

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

April 23, 2015



Cortez April 17, 2015



Same cortez April 20, 2015!

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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 600 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 now archived on scomari.com / Atenas Today.



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

Publisher's Note



As I prepare this issue, I am in the middle of also preparing my suitcase for travel to New York! I love the spring there and I love the rainy season in Atenas so I feel I am very fortunate that I will be experiencing both in the weeks to come.

April has been a very busy month in our little town. We celebrated many events which I have been lucky enough to be a part of. One that stands out is the multicultural fair that was held in the UTN campus in Balsa on April 7th. I was delighted by the energy of the participants, mostly students who came from other UTN campuses in the country.

My participation included giving a short presentation on the benefits of being bilingual and bicultural, something I am very happy to see many of our expats accomplishing too. In addition, 9 of our current expat residents were part of a chat room experience which was a very successful undertaking. Many thanks again to those of you who took time out of your schedules to join us.

All of you who know me know that communication and closure are important components in my life. Due to many unforeseen circumstances in the lives of the organizing committee (wildfires, travel, illness), I have not been able to obtain the final dollar amount of the proceeds from the Chili Cook-off. Please note that I am continually following up as I know that the community made great efforts to make this event a success and that we are all eager to know the final outcome!

The recent fires in Atenas have had us on alert and I know that we are all happy the rainy season seems to be starting. Some of you are organizing an activity to thank the firefighters for all they do and I applaud this initiative. It is a wonderful gesture for the brave men and women of who keep us safe in Atenas, today and every day.

Happy reading and Happy Mother's Day too

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.

April 22nd – International Earth Day

April 24th-26th Climate Fair Central park – see flyers around town for activities

April 26th – Oxcart Parade around the streets and park of Atenas

May 1st – Labor Day celebrated in Costa Rica, National Holiday

May 10th – Mother's Day celebrated in many countries

May 12th – International Nurses Day!

May 25th – Memorial Day observed in the U.S.

REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Every Sunday: Buddhist Book Discussion at Roca Verde (See Flyer)**

Every Tuesday, Wednesday & Sunday Atenas New Community (See Flyer)

Second Monday of every month: 4 p.m. Abandoned Animals of Atenas Foundation meeting at Antaños Please contact Virginia 2446-5343 or Sylvia 8868-1386 for more information. Volunteers are needed and welcome.

Every Tuesday: Atenas Bridge Club meets at Don Yayo's Restaurant. 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. No partner required.

Every Wednesday: At 11:30 a.m. (Please confirm with Michele Clutter 2446-0664)

Atenas Wednesday Women
informal get togethers at Kay's Gringo Postres

Second Wednesday of each month: The Costa Rica Writers Group meets at noon at Colinas del Sol Hotel in Boquerón. For more details contact Larry Rusin at crcaseyboy@gmail.com



Buddhist Book Discussion

Every Sunday
Meditation (optional) 1:30pm
Book Discussion 2:00pm
218 Roca Verde, Atenas

A gathering for those interested
in Buddhism and Buddhist writings.

ALL ARE WELCOME.

If you wish to know what book we're currently reading,
or if you need directions or any other information,
please feel free to telephone or e-mail:

Adrienne and Richard Baksa
2446-8509
adriennebaksa@me.com
rbaksa@me.com



ATENAS NEW COMMUNITY (associated with the Tico church, Iglesia Bíblica de Atenas)

facebook.com/groups/145046998883605

DESCRIPTION: Atenas New Community is non-denominational with a diverse congregation - Messianic Jews, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Methodists, Catholics, Southern Baptists, etc. The focus is on Jesus Christ and the Bible, not on esoteric and divisive theological differences.

SERVICES:

Tuesday - 6pm - Bible study in English.

Wednesday - 6pm - English worship service

1st Sunday of each month – An English translator is provided for the 9:00 a.m. Spanish worship service.

(After the service many of the ex-pats gather at a designated home for a potluck lunch. Just ask any ex-pat before or after worship for the particulars.)

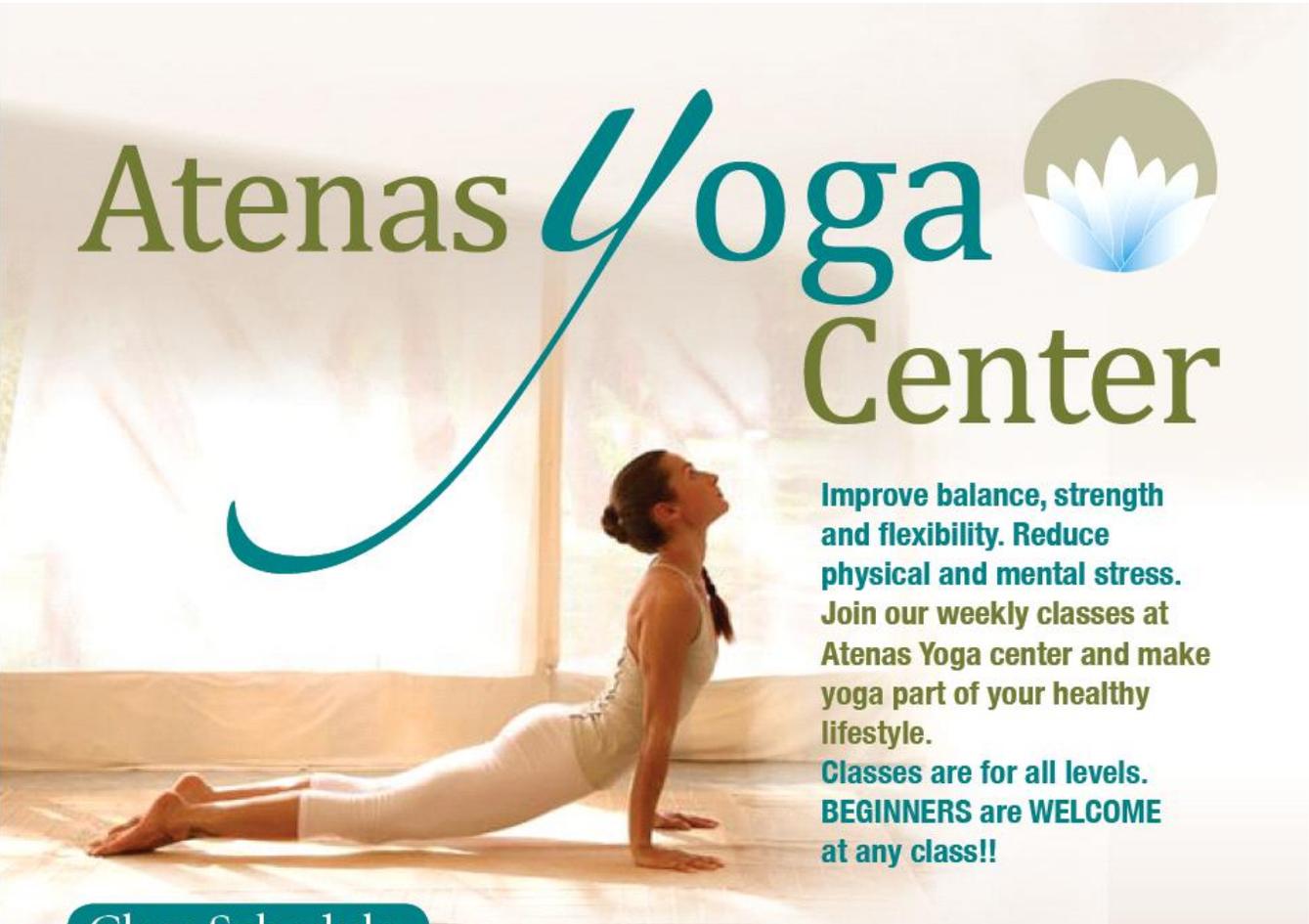
ENGLISH PASTOR: Steve Lucas - <https://facebook.com/steve.lucas> • 8764-8960

TICO PASTOR: Oldemar Artavia - <https://facebook.com/oldemar.artavia>

ADDITIONAL CONTACT: Judy Hickman • 2446-4791 • judy@proslink.com

DIRECTIONS: On Highway 3 at the blinking light

Atenas Yoga Center




Improve balance, strength and flexibility. Reduce physical and mental stress. Join our weekly classes at Atenas Yoga center and make yoga part of your healthy lifestyle.

Classes are for all levels. BEGINNERS are WELCOME at any class!!

Class Schedule

Mondays	9:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Hatha Yoga with Leah
Tuesdays	8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Hatha/Vinyasa Flow with Anna
Tuesdays	9:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Therapeutic Yoga with Anna
Tuesdays	6:00 PM – 7:15 PM	Hatha/Vinyasa Flow with Clara*
Wednesday	9:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Hatha Yoga with Leah
Wednesday	4:00 AM – 5:15 AM	Men's Yoga with Leah
Thursday	8:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Hatha/Vinyasa Flow with Anna
Thursday	6:00 PM – 7:15 PM	Hatha/Vinyasa Flow with Clara*
Saturdays	8:00 AM – 9:15 AM	Hatha/Vinyasa Flow with Anna

Hotel Colinas Del Sol is located in Atenas centro, about 100 meters after the main entrance of the Roca Verde neighborhood, on the left. We are in the salón de eventos



* Class taught in Spanish.

All classes are 3000 colones or US\$6

Mats can be rented for 500 colones or US\$1 Please wear loose and comfortable clothing

We also offer private sessions. Contact Us: 8660-8921 • 2446-3150 • 8928-5497

classes@atenasyoga.com www.atenasyoga.com

Atenas Yoga Center

Leah MacLauchlan
Yoga Instructor

Contact Us: 2446 3170
nomosno21@gmail.com



Atenas Yoga Center

Anna Hunt | Yoga Instructor

Contact Us: 8338 9968
classes@atenasyoga.com



Language, Learning and Teaching

by Melissa González (ILE Professor)



When I was at college I had to read an article called "Language, Learning and Teaching" by H. Douglas Brown. Since Second Language Acquisition is one of my favorite topics when talking about language learning, I read it several times. There were many aspects that caught my attention, but his opening phrase is something that I always paraphrase when my students feel frustrated: "Learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into a new language (...) Language learning is not a set of easy steps that can be programmed in a quick do-it-yourself kit".

When I first read that article I remembered one of my high school classmates. He used to think that he was extremely smart when he was indeed an arrogant. One day, we were talking about the importance of learning English and what were the best places to do it. He looked at me and said: "I am not worried, English is so simple to me that I know that in a couple of months I can totally master it. I have not seen him in a while and I do not know if he masters English as he used to brag. What I can totally assure now that I am a professor is that this process never ends: I learn something new every single day. I have students with great linguistic skills that need to practice a lot and students who have to work even harder to reach this goal.

Sometimes we make the mistake of forgetting that teaching a language is not only about learning grammar or pronunciation, it is also fundamental to

take into account the emotional, physical and psychological aspects. How can this goal be reached? In his article, Douglas Brown mentioned three main questions that at least in my case have been really useful. First, who does the learning and teaching? Students need to understand that we are not walking dictionaries. It is true they learn from us, but we also learn from them. Second, how do the teacher and the student interact with each other? Everybody has different opinions about this. Some professors prefer to keep their distance while others like to listen to their students' concerns. In my case, I do consider that a healthy interaction with your students can make them feel more comfortable when they have to ask questions or participate in class. Third, how can a person ensure success in language learning? This is really difficult to answer because every group is unique. We can teach the same course several times and the reactions and results will be different most of the time. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention and find out what techniques work better for our students.

Teaching a second language is not an easy task. I talk to my friends who are English professors as well and we are always thinking about innovative activities, planning and sharing materials to reach our teaching objectives. Doing all these things requires a lot of time because it is not about preparing "funny and cute games" as some people believe. It is about providing tools to help our students learn while they enjoy the process. Moreover, it is also part of our job to remind them that without practicing, they will not be able to make great progress. As Douglas Brown said learning a language is not a quick do-it-yourself kit.

Television: My Third Parent

By Eric Herrera (ILE Professor)



Just like in many other families, my mother had to work when I was a child, so I spent my spare time with my grandmother; however, someone else lived with us, someone that taught me a lot and made me feel I was not alone during my childhood: television.

I grew up during the 80's; therefore, censorship was a little stricter than today, and TV shows lacked the attitude problem and rudeness shown on TV today.

Back there with no YouTube and only six channels to watch my favorite videos (cable TV was not something everybody had at that time), I learned to be patient and punctual waiting for shows like **Hola Juventud** and **Por los Caminos del Rock** to watch the videos I liked.

Moreover, I learned how human nature, with all values, problems, frustration and difficulties were universal while watching **the Flintstones** and **the Jetsons**. From the Neanderthals to life in space, these two families had a lot in common. In addition, another family who taught me the importance of accepting everyone and being tolerant was the Tanners. They opened their hearts and home to that crazy cat-eater alien called **Alf**, who even though brought nothing but trouble, deep inside showed how similar aliens and humans were.

Furthermore, who else could have explained to me the meaning of necessity is the mother of invention than **MacGyver**. This private eye used anything

around him and turned it into bombs, telescopes, engines, catapults, etc., ah, and very important, he did everything with style. **MacGyver** helped many people, especially men, to believe in themselves overcoming all calamities he faced.

It may sound weird, but I even learned from villains. I remember wicked Gargamel making up a new plan every day to catch those little blue **Smurfs**. His perseverance never worked, but he was determined to catch them. And who can forget Wily E. Coyote and his one thousand and one unsuccessful ACME plans to catch the **Road Runner**.

Additionally, my imagination was nurtured with the **Twilight Zone** stories where the unexpected may happen and a moral was always featured. Besides, some of the organization skills and ability to work as a member of a team come from my encounter with the **A-Team**. In my mind echoes the "I love it when a plan comes together" phrase at the end of each episode.

Finally, another crucial aspect TV marked on my life was the love for animals. **Lassie**, **Benji**, **Mr. Ed** and **Flipper** among others molded a sense of respect for animals since an early age.

Thank you Arnold, Michael Knight, Al Bundy, J.R., Mork, Murdock, Fonzie, and Magnum, to mention some, for being there sharing all your stories, making me laugh, think and cry during my childhood, which I can only describe as the **Wonder Years**.



THE THREE LEGS OF TICO LIFE by Don Bosque

Pre-columbian ceramic pots were often made with three legs. This was a natural form, considering that they were made to sit on uneven surfaces, or in the fire. Like these ancient pots, the Costa Rican social life of today rests on three legs: Free Education for All, Medical Care for All, and Respect for the Worker.

That Costa Rican culture embodies respect for those who work at every level is a direct result of her history. A history that involved hard work for all, mostly in farming and caring for animals. The present government sets

a minimum wage for every category of work, and attempts to see that these wages are fairly paid. The penalties for not following labor rules in CR are quite stiff.

Basic medical care for all is the goal in CR, and it mostly works. Of course, there are some who fall through the cracks. There are some inefficiencies and long wait times. But mostly, the system works. Even new residents from richer places such as the U.S. must join the system and pay into it. The same system also tries to accomplish old age pensions. Each employee and employer pays into the system according to the level of earnings.

Education is free for all, through high school, called Colegio here.

It is of varying quality, but you will find schools in even the smallest rural areas. Class sizes are small and the basics can be learned by any students who are eager to learn. After colegio, there are night classes in the technical skills in many regions, with very low fees. Those going to University must take exams, and there are scholarships.

That Costa Rica has funding for Education and Health Care results from a pivotal event in her history; the abolition of the military by President Jose Figueres in 1948. The day is celebrated every December, and most Ticos are aware of what that event has meant for the country. Since 1948 CR has not bought a single military jet, tank, nor missile to grow obsolete as its children play barefoot in the dust, without schools. Not a single military parade, and zero military takeovers.

There is, instead of an army, a national police force, La Fuerza Publica, fourteen



thousand strong, whose motto is “Somos la Gente QueTe Cuida”. And mostly, they do.

Because the three legs of CR life uphold the daily life here, most Ticos feel as if they have a fair shot at a decent, good life. Any able man or woman who wishes to work can find a place. When Ticos start a family, they know that their children will have a place in school. When the need comes, Ticos can visit a clinic, see a doctor, and get a generic prescription without cost. These three legs support daily life, and give Ticos a sense of security, personal worth and fair play. This in turn lowers the crime rate, gives Ticos a measure of pride, and lets them smile their way through life.

DOG AND CAT OF THE MONTH



Fundación Ateniense de Ayuda a Animales Abandonados
Atenas Foundation for Helping Abandoned Animals
Cedula Juridica # 3-006-542026
ATENAS de Alajuela - COSTA RICA

CHAMBAKU-A LOVER



Chambaku was rescued from a swimming pool when he fell in trying to get a drink in Pica Flora. The neighbors rallied together to give him a temporary home. He quickly adapted to new adults, dogs, cats and children. As a small, mature, castrated male of eight kilos he is most happy to be a lap dog. He will shower you with a lifetime of affection and companionship. A HAPPY BOY!

OLIVIA - AFFECTIONATE



Olivia was rescued in Guacimo, together with twelve other cats. She is about 2 years old and likely gave birth to a new litter of kittens every few months in the wild. She had to take care of the babies and herself on her own. No one was friendly to her or showed her human assistance or affection. She was shy when she arrived, but now she is a quiet and an affectionate girl. Of course she is spayed. We are looking for someone who wants to continue giving her the love and attention she deserves. She will give it back in many special ways.

TORSELO-A PARASITE

Yes, Maggots and you, your pet or livestock do not have to be dead to be a host to a torselo for a free lunch. They could be out of an Alfred Hitchcock movie, except this is not fiction.

The life cycle is complicated beginning with the adult bot fly. She is a pretty color of dark blue with a yellow head and legs Sexy and alluring, she can trick many others to do her work for her. For her brief stay, she does not have to feed, but relies on the food she gained during her larval stage. When the female is ready to lay her eggs, she takes advantage of another carrier insect, usually another fly, mosquito, or a variety of other flying or biting insects. The carrier then lights on the host mammal and the warmth of the hosts' body causes the new larvae to stick while the carrier insect is biting. The tiny larvae manage to enter the skin commonly through the tiny feeding puncture of the carrier, or even the small pores of the hosts' body. Afterward the feast and squirming is on. The maggot slowly develops until fully mature in a few months. Humans as hosts, describe the maggot as a living sand spur crawling through their tissue. The size can be impressive, over an inch long and the diameter of a pencil.

DORA TEL.8855-9822 PRESIDENT (ESPAÑOL)
SYLVIA TEL.8868-1386 SECRETARY(ES,EN,DEUTSCH)
ANIMALESATENASCR@AOL.COM
EDDIE TEL. 8308-8485 VOLUNTEER (ES,EN)
EDOT13@GMAIL.COM

ANIMALES ATENAS PROGRAM

Stop by the vacant lot next to Pali Grocery on Friday mornings to see the animals and good quality used clothing and household items. Donated items are needed and can be left at Kay's or at our Friday mornings location.

Sylvia Spix, Myrna Kastner

GET YOUR COPY OF

1. 'HOW TO KEEP YOUR PET SAFE, HEALTHY, HAPPY IN COSTA RICA (Pet Care)
2. 'HOW TO RECOGNIZE VENOMOUS SNAKES OF COSTA RICA' English and Spanish

By Gloria Dempsey-Microbiologist-Zoologist#

Part of the proceeds of this work help defray expenses of the costly care of orphaned and sick animals. It also helps to sponsor spay/ neuter clinics.

EMAIL kastnerm@hotmail.com for your copy.

SPECIAL NEED- FOSTERING FOR PUPPIES

Foster puppy volunteers open their homes and hearts to animals that are too young for adoption. Many of these are nursing mothers with their puppies as well as puppies abandoned by the owners.

Animales Atenas provides all vet care as well as providing food, treats and toys free to foster parents.

Animales Atenas does not have a shelter for abandoned puppies.

If you are not able to foster and would like to help in some other way, we have other options for volunteering.



Day trips from Atenas: Volcano Irazu, Cartago, Lankester Botanical Gardens

By Shannon Farley

I remember the first time I visited Volcano Irazú. It was my first year living in Costa Rica (1999). A friend of mine and I rented a car to drive around and explore this magical country we now called home.

We set out in the morning from San Jose, a hot and bright sunny day. We drove through Costa Rica's first historical capital city of Cartago, past the soaring and majestic Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, on up through patchwork farmland ascending the flank of Irazú Volcano. Up and up we wound, past potato and onion and cabbage fields with soil so rich and dark it was nearly pitch black. High up on the volcano's slope, there is even an area called the "Russian Forest." It is so high, cool and misty there that you can find myriads of wild mushrooms like in a Russian forest. It's also the dairy area with picturesque pastoral scenes of black and white cows dotting the green hillsides.



We finally reach the top, all 11,260 feet of it. We're so excited to be at the summit of our first volcano crater. There are no trees up here, just low scrubby growth, so we didn't much notice the wind from inside the nice warm car. Remember I said it was hot and sunny in San Jose? Sure, we were new to Costa Rica, and we thought we were very appropriately attired in shorts and T-shirts and sandals. It's the tropics, right? Not on Irazú.

We jauntily opened the car doors and hopped on out; then just as quickly jumped back in, slamming the doors shut and looking at one another with wild eyes. It was FREEZING! OK, well, maybe not truly the kind of freezing with actual ice and snow, but we were certain that was imminent. Who knew it would be so cold with a wind chill

that blew away any chance of warmth from the sun? This is Costa Rica for goodness sakes, located between 9 and 7 degrees latitude above the equator! A hot place!



What to do? Not wanting to waste the trip or the experience, we thought, well, if we move really fast, we'll keep warmer with exercise. So there we were, two ridiculous-looking California girls in bright shorts and T-shirts, dashing here and there across the crater's moonscape like crazed hummingbirds. (Note: you actually can see the region's native Volcano Hummingbird at the top of Irazú.)

I do have to say that walking around the top of a volcano is an exciting experience. Supposedly NASA astronauts in years past trained up here because the terrain is like the moon. And if you're lucky to be there on a really clear day, you're so high that you can see both the Pacific and Caribbean coastlines.

After our mad dash, trying to warm ourselves while huddled over steaming coffee in the Visitor's Center, we read the guidebook description: "All of Irazú Park is above the frost line, and much of it above tree line. Temperatures hover around freezing, and constant winds ... contribute to the bitter cold at the rim." Indeed!

Getting there: From Atenas, it will take you about 1 hour 45 minutes (with no traffic) to reach the entrance to the Irazú Volcano National Park. Go to the center of Cartago near the Basilica and follow signs to the volcano. There is a Visitor's Center in the park serving hot and cold drinks and snacks. There are a few restaurants along the road on the way up. If you plan to visit on a weekend, go as early as possible – not only for better weather, but because you'll avoid the line-up of cars that happens by late morning since park officials control the amount of cars/people allowed in the park at one time. Information about Costa Rica's national parks: <http://www.costarica-nationalparks.com/>



What else to do: Visit the **Basilica in Cartago** with its fascinating history; be sure to go see the "Room of Miracles" inside the church full of little silver medals and discarded crutches, etc. from people reportedly cured by the Black Virgin. The fountain of holy water from the natural spring is around the backside of the church.

Visit the **Lankester Botanical Gardens**, located between Cartago and Paraiso, which are operated by the University of Costa Rica as a botanical research center. Beautiful trails lead you through the gardens, full of exotic plant life and lots of birds and butterflies. More information at: <http://www.jbl.ucr.ac.cr/php/jardin/horario.php>



Tryin' to make it real VI

“Real is doing things now, not we’re gonna do ‘em or say we did ‘em, or saw ‘em on the damn TV. Real gets you skint knuckles and dirt under your nails. Real’s a custom fit with a file and sandpaper; got mistakes in it, see? Real ain’t got a damn thing to do with lookin’ real; real really works! Speaking for myself, it’s about wheels; riding ‘em, driving ‘em, bendin’ ‘em where I wanna go; even just lettin’ ‘em roll! Compared to what? Sheee... Emily Tooth, first woman to ride NY to San Francisco backwards.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAbY2cmEsS0s>

Editor’s note: by this time the trip was nearly over. This story is a necessary connection to the last narrative of going home. The things we did in this version, like the whole series, really happened and I trust will hold your interest; however this may not be a story with a beginning and end as the previous ones were. Still, I hope you enjoy this non-story story.

Paul Furlong

“...Catching my reflection in an eddy notched by the side of the San Juan, maybe because it wasn’t really still water — or no stillness in me, but while I could see my faltering reflection, there was no one looking back. How you gonna keep ‘em down on the farm after they’ve seen Parre?”

It was late when we left. Brother John and I were on a mission in Kenny’s red truck headed south to where the grass was greener... and cheaper... and better. I’d rested and napped all day to be ready and now we were finally on the road—

It was maybe nine or ten o'clock and we were just settling into the ride down from Norwood. We took a left in Placerville and got into steep mountain roads with switchbacks where I had to pay attention. John was talking about his Roadside Attraction and quoting books he'd read out loud from memory and I'm being my best but already wondering if we'd make it to Texas and back still friends.

I'm play-racing, like taking lines high into turns, pick a late apex and come out on the gas, but slow, not really trying to go fast, just something people who race always do, like shadow boxing to a boxer. Suddenly, on a downhill curve a man appeared in my lights.

He was lying in the road, his truck off to the right with its lights still on. I pulled off quickly and dug around for my flashlight.

He was on his side, knees slightly bent. I asked if he was all right but he didn't answer and I could see he wasn't from the blood around his groin area. I gently lifted his jacket and saw he was done bleeding and even if he wasn't, he was split pretty good. I checked his pulse but couldn't tell. His cheek still had some warmth and I believed him to be alive so I sent John to find a doctor, not realizing it would be three hours before I'd see him again.

Now I was alone with this man in the dark except for his truck idling a distant fifty yards away—the low muted rattle seemed to underscore the absolute soundlessness of a big night sky under a vast canopy of stars.

The man on the ground was a well-worn fifty years old I'd guess and I guessed too, that he planned on jumping if he ever lost brake pressure or found himself out of gear on a downhill.

I told him the doc would be along soon, but I had my doubts if he'd come in time, or if it was already too late. So I pulled my coat around me and sat with this dying man.

I kept him company, sang him low slung blues and told him it was all right to go if he had to, that his people would mourn him and that I reckoned about now he was outbound—riding the speed of light—blasted in/through/by a torrent of full tilt love. Yeah, and I wanted him to know he wasn't alone—and secretly hoped I wasn't interfering.

After a while, curious and cold, I excused myself and walked down to his truck by the road in the ditch. It was a logging truck, an old B Model Mack. I noticed the door wasn't latched and looked inside. It was still idling with both sticks in neutral, dash lights lit, cab warm, engine just turning over easy and it left me with an eerie feeling. I know I should've climbed up and kicked out the fuel racks but I hesitated, not wanting to be in that cab and not wanting to disturb the strange energy there.

Besides, it was a steep grade in the middle of a curve with a sheer drop off the other side and I couldn't figure what caused the damn thing to stop, what was keeping it there, why he jumped and how come he was nearly dead and his truck, like a good horse, was resting alive warm and waiting for him by the side of the road. He must have heard it running—waiting for him, as he lay there dying at this scene of regret.

Then out of the silence, he said something I didn't quite get, I felt stupid when I asked him to repeat it, then it got quiet—the truck had stopped running too—and the cold filled me with the loss of being left behind.

John came in due time with the doc in tow and I let him drive us out of there. Thinking about it as we drove, this is the west, not the nervous east coast where meat wagons beat the cops to the scene and everything made sense. Yeah this was big sky country where endless miles and bizarre circumstances left men to die alone much of the time. In my years of racing I never saw anyone die on the track, yet the road puts them in my path every now and then, don't know why.

I did my best to explain my feelings to John as he drove but quickly realized I didn't know what they were. So I sat back, looked out my window and watched the road and the mountains under the heavens and let him drive into the morning light when I took over in New Mexico.

...and we drove gusty windblown brown desert—windows rattling through long open stretches in cold barren country—truck-stops cold, coffee old, waitress bold an' me on hold—and it don't matter where it is; if it's illegal, the toll is always the same—got to ride through Indian Gulch.

Traveling south on route 35, Austin came upon us in stages; faded grease pit truck stops, slanted old shacks and tumbleweed strewn bridge abutments that lifted us over the parts of town that just weren't good enough for us to drive through. I turned west on 38th and threaded my way up to Guadalupe, rolled north and took a right on a side street to the end where Al lived in a secluded old house shaded by ageless walnut trees, about ten degrees cooler I'd guess, dunno, maybe it was Al that was so cool, who knew, we smoked the peace pipe and I asked about our order,

“No, got to wait,” he said blowing smoke through a cough, so we waited.

I put John up on the east side of town with Ned, an old friend who would help me again one day, and I stayed with Al and his wife Ana. They were both slender, fair-complected and quiet. Ana stayed busy with her plants and kept to herself. Al and I had roots in motorcycles, but now he spent his time in the shop, building radio controlled gliders.

A week went by easy as I visited friends and dug this Texas cowboy town before it got too hip, too musical and too famous. I worked on my dulcimer in Al's shop and made inlays and intricate carvings on it instead of actually learning to play the damn thing. Again, it was an easy time as we toked up Al's private stash and ate homemade ice cream late at night in his shop—or on perfect days, lighter, enlightened and childishly happy, he'd fly his glider in Hyde Park and I'd watch transfixed on the dot in the sky for hours. He told me once that he was up there in the thermals, transported—a Spiritual warrior hunting with the buzzards, and yeah, I was up there with him.

I guess it was in the second week that we scored and stashed the greener grass we'd come for and prepared to leave. Al was happy to see us leave, just my presence violated his shop after a day or two, and I was ready to be moving. Perhaps overly paranoid, I asked Ned to cut my hair around the sides so my ponytail would tuck up inside my Stetson — suddenly I was regular cow puncher, warn boots, conservative western cut shirt with a karmic bet placed on appearance. John, of course was just a hitchhiker, hey, you gotta try—

The ride north was uneventful except for a waitress in west Texas who publicly chastised me for wearing my hat in her restaurant. I had to tough it out and felt stupid that I'd put myself

in that position, maybe too much fake cowboy and not enough man in the hat. At least I was alone with my thoughts; Brother John had finally shut the hell up.

We got up to Telluride early one morning after driving all night. No band, no party, just a handshake from Kenny and some sack time in my lean-to. Our obligations discharged, we'd brought the mail through Indian Gulch and happiness would soon spread throughout the land. John retired to his teepee and it was good and right once again to be home in Rattlesnake Canyon.

>>>><<<<<

I thought about selling the farm and moving west for the raw freedom of it, and talked about the move, but somehow it didn't sound real when I played it back. A wistful idea with no steam behind it; I managed to fool myself for several months. The farm wouldn't be easy to move; I'd become tangled in the unfamiliar roots of ownership. But that's another story.

The real story is still—*who am I now that I'm no longer racing?* Nearly a year on the road of distractions, stories to tell, subliminal diversions to avoid an answer to this single question. No amount of meditation, nothing I could possibly have ingested would have helped; There was always a small bag of blues in my gut, like a stone in my shoe that never seemed important enough to unlace my boot for, a bottomless guilt for something I gave away that I shouldn't have. Again—that Zen Proverb—

“If you want a certain thing, you must first be a certain person. Once you are that certain person, obtaining that certain thing will no longer be a concern of yours.”

Now, of course, I'm in it so let me tell the story—so there's this damn horse—as Kenny and I sampled our new Texas Boo, (hoo hoo...) we began to think in broad strokes. The plan would take us to Tucson on horseback. A fuse was lit, we'd ride backcountry trails; how romantic!

I knew the trip might fall short of Tucson, but that was okay. I lay awake at night, the San Juan River toying with my emotions, a gurgle and a splash, blue-daring me, and I saw us for the first time as real Buckaroos on horseback.

Which brings me to my horse, who I reasoned, would finally “come around” after weeks in the saddle. Another Wiley Coyote disaster shtick I suppose, but don Coyote always comes back with confidence and a plan. Mine was that she’d calm down in a few days; and besides, there’d be another horse to keep her company.

Then one morning early, Kenny and I mounted up and headed out.

Of course Coño’s doing a tap dance across the road and keeping me on my toes as we lurched forward with fair speed. We’d be a quarter mile ahead and had to stop and wait impatiently while dancing in place, as Kenny and Pepper plodded their way to us. Pepper fell asleep sometimes and ambled off the path. Coño was always on the verge of running and I began to doubt my ability to outlast her.

It was late in the day when we came upon a windswept mesa when it began to blow hard with snow mixed in. It came in gusts that cut through our clothing and we decided to stop for the night. Blown too, were my dreams of Arizona and a friendship with Coño. There’d be no sitting around a fire and talking about anything we did together. We weren’t together, I was always a bone jarring hundred yards ahead, and now there’d be no fire either in that wind.

Kenny thought we should hobble the horses and let them graze. I was in a funk, he could have said graze the horses and let them hobble, which would have been a prophecy—the next morning Coño had a cut just above her hock, front left. It had thundered and blown and lightening slashed long neon bolts across a broad expanse of sky, God with a bad tooth raging and pacing the firmament not knowing whether to rain, snow or go blind—wind whipping, as if it were possible, to the time of thunder, (bass) lightening, (lead guitar), wind, (rhythm) and us, little specks balled in our bags dashed dreams no hope for morning...

Morning came in calm and still. We made coffee in a kinder mood and prepared for our ride back home. I’d just cinched up my saddle when men on horses rode up to say howdy. We chatted with them for a while and mounted up. This is when I learned a horse joke—horse takes a deep breath and holds it while the rider cinches up his saddle. Then—gonna love this—when an unsuspecting Pilgrim steps abroad, the horse exhales, and the saddle slides around and dumps the Pilgrim on the ground, yeah, happened to me in front of these men on horseback, thus restoring me to my previous day’s funk.

Kenny reminded me to ride slow this time, a small verbal cuff in a world of institutional green mortification. Suddenly I wanted to be where I was from—New Jersey. I spent the rest of the day in pain, my lower half chafing on the saddle, my upper half chafing on the businesses of going home.

Open Hands

I was 8 or 9 years old when my mom spoke to me about something that remained ingrained in my being. This message has had such power through my life that nowadays I look forward to sharing it with my children. But not all messages from my parents or caregivers have been a wonderful stepping stone in my life. Quite the contrary. We all have some childhood events stamped so clearly into our psyche that it becomes our default reaction and belief later in life. As we grow, we start looking for ways to show and build our own personality, but many strongholds keep determining our path. We spend energy hoping to be free from those conditionings.

Many people go through a great amount of therapy and introspection to overcome and free themselves from that strong grip of childhood conditioning. I guess it is healthy to do a “belief spring cleanup”. When we are full of noise inside, we are ready for cleanup! To be healthy is great, but to be at peace is a treasure. That is why inner silence is so powerful.

Yet, some messages remain in us as stepping stones that shed light along the path of life. A message does not have to be complicated, nor long to touch us deeply. Again, quite the contrary. Great quotes and messages are short and simple.

Back to my mom’s message. She was in her room where she would spend hours reading and checking arts and crafts magazines. I was sitting down by her and she told me about Khalil Gibran and his thought about the parent being the bow and the child being the arrow that flies into life. She told me how much she loved me and that she loved being my mother, but that I actually belonged to Life. She then put her hands in front of her and left them open. “This is how I love you.” She said calmly, “I love you with open hands, not with a grip, but with open hands, and that is a way to live. Don’t be afraid, you will always be okay.”

Today that message is heavenly and golden to me. What remains untouched and fixed in my visual memory was the light of her smile reflected in her eyes, and that is what I try to pass on to my children.

Written by Konrad Esquivel

Photos: My daughter Celine (14) loving the article, we both cried, the message is alive.



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



Stories from Mr. BudBud, Primero Perro of Lighthouse Animal Rescue. They were written 10 years ago when he first came to Costa Rica for a house sitting job.

Editor's Note: This is Part Two continuing March 2015 column)

Mom finally let the others in when she realized they were the only two left out there. All the guests thought we were adorable, naturally. Mom had instructed us to use our BEST manners and not to actually BEG at the table. But she didn't say we could not sit there and look real pitiful!!

It all went real well and us perros got to lick a lot of plates clean. OH!!!! LOL!!!! One man came into the kitchen and said to Mom, "I hope it does not offend you but I put my plate on the floor and let one of the dogs lick it clean." Mom just laughed and said, "Not at all!!! How do you think they got clean to start with?" LOL!!!!
I'll bet that guy is still wondering if that was true. hehehehe
All in all it went real well and us perros got to enjoy it too.

Enid, our tico friend came over the next day and told us that a good friend of hers had passed away and asked Mom to take the family to the wake. She was in her 60's and died very suddenly from a heart attack.

Over here they set the casket up in the home and all the people in the village come to offer their sympathies and pay their last respects. Mom says they USED to do that in the states too but now they use funeral homes.

Mom says they do things a little different here than back in the states. The casket is open so you can see the deceased, but it is sealed. There is a glass window sealing the top half of the casket. Here, the "wrinkled" satin that lines the top and sides of the casket in the states is also wrapped completely around the deceased and all that shows is their face. She says the lady's face looked like an angel in the midst of all that satin.
There were flowers all underneath the casket and HUGE candles burning at

the head and foot of the casket. If someone dies here, they have to bury them within 48 hours because they do not embalm here.

Anyway, Mom took Enid and her family and went to the wake. Mom says there were no less than 300 or 400 people there at the house. The house was jammed full and the yard was overrun. Cars were parked EVERYWHERE. Mom says this lady had LOTS of friends and was considered a saint in the village of Cajon.

Back to the crates!!! Mom and Dad unpacked all the family pictures Mom brought. They hung the pictures of the human family members on the wall of one dining room and all us fuzzbutts got our pictures on the hutch in the OTHER dining room!!

Oh!!! Spanky had a little accident. We don't have a clue what happened to him but Mom thinks maybe he was climbing and snagged himself (his hip) on a nail or something. Anyway, he had to go to the vet, be put under, and have 11 stitches!! Then he had to wear a lampshade on his neck for a LONG time!! He YOWLED like crazy too because he did not like the lampshade. He's going to have another scar. Mom says she is going to change his name to "Lucky." He's worse than Mom about getting into trouble. LOL!!! By the way, her hand is LOTS better but it still hurts her a lot.

They have a really neat weather thing here in Costa Rica. It is kind of like what we call a "drizzle" back in the states but it falls so slow that Mom says it looks like a very fine snow falling. Of course, it is never cold enough to snow here but that is what it looks like. The temperature ranges between 58 and 80 year round here where we are. On the coasts it is a lot hotter and further up in the mountains it gets a little colder. The ticos call the drizzle "pelo de gato" (pronounced pay-lo day gotto) which means "hair of the cat." It usually NEVER rains here in December and January but they DO have pelo de gato. When we go outside in it it gets our fur damp!

We watched the Rose Parade today on a local channel. It was all in Spanish and the announcers got REAL excited when the float from Costa Rica passed!! Enid and Berenice were over here cleaning the floors while it was on. They like our TV better than theirs so they came over and asked could they clean today so they could watch it on the bigger TVs. Javiercito climbed up the stand their big TV was on and it turned over and BROKE!!! So they are stuck watching a little bitty one for a while. Javiercito is as bad as Delilah!!! LOL!!!

They had fireworks in San Jose tonight, (New years day.) We could not hear them because they are very far away, but we could see them from the front rooms of the house. We don't like the sound so it is a good thing that we could not hear them. Have a Great New Year. Tailwags!!! BudBud the gate crasher.

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.



Market Vendor
17" x 27"
Oil on Linen

Al Alexander
jeanandal@gmail.com

Artist's Statement: I wanted to capture the kaleidoscope of color, shapes and the overall activity of the feria. The vendor provides the focal point around which the painting flows.



Dos Bueyes Jóvenes
Acrylic on Canvas
11" x 14"

Artist's Statement: This is a painting I'm donating to the boyeros. It is a team of oxen that was part of the Oxcart Parade a few years ago.

Diana F. Miskell
Horse and Cattle Art: www.dianamiskell.com
Costa Rica Blog: <http://dianascostaricablog.blogspot.com>



Photograph of Sunrise looking towards the mountains

Tom Duffy
tom@duffyportraits.com

For the bloggers...



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<http://natureboy70.blogspot.com/>

Going Like Sixty

<http://goinglikesixty.com>

Julie and Rick in Costa Rica

<http://julieandrickincostarica.blogspot.com/>

Marietta Arce
Mi Chunche

<http://marisundays.wordpress.com>
michunche.com

Nadine Hays Pisani
New Life in Costa Rica

happierthanabillionaire.com
http://www.anewlifeincostarica.com/nuevo_vida/

Paul Furlong motorcycle blog

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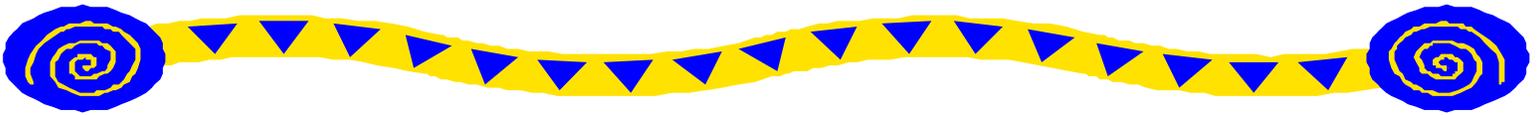


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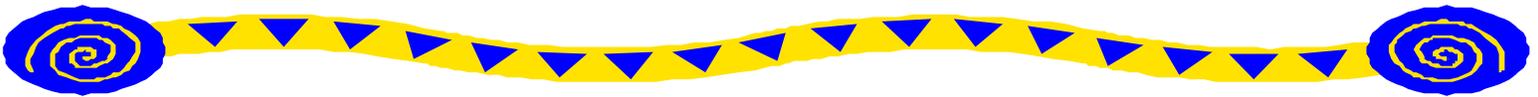
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