you do.

KM: I thought for a long time about the experience that I wanted my customers to have. As you can see, the location is on a rather busy street. However, once I close the door and start working, my clients relax and forget about the world out there. They sometimes fall asleep, or if the mood strikes them, they might use part of the time to talk about things they might not be able to discuss anywhere else.



Hot Stone Therapy

AT: That's interesting and not unusual. I have heard that people often become very close to their massage therapists. What kinds of massage do you offer?

KM: I offer many different massages. For example, the therapeutic massage that I offer is a combination of different techniques focusing on deep tissue; strain, sciatica or lumbago. This massage lasts about one and a half hours. I also offer a relaxing massage which is exactly what the name suggests. It is targeted to people who have no major pain or strain. This one lasts one hour and is gentle so that the customer is able to have a deeply relaxing experience. I offer gestational as well as geriatric massage so you see, I cover the gamut of ages and stages of a person's condition.

I also know reiki, which is indicated for people who enjoy having a more spiritual technique. Reflexology, Acupressure and Lymphatic Drainage are also among the techniques that I know how to perform.

AT: I know that being a massage therapist is very physically demanding. Do you have a set number of massages that you offer per day?

KM: Since I mostly work by appointment, I am able to control how many people I see in one day. The maximum number of customers I have worked with in one day is seven, but I do find myself exhausted by the end of a long day like that and try to keep my agenda full but not overflowing. I don't think it is fair to my customers for me to be too tired to give them a good massage.



Reflexology

AT: What do you do for yourself to relax?
KM: I actually do have regular massages. I think it is important for me to also be a customer. This allows me to experience for myself what elements of the room, the music, the aromas, etc. are beneficial and what things are disturbing.

AT: There seems to be an abundance of massage therapists in the area. What do you think accounts for that?

KM: Yes, it's absolutely true; there are many more massage therapists than when I first began to practice eight years ago. I think that the expat community has contributed to the awareness of the existence of alternative methods of healing. Ticos are not really used to the idea of getting a massage for preventive health, they

think of it as a luxury, but I think changes are coming. The expats who come to visit are very surprised that they can get the same high-quality massages for a fraction of the price they are accustomed to paying in their home countries. Do you speak English?

AT:

KM: I can understand a great deal and I can read but conversation is a challenge. However, I can often tell by observation or non-invasive touch, what is ailing a person. If they find that the massage is too deep or too gentle, they can usually make themselves understood!

AT: Do you also go to people's homes?

KM: Yes, I can schedule an appointment at a person's home.



The Elements of Healing

AT: Thank you Kattia, for spending this time with us. We wish you continued success as you bring healing and relaxation to the people of Atenas.

KM: You are very welcome. I hope to see many of your readers soon!



It's A Dogs Life...REALLY!!



Stories from Mr. BudBud, Primero Perro of Lighthouse Animal Rescue. They were written 8 years ago when he first came to Costa Rica for a house sitting job.

6/1/2004

HOLA!! Everyone (Hola means hello in Spanish)

Well, Mom, Dad, and I went into a town today called Sarchi. Mom did pretty good driving and we didn't even get lost!!!!

Mom says that is where they make BEAUTIFUL wood furniture by hand. They sell it REALLY cheap compared to in the U.S.

I saw a lot of funny looking wagons. They had GREAT BIG wooden wheels that were all painted up with flowers and stuff in really bright colors. Mom told me they are ox carts. She says they still use oxen over here to pull the carts and plows and stuff. I don't know what "ox" is but it must be pretty stout

to pull some of those wagons I saw. I sure don't want to have to pull one. Heck!!!! I don't think even think all of the Lighthouse fuzzbutts TOGETHER could pull one.....OH!!yeah....maybe if we hooked Hotflash up it would be easier. He's the Lighthouse horse and he's pretty strong!!

We parked the car at the park, in front of the church, and we walked around the town. Mom brought along my "baby pouch" so I rode in that on Mom's front side. People on the street looked at us kind of funny. Mom said they were thinking "I have always heard that Americans are crazy. Now I know for sure." LOL!!

We were allowed to go into the stores and everything!!!! People here are more at ease with dogs being around. They are not all up tight like the humans in the U.S. They even get to come into the eating places. The street dogs, if they are nice, can just walk in and sit down by your table. The humans don't scream and get all excited like they do back home.

Sheeeesh!!! Back home you'd think dogs were nasty or something the way people act. Mom got in a fight with some American man last year when they were over here. He was trying to shoo away a street dog from a restaurant. Mom told him to go back to the U.S. if he was that "anal retentive." I don't know what that means, but dad said that was not the real words she used anyway. By the way...the word here for "dog" is "perro." The word for "but" is "pero." They sound a lot alike except you "roll" the r more in perro. Mom says she had to be really careful not to say to someone "I like your but." LOL!!!

Mom and Dad took some pictures in Sarchi in front of the church there. All the towns in Costa Rica center around their churches. The park is usually in front of the church and that is where everybody gathers. There are lots of street dogs and cats here and they hang out at the park. People give them scraps of food. They also hang out in the market places around the meat shops. Some of them look pretty well fed and healthy but Mom says that if we move over here we will have to start catching them and having them spayed and neutered. She also says we will have to bring some medicines with us to doctor some of them. Mom says they don't belong to anybody and don't really have anyone to take care of them and love them. BOY!!! I sure am glad I belong to Mom and

Dad!!! It must be scary out there without a human to love you.

OH!!!! And some lady came to the house today and cleaned and mopped the floors!!!!!! That never happened back home!!!! Mom was funny though. She cleaned and mopped before the lady got here because she didn't want the lady to see a dirty floor!! LOL!!!

More of my adventures later. Mom wants to use the computer now.

BudBud the traveling man



Costa Rica's Railway History Sparks Modern Day Culture



By Shannon Farley, Atenas, shannonfarleycr@gmail.com

Have you ever wondered why Costa Rica's Caribbean culture evolved so differently, influenced by Jamaican traditions? Ever wondered how it happened that there are so many Chinese living in Costa Rica so far away from their homeland? Do you know what a "Banana Republic" is? A hint ... it's not a fancy outdoors-clothing store!

Incredibly, the history of Costa Rica's railroad sparked all of these cultural traditions into being. Today, they are very much part of the Costa Rica we know and love.

As with anything, it begins with a story.

A small Central American nation yearning to grow from subsistence farming to being a world player with agricultural exports chooses to think big. Costa Rica is the country, and coffee is its most valuable commodity. The year is 1871.



This is the decade of enormous world industrial, urban and agricultural growth, expansionism and technological "miracles." In these next years, the telephone, the light bulb, the phonograph and the steam drill will be invented – radically changing modern life.

Railroads were sprouting like vines everywhere; just two years earlier in 1869, the First Transcontinental Railroad completed linking the East and West coasts of the United States.

The Costa Rican government, led by President Tomas Guardia Gutierrez, and the nation's powerful coffee barons set their sights on radically changing Costa Rica's future by linking San Jose and the Central Valley with the Caribbean port of Limón via their own "trans-country" railroad. They passionately needed to get their coffee, known as "*granos de oro*" ("grains of gold"), to their main export market of Europe – principally Britain. The current method of sending sacks of coffee by oxcart from the Central Valley to the Pacific port of Puntarenas, the easiest route at the time, and then by ship around the tip of South America and all the way over to Europe was taking far too long and costing far too much.



So, they hired American Henry Meiggs, who had built railroads in the Andes in Chile and Peru, to oversee the construction. The 60-year-old Meiggs brought his nephew, Minor Cooper Keith, down from New York to help. When Meiggs died in 1877 finishing a railroad in Peru, Keith took over full leadership – changing his life and the lives of Costa Ricans forever.

The monumental obstacle the railroad's builders was terrain of epic proportions, jungle, huge rivers and torrential rains. The railroad's was to follow the Caribbean from Limón until the small port Matina, then head inland up Reventazón River Valley. After divides to cross the northern mountains, with one branch north of Irazú Volcano, and the other traversing south of the Irazú and Turrialba volcanoes through the Ochomogo Pass of Cartago, until the lines meet up in San Jose.



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However, starting in Limón, the first 25 miles alone sent some 4,000 men to their graves, including three of Keith's own brothers. Malaria, yellow fever and dysentery, lack of fresh food and clean water were the main culprits. Initially, Meiggs and Keith had difficulty getting Costa Rican laborers (since the entire population of Costa Rica was about 150,000 at the time!), so they hired Chinese indentured servants and out-of-work Italians. Just as in the USA with the railroad there, boat loads of Chinese were brought in to work and they stayed.



Everything changed when Keith finally insisted in 1872 on bringing in Jamaicans to clear the forest and lay the railroad tracks. Former slaves from Africa and their descendants, the Jamaicans were used to the heat and humidity, and better yet, they could speak English with their North American bosses.

Keith's pivotal decision both solved his railroad problem and also created Costa Rica's unique Caribbean culture influenced by the Jamaicans who populated the area. To help feed his huge crews of workers Keith planted bananas along the train's route – another key decision that would further change his and the country's future.

Eleven years along, the project stalled in 1882 when the Costa Rican government ran out of money. Keith saved the day by raising funds and renegotiating Costa Rica's loans with London banks. In turn, he was given 800,000 acres (3,200 km²) of land and a 99-year lease to operate the railroad. After a grueling 19 years, the San Jose- Limón railroad finally finished in 1890. Problem was now coffee exports alone couldn't pay the railroad's bills. In desperation, Keith filled the empty railcars with the bananas conveniently located along the rail route. He sent a trial run to the USA by ship, and they were immediately a hit. A true entrepreneur, he began running a steamboat line from Limón to New Orleans shipping the bananas.





Keith's crucial banana-planting decision for the railroad turned into a "banana empire" stretching from Colombia to Guatemala. When he merged his lucrative banana trade in 1899 with the Boston Fruit Company, which was dominating the Caribbean, the United Fruit Company was born and Keith became the most powerful man in Central America. United Fruit not only transformed Costa Rica's economy and culture, it also shaped the history of the rest of the "Banana Republics" of Central and South America (from Honduras to Colombia).

It took a while, but Costa Rica was finally completely connected by rail from east to west in 1910. While Keith toiled in the Caribbean, laborers built a rail line

from Alajuela to the capital city, which finished in 1873. Then, in 1897, workers began building the Pacific Railroad from Puntarenas to San Jose. After its own set of challenges, the Pacific Railroad officially launched on July 23, 1910, when the first engine, "Maria Cecilia," steamed out of Puntarenas up to the Central Valley with passengers and cargo.



Unfortunately, the heyday of Costa Rica's rail travel was destroyed in a 7.5-scale earthquake in Limón on April 22, 1991. So much damage was caused to rail lines and bridges in the area that the route has never been re-built. The Pacific Railroad kept functioning regularly up until 2010; a tourist train called "Tico Train" operated from about 2004-2010 taking passengers from San Jose to the Pacific port of Caldera. It was popular, but high costs of maintaining the tracks and trains put it out of business. Freight trains still sometimes run between San Jose and the Caldera port, and in the flatlands of the Limon area. Costa Rica's railway management company, INCOFER, is working hard to get commuter trains up and running in the San Jose metropolitan area.

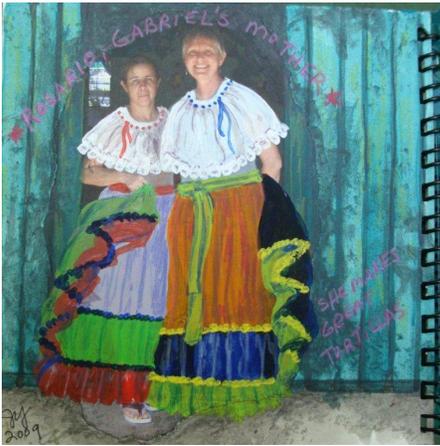


It is possible to return to the golden age of Costa Rican rail travel, however, with the unique Monteverde Cloud Forest Train tour. A replica old-fashioned steam locomotive pulls vintage black and red rail carriages on traditional narrow-gauge tracks deep into Monteverde's famous cloud forest. The 90-minute journey departs every hour between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm every day of the year. The Monteverde Cloud Forest Train is an especially fun one-day tour in Monteverde, not to be missed! Check it out at www.monteverdecloudforesttrain.com.

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Plentiful Dogs and Mythical Cats



By Jan Yatsko
janyatsko@ice.co.cr

Costa Rica is home to (dare I say) millions of stray dogs and six species of one of the most charismatic animals in the Americas, the wild felines. Of the six species, four are classified as threatened. They are the Jaguar, the largest carnivore in the Continent and less than 300 in existence; the Puma, who resembles most the domestic cat for its head shape and its meow; the Ocelot; the Jaguarundi; the Tigrillo, "little tiger"; to the smallest, the Margay. Past and present indigenous cultures in Costa have kept the spirit of these felines alive through their art and their beliefs.

Representations of felines in ancient Costa Rican cultures were recorded from 500 BC until contact with the Spaniards in the 16th century. Stone "metates" (curved rectangular slabs with 3 or 4 legs) depicted the heads, jaws and legs of the jaguar. It was the feline most feared and worshiped. Metates were used to grind corn and special ones were created as burial offerings for high officials. Pottery, whose design was influenced by the Mayans through trade, conveyed felines through painted spots, incised lines and circles and raised relief in the form of spots, heads and feet. Many were

vessels used to burn herbs for ceremonies, while clay human figures with feline heads were used to portray strength, agility and fierceness.

Where we see the most influence of the wild feline, in particular the jaguar is through the myths of ancient and present day indigenous cultures in Costa Rica. To the BriBri and Cabécar cultures of the Talamanca Mountains, the jaguar represents leadership, mediators between the lower Earth and the darkness of night, protector and procreation. Their belief is that a jaguar, with the help of *Sibo* (the god of creation) and a howler monkey, gave birth to the land on which humans live. Another story is that the Teribe and Boruca groups were created when a jaguar joined a traveling group consisting of a mythical man, named *Suik*, monkeys and swine.

The Malekus of North Central Costa Rica recite or sing particular phrases to protect themselves and others from feline harm. I have taken many groups to visit the Maleku Indians and I remember my first visit ten years ago. I was introduced to the leader of the Tonjibe village and his name was Tafá, which means "jaguar" in Maleku. It was his spirit animal, the animal that most represented him, and to the Malekus it means leader, intelligent and lover of nature.

Don't miss the special exhibit "Felines in Costa Rican Archaeology- Past and Present" at the Gold Museum in San Jose until October 2012. Learn more about the six feline species, view first hand ancient metates and pottery, test your knowledge with an interactive feline puzzle, try on feline masks carved by Boruca Indians, take a photo and share it on Facebook/MBCCR. The exhibit is in Spanish and English and with a residency card, admittance is free on Wednesday.

The Atenas Today Art Gallery

The Art Gallery is a regular feature of Atenas Today. Local artists are encouraged to submit photographs of their works to be included in the gallery, and to send a new picture each month. The artists may be contacted via the email addresses shown.



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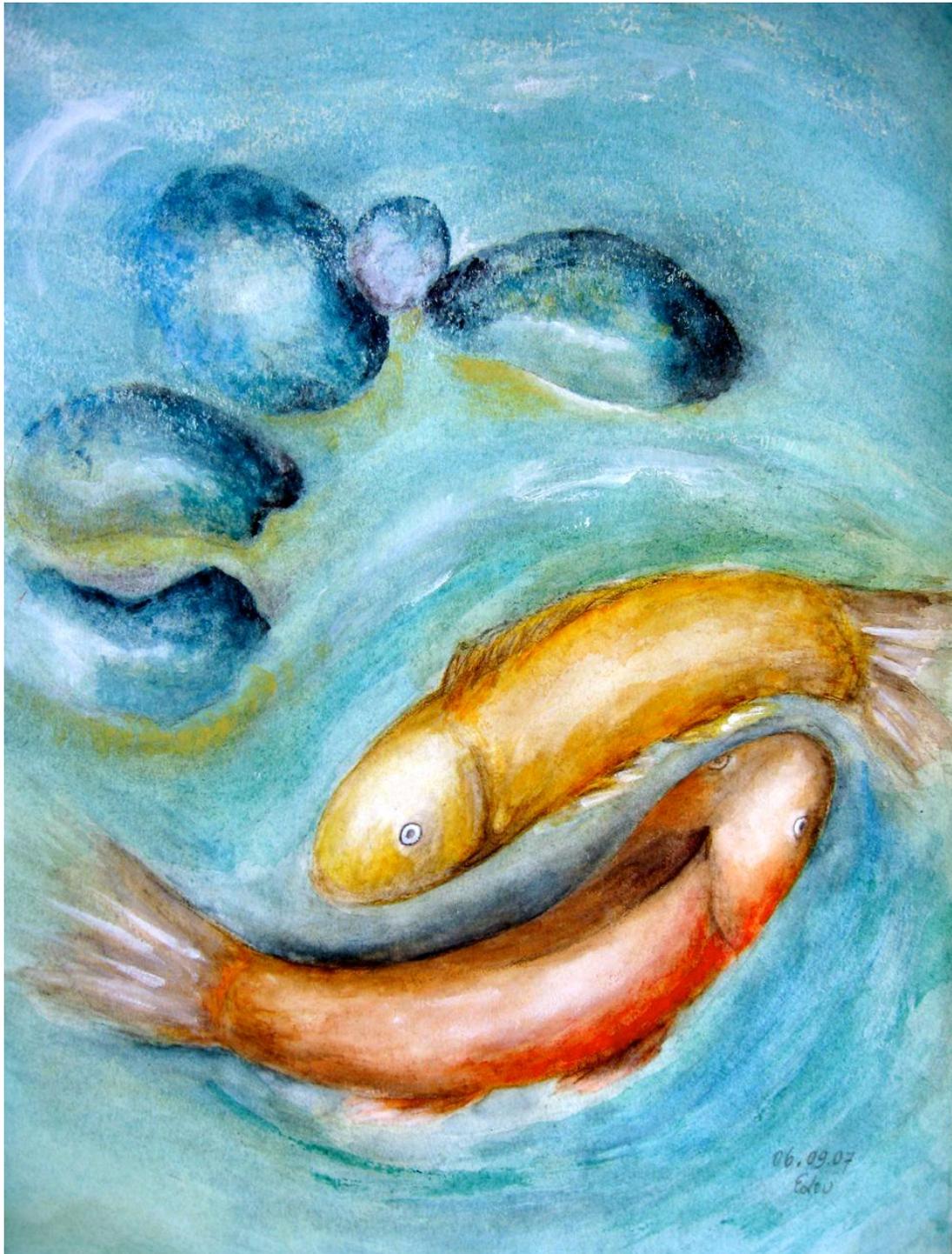
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