

## 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



Issue No. 76

April 29, 2011

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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 400 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Marietta Arce at [atenastoday@gmail.com](mailto:atenastoday@gmail.com).*

*Compositions from back issues are archived on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, [www.atenascatuca.com](http://www.atenascatuca.com). Click on the English version and then Atenas Today on the business page.*

## Display Advertising

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## 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](mailto:atenastoday@gmail.com)

## Atenas Today Has a New Publisher



*by Fred Macdonald*

Four years ago I started publishing this on line “newsletter” as a communication vehicle for the English-speaking people moving into the Atenas area. The first issue went to only six email addresses.

As our community grew, more and more people asked to have their addresses included. At the same time the “newsletter” evolved into something more like a magazine, with regular columnists and advertising for local businesses. Now some 450 people receive Atenas Today every month.

Recently my wife and I made the hard decision to move back to the U.S. When we came here over nine years ago we had no grandchildren; now we have nine. It has been a wonderful experience, but it’s time to go home.

Fortunately a very able person has agreed to take over Atenas Today and keep it going. Her name is Marietta Arce, and you probably recognize her as a regular contributor to the magazine. She was born in Costa Rica, but spent many years in the U.S. Her husband,

Scott, is an American who commutes between Atenas and New York.

Marietta has been a resident of Atenas for nine years, and is very active in community affairs. Last year she was the president of CATUCA, the Chamber of Tourism and Commerce of Atenas . Her knowledge and contacts will enable Atenas Today to include much more information about local happenings.

The success of the magazine has always depended on contributions from local writers. It is this interesting content that has made people want to be on the distribution list. I want to express my gratitude to all who have sent me material, and I hope you will continue to do so with Marietta.

Please direct future correspondence to:

Marietta Arce  
*AtenasToday@gmail.com*

## From the New Publisher



by *Marietta Arce*

When Fred first mentioned his idea of starting an electronic ‘newsletter’ four years ago, I enthusiastically encouraged him to do so and promised to write articles if he needed material. I remember thinking then that *Atenas Today* (actually, it had no name at the time) would fill the void many expats were experiencing as they negotiated their way into their new community.

*Atenas Today* has become something I am sure neither Fred nor I imagined during those early days. It now boasts regular columnists; a substantial Yellow Pages Listing; and the opportunity for businesses and talented persons to advertise their goods and services. I am proud to have been present at the start and to have experienced the growth and importance the publication has had for residents and for people considering Costa Rica, and specifically, Atenas as a place to visit or retire to.

Fred and Linda’s determination to move back to the U.S. to be closer to their growing family is a decision I met with mixed feelings. I applauded and concurred with their desire to watch their grandchildren grow, but part of me worried about the future of the publication once its founder

was immersed in his new life. I was unprepared (but very flattered) when Fred asked me to consider taking over the editing duties. I asked Fred to give me some time to think it over, hoping that he and Linda would change their minds and stay in Atenas forever!

We are just a few weeks away from their departure back home. I join the entire community in thanking them for the generous contribution to our town in ways beyond the magazine. I wish them the success and happiness they so richly deserve on this new journey. I have no doubt that their family is delighted to welcome them home and that they will pursue interests which will include community-oriented activities.

I have accepted the Editing position and I thank you in advance for helping me make the transition smoothly. Fred has generously offered to guide me as I navigate through a completely different perspective from that of columnist. I look forward to receiving your feedback and I welcome any and all suggestions that will make you feel part of the growing family of expats in Atenas, today and every day. That, after all, was Fred’s vision, one which I share and intend to continue.

Atenas Today Interviews  
Larry Laxson

*Retired police officer and security expert*



AT: We have had quite a few house break-ins in Atenas lately. As a former police officer does this concern you?

Larry: It's always a concern. It happens everywhere. But there's a lot you can do to make it unlikely to happen to you.

AT: What is your background in this area?

Larry: I was a police officer in Colorado Springs, Colorado for over 30 years. For seventeen of those years I was either a supervisor or a shift commander. As a shift commander I supervised approximately 120 officers. A major part of our work was burglary prevention.

AT: How did you end up living in Atenas?

Larry: I am also a pilot, both planes and helicopters. My first visit to Costa Rica was in 1983 when I was delivering an airplane. On other trips I drove through Atenas and always liked it. When I retired four years ago I decided to move here.

AT: Do you have a family?

Larry: No wife at present, but I have a grown daughter who lives in Texas.

AT: Are you interested in getting into the security business in Costa Rica?

Larry: Not really. However, I am happy to talk to people and give them the benefit of my experience in this area.

AT: How would you assess the security situation here?

Larry: In general Atenas is a much safer place than most other cities I have visited or considered moving to. There is a fair amount of petty theft, but little violent crime. By taking rudimentary precautions you can minimize the chances of having your home burglarized.

AT: What kind of precautions?

Larry: As a rule burglars will stay clear of situations where they are likely to be seen. They will avoid houses where there are open areas with a lot of light, houses where there is noise from dogs or alarms, houses that have security cameras, and areas that have neighborhood watch programs.

AT: What about gated communities?

Larry: Having a guard and/or a gate does make it hard for a burglar to get away with big items, but it does little to prevent the theft of money, jewelry, cameras, laptops, etc. In fact the concentration of expensive houses in a gated community is a tempting target; however, by implementing some of the basic strategies we have discussed, most residents can live with peace of mind that they have adequately protected their families and homes. The most important element is that folks do not need to live with the fear of being burglarized.

AT: What about hiding your valuables?

Larry: That is always a good idea. Also, you should not let it be known that you have cash or valuables in your house.

AT: What other advice can you offer people?

Larry: I have written up some tips and observations that may be of help. Also, I'm just finishing up another article to help folks with making the decision to install a home security system, which I will also make available to local residents.

AT: Excellent. With your permission I am publishing it on the following pages:

## HOME SECURITY CRIME PREVENTION TIPS AND SECURITY SYSTEMS

*by Larry Laxson*

In the past few weeks there have been several residential burglaries in the area that has caused a growing concern for local residents regarding their personal safety as well as the safety of the family and possessions. Many folks have decided to invest in a home security system or encouraged their property association to provide additional security. This information has been put together as a guide to help those who are interested in reducing further criminal acts regarding personal safety and residential burglaries.

Burglary is a crime of opportunity, committed by criminals who capitalize on carelessness or neglect. Most home burglaries are not committed by professionals who have planned to commit a burglary. Most are committed by amateurs, who find an open or unlocked door or window, or drug abusers that take advantage of a home's weak defenses.

No home can be protected like Fort Knox. All of the locks, bars, lights and alarms cannot guarantee total protection. You cannot make your home, property, and self crime proof, but you can make them crime resistant.

Burglars are actually more likely to come during the day than at night. They look for homes that appear empty and thrive when people are away at work or on vacation. A monitored alarm makes sure that your home is never left alone. Feigning the appearance of presence is another great way to ensure that your home will remain untouched. Setting lamps to timers, watering and cutting the lawn and removing fliers from your door or porch are great ways to not only improve the appearance of your property, but to let burglars know that someone is home.

Have you ever been out late at night and when you get to your home you realized that you forgot to leave a light on. Without that light on, things get pretty scary in the dark. If you have a home security system, you can feel much safer going into even an

unlit home. Home security systems do offer an added level of confidence to the home owner when either at, or away, from home.

Probably most of us long nostalgically for the days when we could simply lock our door and leave home, secure in the knowledge that few people would bother to go past a locked door, and that for the most part, burglaries were only aimed at the rich. Those days are gone; today's thieves know that even a modest home is likely to have computers, video games, a little cash stuffed in a drawer, tools, televisions and a few other prizes. Unlike other cultures, Americans are also likely to have one or two firearms in their homes. And, even if the intent of these firearms are used for personal safety, if by chance the residence is burglarized when no one is home, these items can be picked off and sold at the nearest pawn shop or used in the commission of another crime. The pros and cons of owning firearms will be discussed in future articles.

*Before investing thousands of dollars in a home security system, make a small investment in your home security education.*

- Protect Points of Entry to Enhance Home Security - Safer Doors and Windows Help to Keep Out Crime
- Don't be too casual about your doors and windows; unlocked doors, open windows and unsecured garage openings invite criminals to target your home.

A home security tip that surprisingly often overlooked is to make sure all your doors are securely locked whether you are inside your home or out. Be sure that your locks are in good repair as well. Compromised locks, worn old doors and weak window casings are too easily tampered with. Place a safety bar along the inside track of sliding glass doors and ground-floor windows; this can help prevent them from instantly sliding open should an intruder disable their locks.

- Keep ground floor windows closed and locked even in warm summer months. Investing in a quality air conditioning system can help to enhance your home security ef-

- system can help to enhance your home security efforts. Open windows are always a threat to home safety.
- Don't Advertise Your Absence - Give Your House a Lived-In Look to Improve Home Security
- Most criminals don't like to work hard, and an empty house always looks like an easy target.
- If you are away from home for a few days, or longer, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to pick up any fliers (ICE bills left in doors) or other items left out in the open. Select someone who will keep quiet about the fact that you are out of the house.
- Never leave a note on your door mentioning that you're away. If this information falls into the wrong hands it can be an invitation to break into your residence. Of course, it's advisable to never ever leave a spare key anywhere outside, no matter how well hidden you imagine it to be.
- Even if you're going to be gone overnight or have to come home late it can help to have lights and a television or radio set on timers. Close up blinds and curtains at night or when you're out so no one can look inside.
- Anything you can do to give your place a lived-in look can eliminate the vacancy signs that criminal minds watch for and help to improve your home's security.

## **ONCE THE DECISION HAS BEEN MADE TO PURCHASE A SECURITY SYSTEM**

If a home owner is still concerned about personal and home security after implementing several of the common crime prevention strategies suggested in this document, the next step is to consider a home security system.

If your home is highly visible and in a well-populated area, a system that both calls a central monitoring service and triggers a siren would be good. The burglar would probably be gone by the

time the police arrived, but your belongings would be spared which, after all, is the point of the best home security system in the first place.

The type of security system you purchase will depend on whether you are just building a home or are installing it into an older home. In a new home, the system can be installed along with the wiring of the house. A wired system is often considered the most durable and reliable, but in older homes, it may be costly to drill holes in walls and connect the system to the electrical service. In such cases a wireless system will be cheaper (with most companies) to install and more convenient for the homeowner.

Home alarm security systems are worth more than the price you will pay for them, but you can purchase an alarm system for less than \$100 or for as much as \$5,000 depending on what you need it to do. The simpler types just set off a series of alarms when a contact on a door or window is broken or when an electronic beam is crossed. These alarms can be purchased locally and do not come with monitoring service.

The midrange burglar alarms need to be installed by a professional and may include a contract with one of the many monitoring companies. Often the alarm system will include fire and smoke alarms as well. These systems could use a combination of sirens, blinking lights, and phone calls to the appropriate persons.

The best home security system not only includes home security alarm monitoring with service that contacts local authorities, but also allows the owner to monitor the premises on a computer via closed circuit TV cameras positioned in strategic locations on the property. Of course, these systems are also the most expensive with the wireless systems costing as much as \$10,000. The better companies may include the first one to three years of monitoring in the price.

How do you know what type of system you need? Before making your purchase, you should do a thorough analysis of both your property and your needs. Do you have school age children or elderly people who will be home while you are still at work? Is the property complex with multiple entry points and spots that are difficult to see from the

road? Then a system that not only protects you from burglars but also allows you to monitor the property yourself may be a worthy investment. On the other hand, is the home vacant during the day? Would an alarm monitoring company be sufficient protection in the event of a break-in?

In addition to the cost of installation, you will pay a monthly fee for a company that provides monitoring service. These fees can range from \$20 a month to over \$100 depending on the services that are included. Some companies actually waive the cost of the installation as long as you activate the monitoring service, but you can count on a three to five year commitment. However, you may get a guarantee of no price increase during that time.

Combine your Home Security Alarm System with common sense.

As discussed earlier, while there is no question that a home security system is important in protecting property in today's world, many people live in the same location for years and never have a break-in while a home just a block or two away may be targeted repeatedly. The difference is in the habits of the home-owner. Those who are never burglarized may just be lucky, but often they have habits that they themselves take for granted. We discuss the following simple actions that can make your home less attractive to the burglar either with or without a home security system.

- Keep the property well lit at night.
- Do not plant large bushes or shrubbery where they will conceal doors or windows that would be easy access points.
- Invest in a privacy fence and leave the family dog loose at night or when you are not home.
- Lock doors and close the garage doors whenever you leave the premises. You would be surprised at how many people leave the garage wide open during the day when they are at work; equally amazing, most burglaries are conducted in broad daylight.
- Get to know your neighbors. Let them know where you work and when you usually get home. Tell someone if you will be away for several days so they will be suspicious if a stranger shows up while you are gone.

One thing is for sure and that is that the crime rate isn't going to significantly drop and in fact it is projected to only get worse. One type of crime that has truly been on the increase is property crimes and one new type of property crime to make its debut is the home invasion robbery. Currently, many police departments are overwhelmed, so in more and more communities it is up to each and every home owner to take measures to protect their home, family and property.

Fortunately something that has also been increasing steadily along with the crime rate is the level of technology in home security systems. What started out as a simple system of window and door trip triggers that were connected to an alarm has grown into elaborate security systems that can cover your whole home in an invisible blanket of security that is monitored twenty-four hours a day?

In fact home security has moved out of the home and into the yard with a thirty-five foot perimeter of protection that is monitored by state of the art ultra-sensitive heat and motion detectors that will trigger the system if anyone enters the protection zone. While home security systems still rely heavily on window and door trip mechanisms, that prevent anyone from entering with out setting off the alarm, they also make heavy use of the newer technology that is available in the way of infrared and motion detectors.

Also, new wireless technology makes all of the devices that are incorporated in a modern alarm system far more tamper proof then they have ever been before. This is because with a wireless system there are no wires that can be cut and the batteries that power the individual devices last up to three years and will signal the key-pad when they need replacing.

Alarm systems also now come with a back-up power source in the way of batteries that can power the security system for weeks if need be, due to the power being shut off. One thing that a home security system is designed to do is to give the homeowner peace of mind and to help with this one of the added features of an alarm system is that the owner can actually call the control panel any time to check up on the system and the home.

There are other features that are available with a modern, state of the art home security system as well and that includes such things as fire detection sensors that can detect unusually hot temperatures in a home and notify the appropriate authorities and wake up the owners simultaneously. Also, you can have an added option of having carbon monoxide sensors in your system as well that will sound the alarm if this poisonous gas is leaking into your home from your gas heater or from any other source.

Use home security equipment such as motion sensors and attach them on your doors and windows so that you are immediately alerted if they're opened. Protecting all points of entry is a smart way to help keep crime away from your family and make the most of your home security systems.

Another option is to install surveillance as a part of your home security system; even if you are away, you can monitor your home 24 hours per day and can also be notified via the internet whenever your alarm system senses an open door or window. If the open door alarm is not planned, you can quickly alert the local authorities. This options also allows the owner to monitor who is coming and going from their home, such as a maid, when they are not home

It is imperative to protect your belongings with some sort of home alarm security system. The type of system best for you really is more dependent on the area you live in than on the cost even though cost may be the first issue you consider. If you live in an isolated location, for example, where thieves would have plenty of time to break in, help themselves and get away, with no danger of having an audible alarm heard by neighbors, a mere siren that does nothing more than make a lot of noise might not be of much use. In such an area you need a system that includes home security alarm monitoring service. A silent alarm that contacts a monitoring service or a neighbor would be a good option as any would-be thieves might think they had plenty of time and could be caught in the act.

Remember, burglary is a crime of opportunity, committed by criminals who capitalize on carelessness or neglect. Most home burglaries are not committed by professionals who have planned to com-

mit a burglary. Most are committed by amateurs, who find an open or unlocked door or window.

It is important to remember that the most important part of planning for home security is to take a commonsense approach and implement the strategies that offer the most amount of protection for the least amount of money and will prevent the crime from ever occurring.

# Armed Robbery in Atenas

by Ivo Henfling

I feel the need to tell you a bit about what happened several weeks ago in Atenas and how one or two bad things going on in a certain town or city should not be seen as if it is the end of the world. Some people panic over the wrong things.

Yes, a home invasion happened and it's all over the news.



But instead of reporting more of the same, I would like to make you all aware that though it's no fun to be robbed, especially when you're with your family and they put a gun to your head. This is something that rarely happens unless you brag about what you have, invite the wrong people into your house, or frequent the places like bars and other fun places where you might meet the wrong people.

[Atenas Today](#), an online newspaper reported about an armed home invasion last Saturday, the 19th of March 2011. And it will be remembered for the next 100 years. Mainly because nothing ever happens in Atenas and now something did, so everyone suddenly feels a need to write about it, like I do, but as descriptive as possible.

On Monday, also [AM Costa Rica](#) reported about it and by then the forums like [CostaRicaLiving](#) on Yahoo people started to discuss what went on. Hey! We have a new topic!! Something else to talk about, finally!!

Yellow journalism is fun, its exciting; especially when it happened to someone else. It gives people something to talk about because it's better than watching TV all day. But it scares people and especially those who live in the same community where it happened. Or those who had just made an offer on that house that is for sale in that community. I am surprised though that most of the people who complain and run scared, forget that it is no different anywhere else.

If you like excitement, read this:

## Home Invasion Facts:

\* According to a United States Department of Justice report:

*38% of assaults & 60% of rapes occur during home invasions.*

*1 of every 5 homes will experience a break-in or home invasion. That's over 2,000,000 homes!*

\* According to Statistics Canada, there has been an average of 289,200 home invasions annually over the last 5 years.

\* Statistically, there are over 8,000 home invasions per day in North America

\* According to Statistics U.S.A., there was an average of 3,600,000 home invasions annually between 1994 and 2000.

Allow me to show just a few cities in the U.S., and I have tried not to pick cities like L.A. or New York, that have much bigger crime problems than Atenas has. The 2010 [FBI Crime Report](#) shows the following in 2010:

City	Population	Violent crime	Burglary	Robbery	Aggrav. Assault	Property crime
Scottsdale, AZ	239,115	176	620	50	106	3,251
Anaheim, CA	335,970	534	783	234	251	4,271
Westminster, CO	107,705	107	274	19	69	1,592
W.Palm Beach, FL	100,763	411	602	137	233	2,291

Scary eh? And Costa Rica doesn't have welfare, imagine the States not having it? I am definitely not trying to make you forget what happened to these poor people in Roca Verde in Atenas. And I hope it will never happen again. But the above figures show that even the golf course community of Scottsdale, Arizona is not a safe place to live anymore.

And what do you think about the beautiful community of West Palm Beach in Florida? At least, what now has happened, makes the people who live in Atenas understand that they do not live in a place that is exempt of bad things like crime and hopefully they will all start to get organized and share in the effort of keeping Atenas a nice and quiet community as it always has been.



Atenas is well known as a quiet, quaint town, away from the crowd, with the most perfect climate in the world. For a while, it will stop being that, then people forget and go on with their life. But one day it will happen again, and most of the time it does happen for the following reasons:

1. Some people like to show how much money they have by flashing rolls of dollars, wearing big diamond rings and driving big flashy cars. Everywhere in the world this calls

attention to the bad guys, even in Atenas. So do yourself a favor and don't.

2. Some like to frequent local bars and get to talk to the wrong people. Show off, tell them big stories about all the good stuff you have at home and even become friends with some and bring them home to enjoy the good stuff together.

3. Some like to date the girls in downtown San Jose, available in nightclubs and well known hotels and bring them home. No more needs to be said I think.

4. Some leave their doors and windows always open. I know, you could do that before and you still can. But don't say later the laptop you left on the dining table, for everyone to see, is missing. Or the cash you left on the kitchen counter.

5. Some have never heard of banks and safe deposit boxes in the banks that you can rent for little money. Why keep the \$15K you got for the car you just sold at home and not in the bank? As well as your good jewelry. My wife does.....

6. Communities like Roca Verde charge a condo fee of like \$40 or \$50 a month, just for a guard at the gate, who is doing nothing there anyway. Most condos in Escazu and Santa Ana pay \$150 or even \$250. I've seen plenty pay \$400/month. Stop crying about crime, pay an extra \$50 a month and that will pay decent security and will make it possible for you to sleep well at night.

I am glad that the homeowners of Roca Verde have already gotten together and are ready to attack the problem immediately. I am sure other communities in Atenas and other locations will follow suit.

# 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.



Mucho Machismo

Evelyn Levtchenko

*levtchenko.art@gmx.eu*



Twilight on the Nile

Alice Constantine  
[www.aliceartworks.com](http://www.aliceartworks.com)



New Dawn

Al Alexander  
[jeanandal@gmail.com](mailto:jeanandal@gmail.com)

## How our ancestors gave us maize



by Theresa Fulton

In the U.S. I am often asked – is maize the same thing as corn? Yes - the term ‘*maize*’ is derived from the ancient word *mahiz* from the Taino language – a now extinct Arawakan language - of the indigenous people of pre-Columbian America, where maize originated. Columbus and other explorers took maize back to Europe with them. Because it is such a versatile crop, nutritious, and grows well in many environments, (not to mention tasty), it quickly spread across the trade routes of Europe, Africa and Asia in the 1500s and 1600s. When Europeans were introduced to maize, they called it ‘corn,’ which was then a general term for a grain but has since come to refer specifically to maize in the U.S. Today the terms maize and corn are usually used interchangeably, with one being used more commonly than the other in certain regions or contexts, though in some European countries ‘corn’ may also refer to wheat or barley.

Maize is the most widely grown crop in the Americas, with 70-100 million acres grown annually in the United States alone, accounting for nearly 40% of the all maize grown in the world. It is grown on every continent except Antarctica. Maize is also higher yielding than many other grains – its average yield is 160 bushels per acre but it can reach over 300 bushels per acre (27 tons per hectare) - and therefore is often less expensive. Together with wheat and rice, maize is one of the three most important crops in the world. Although it is not native to Africa, it has become an important crop there, too, due to its nutritional qualities and ease of cultivation. Now it is the most widely grown staple crop for over 300 million Africans, as well as crucial in Latin America.

But although maize is now so popular throughout the world, it is actually a relatively new crop, having only been domesticated around 6,000 years ago. In contrast, some flowering plants evolved 140 million years ago, and the earliest *Homo sapiens* appeared around 200,000 years ago.



Photo: Teosinte, the ancestor of maize.

Scientists believe that maize is derived from an earlier ancestral plant called *teosinte* (see photo). Maize was domesticated in MesoAmerica, in the region that is now Mexico. What do I mean, “domesticated”? Sounds like a house cat. Actually, it IS the very same process that gave us house cats. Domestication is the process by which plants and animals are genetically modified over time by humans, for traits that are more advantageous or desirable for humans – simply by the process of selecting (and propagating, or breeding) things that we like. For example, if a human notices that one particular plant in the field is taller, and taller plants are considered more valuable, s/he may choose seed from that plant from which to grow new plants. Since the individual plants selected likely contain genes for the trait they were selected for, their progeny (children) are more likely to inherit that trait. A tall plant is more likely to have taller progeny. Over time, if only tall plants are chosen as progenitors, more and more plants will be tall. The proportion of genes for tallness will be higher. This may not be the type of “genetic modification” you are accustomed to hearing about, but because humans are selecting certain genes over others, the result is a change in the overall genetic structure of the population. This is sometimes called “artificial selection” because it involves the same principles as natural selection but the selection is done by humans rather than nature.

In the case of maize, our human ancestors began this process by selecting certain *teosinte* plants that had bigger kernels, and more rows of kernels. Over time they probably also selected for other useful traits, such as kernels that didn’t shatter (fall off from the plant), exposed kernels (lacking the hard outer protective part of the kernel) and

higher-yield. Eventually, a new type was formed, what we know now as maize, or corn.



Another key quality of maize is that it is incredibly genetically diverse. This astounding diversity has enabled it to be adapted to vastly different growing regions and purposes. Although we usually see yellow varieties, across the globe, particularly in Latin America, there is an incredible array of colors, sizes, and types. Of particular interest lately are varieties that have higher levels of carotenoids, which are more nutritious. This diversity allows us to have field corn, sweet corn, popcorn, and is also leading to new uses of corn, such as environmentally friendly plastics. To get an idea of how diverse maize is, according to Dr. Ed Buckler, a maize geneticist at Cornell University, any two varieties of maize can be as different from each other as humans are from chimpanzees!

Domesticated over the centuries, maize nourished the civilizations that became the mighty empires of the early Americas, including the Mayans, Incas, Aztecs. So the next time you sit down to a delicious meal of corn salad, tamales, cereal, or just plain corn on the cob, thank those early humans for their good selections!



Photos: Maize is a member of the Poaceae family, along with its close relatives rice, millet, and sorghum.

For more reading:

A zillion uses for corn:

<http://www.ontariocom.org/classroom/products.html>

The maize teacher-friendly guide to evolution (that this article is excerpted from): [http://tfg-](http://tfg-maize.museumoftheearth.org/)

[maize.museumoftheearth.org/](http://tfg-maize.museumoftheearth.org/)

The Buckler laboratory for maize genetics and diversity: <http://www.maizegenetics.net>

For questions, comments, or suggestions for future topics, contact Theresa

[tf12@cornell.edu](mailto:tf12@cornell.edu)

Thanks to collaborators Ed Buckler and Jeff Glaubitz.

# My Mother



by *Marietta Arce*

About a month ago, my family and I believed my mother was in her final days on this earth. She is in the last stages of Alzheimer's and was being treated for an infection in her throat which made it impossible for her to swallow any food. The doctor ordered nasogastric intubation and my mother looked pale, dehydrated and very frail. At one point, she said clearly: "I am dying", something I took as a hint that preparations needed to be made and that we'd better start making them.

On the advice of her doctor, all my siblings were encouraged to come home and my brother and I became very busy with the practical details of her departure. We arranged for the priest to give his blessing; we visited the cemetery and spoke to the man in charge and we chose the fitting and beautiful wooden chest which will hold our mother in the future. Our father remained constantly by her side, allowing himself only the few hours of rest that his body demanded.

Although Costa Ricans are not known for efficiency or speed, I admit that I was impressed with how quickly everyone we encountered took care of our needs. I was touched and grateful for the kindness shown by strangers who empathized with our

situation, and guided us through a difficult ordeal with patience and knowledge. Our cousin lost his ailing father during those days and I saw how being unprepared made the stress of a painful life event even more unbearable.

My mother is still with us. It was almost as if she were letting us have a trial run so we could correct whatever was out of step with what she wanted us to do for her. I am at peace knowing that all her children have been at her side and have expressed feelings that will allow us to grieve properly when the time comes. She was able to receive expressions of love that were not always evident in former times.

Thinking about death and its inevitability has actually forced me look at my life and make a list of the things I would regret not having done if I were to die suddenly. I look back at my mother's life and I realize that she achieved most of her dreams because she allowed her internal expectations to overrule those of the society of her day.

I will always be proud of the things she accomplished and of the lessons I learned at her side. I hope that my children will be able to say the same thing about me. I am taking time to nurture friendships, spend time with my family and give of myself and my talents to the community that I have chosen to live in. I wish to live for a long, long time and to do so in a way that reflects my internal expectations, just as my mother has.

## An Appeal from Hogar de Vida



*from Tim and Dena Stromstad*

We want to give a quick overview of our difficult situation here. The Costa Rica mission has suffered a direct hit from an unexpected financial perfect storm in 2010! This perfect storm is the result of the convergence of:

- Mandatory Costa Rican pay raises
- New mandated Costa Rica services to children
- A 20% devaluation of the dollar

-Inflated cost of goods in Costa Rica  
-Reduced value of donations from the U.S.

- Decrease in dollar giving because of the U.S. economy
- Only one small team came last year.

We are disciplined and devoted to being good stewards of what the Lord supplies, and we thank Him for the financial reserves that have sustained us to today. However, the perfect storm of seventeen months duration has reduced our reserves to near zero.

We are encouraged as the Lord send us help in many small ways. (see [Stories of God's Provision](#) below.) The Lord has called us to live by faith and we are doing that here and now!

We had a short-term mission team in March that began phase one construction of a secure maintenance building for the ongoing operation here. We have a long way to go on that project, but we hope that the teams slated to come this year will make good progress on that project so we can announce at the end of the year that it is finished! Again "PRAY".

Last week we rejoiced as one of our children was placed with an adoptive family. (Don't miss [Adoption Story](#) on the sidebar.) This was yet another victory as this Costa Rican family has prayed for 5 years as they actively pursued adoption in their country. To see them find their child, and to see this despondent little 1 yr old girl blossom like a flower in the span of 4 days, was to say in a word, "miraculous"! For confidentiality we cannot say more, but Cherished Partners, please know that the Lord is using your offerings to change lives and to bless families.

We will make it through this storm. We have a few mission teams lined up starting in late June through the end of August. Those teams will provide much needed help on campus as well as much needed cash flow.

## The Lord Provides!

My request to you is to help shore up the mission financially so we can make it through JUNE! Please consider what you could do as a generous one-time only or extra gift designated to the Costa Rica mission! We need an extra \$12,000 over the next three months. Thanks from all of us here. May the Lord richly meet all of your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.

*Tim Stromstad*  
*Founder and Executive Director*

P.S. Please allow me to make a plea for a one-time gift this month payable to "Children of Promise International" with a note directing it to the Costa Rican mission. 100% of your donation will go directly to care of the children. None will be retained to cover administrative expenses.

If you'd prefer to make a long term commitment, check out our new [Expanded Sponsorship Program](#) or options for [Automatic Monthly Donations by Credit Card](#) or [Automatic Withdrawal \(EFT\)](#).

Early this year, the community of foreigners here in Atenas hosted a Chili Cook Off with some powerful examples of the best Tex-Mex south of the border. It was extremely well organized and was promoted locally and throughout Costa Rica. Their aim was to raise money for Hogar de Vida. The turn-out was beyond expectations. Their committee was ecstatic to bring us a check for \$3000 and we were ecstatic to receive it. Next year they want to double their efforts.

One of our tías (Auntie) is a mover and shaker. She roped in the local taxi

drivers to donate for the kids. Some of them gave her money to go buy groceries (all they wanted in return was the receipt) and others went with her to shop and paid the bill at the check out. We are open to however God wants to feed His kids!

Last weekend the small town of Atenas rumbled under the hoofs of the "tope" (horse parade) where the contestants had to pay to enter their high-stepping steeds. Hogar de Vida was chosen by the Chamber of Commerce to be one of the recipients of the proceeds. Not only does this represent the promise of food on our tables but opens the possibility of a relationship with our local business community to become involved at a more personal level. We are excited and grateful.

Every Friday we send our little red wagon to the agricultural fair to gather up God's provisions of veggies, fruits, some meat and sometimes a loaf of home-baked bread. Some will give pineapples, others a cucumber or two until there is an impressive load of produce to last three houses for a week. Do we take this for granted? Never! God is our Jehovah Jireh, our provider. He doesn't say to pray for money (although that helps pay salaries) but to ask for daily bread. He is good!

# Minutes of US Embassy Town Hall Meeting

by Marietta Arce

Mr. Paul Birdsall of the US Embassy visited Kay's Gringos Postres on April 2<sup>nd</sup> to give a short presentation; answer questions, and listen to comments from about 50 members of the expat community.

Mr. Birdsall focused most of his talk on three topics: crime; disaster preparedness and immigration issues.

Mr. Birdsall addressed the issue of **crime** first, stating his concern for the recent rise in crime against U.S. citizens. He stressed the importance of using common sense when traveling or living anywhere in the world, not just in Costa Rica or Atenas. He advised members of the audience not to leave their possessions in plain sight; not to carry excessive amounts of money on their person; not to stay out late at night in unfamiliar neighborhoods, and to keep their passports in a safe place, carrying only a photocopy of the first couple of pages and the page with the entry stamp.

On the subject of **disaster preparedness**, Mr. Birdsall recommended having enough provisions (water, medical supplies, canned food, a month's supply of medications) to ensure being able to survive communication and transportation emergencies. Although the U.S. does not require registration with the Embassy, it is a good idea to do so in case there is an announcement the U.S. Embassy needs to get out to its expats.

The last topic to be covered was the subject of **immigration**. Mr. Birdsall commented on the efficiency of the program that they have implemented whereby people who want a visa to travel to the U.S. must make an appointment. He stated that, contrary to popular opinion, 83% of applicants who

apply for visas actually receive them and says that although the fee of \$140 for application is deemed high, it is a global figure which they are not likely to change. The same thing applies for other fees (passports; authentications).

Mr. Birdsall says that according to Costa Rican officials, there are only 13,000 U.S. citizens 'officially' living in Costa Rica. The actual number of residents is believed to be much higher and 'perpetual' tourists are encouraged to apply for residency status in order to avoid being deported. Since the residency laws are subject to interpretation and are changing constantly, Mr. Birdsall advises everyone to keep abreast of the current law and to pay attention to the entry stamps on the passports which change arbitrarily.

The U.S. Embassy can be accessed on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/sanjose.usembassy](http://www.facebook.com/sanjose.usembassy)) Twitter (<http://twitter.com/usembassysjo>) or at <http://sanjose.usembassy.gov/conscitizen.html>.

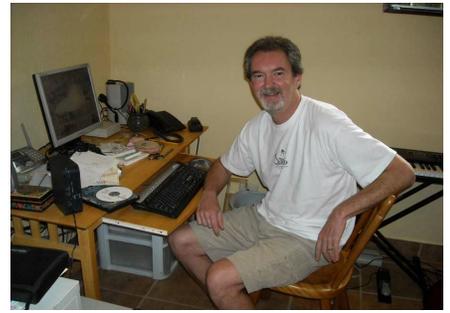
Mr. Birdsall said he is traveling throughout the country meeting and greeting expats and trying to address their concerns.

# TECH TALK

by Gordon Klatt

## RIP IPv4

Every computer or device connected to the internet is assigned a unique identifying number, called an Internet Protocol (IP) address. The entity responsible for assigning these numbers is the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA). IANA is operated by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, also known as ICANN, under a contract with the US Department of Commerce. The current standard for IP addresses is Internet Protocol version 4. IPv4 addresses are 32-bit numbers, which means there are  $2^{32}$ , or just over four billion, possible addresses. This may seem like a lot, but on February 3, 2011 the IANA allocated the last available IPv4 addresses. The transition to a new protocol has begun. IPv6 uses 128-bit numbers, which means there will be  $2^{128}$  possible addresses, and that software and routers will have to be changed to work with the more advanced network. All major operating systems already support the IPv6 standard. The first real test of the IPv6 network will come on June 8, 2011, World IPv6 Day. On that day Google, Facebook, and other prominent web companies will test drive the IPv6 network to see what it can handle and what still needs to be done.



If you're wondering how many  $2^{128}$  is, it's 340,282,366,920,938,000,000,000,000,000,000,000!

## Online Backup

When a friend's laptop computers and backup hard drive were stolen recently, it made me rethink my backup strategy. Like most people, I have thousands of photo and music files and other documents on my computer. About once a month I back up my system to an external drive, but I know that sometimes this is not enough. So I thought I'd take another look at online backup solutions. There are several companies that offer to store your data securely over the internet. I wrote about the most well known, Mozy.com, a few months ago. I compared prices and options and decided to sign up with Online Storage Solution. For \$19 a year they provide unlimited storage, by far the most storage for the lowest price. They offer different backup methods, the one you use will depend on the amount of data you have. I first mapped a network drive to their server, so that it appeared as a drive (Z:) in Windows Explorer. It was then simple to drag and drop files from my computer's physical drive to the online drive. I then downloaded and installed their software (PC, Mac, Linux compatible) which lets you sync folders on your computer with folders on the online server. When files are added to my computer, they will automatically be copied to the backup server. I calculated that, based on the upload speed of my internet connection, it would take about 175 hours to upload my 20 GB of photo and music files, and would certainly incur the wrath of someone at ICE. So I'm uploading for a few hours a day, and I'll be done in about a month. I'm thinking long term here. But if you have too much data to realistically upload, you can send them a USB drive with your data (up to 1 TB) and they will copy it to their server for you. For this they charge \$100, and they pay the cost of returning the drive to you. So that seems like a pretty reasonably alternative.

For more information about Online Storage Solution, visit their web site:

<http://www.onlinestoragesolution.com/>

## Clean Your Registry

The Windows Registry is a database that stores configuration settings and options. Over time the registry can become corrupted, or filled with invalid entries. There are several software products that will clean up the registry. One I use is Comodo System Cleaner. It's free, and can be downloaded here:

<http://www.comodo.com/home/support-maintenance/system-cleaner.php>

## Atenas Today Advertising Rates and Policies

Atenas Today is sent out monthly to over 400 email addresses of people who live or vacation in the Atenas area. Display ads up to half a page in size cost \$50 per insertion; full page ads are \$100 per insertion. Ads in the Atenas Today Yellow Pages cost \$5 per month for one column by one inch, and \$10 per month for one column by two inches.

Advertisers should send the copy via email to [atenastoday@gmail.com](mailto:atenastoday@gmail.com), with pictures attached as separate files. We will compose the ad and send back a proof for approval. The deadline for material for that month's issue is the 15th of the month.

Payment can be made in any of the following ways:

- 1) deposit to BCR Account No. 962-0003149-6 Marietta Arce Valverde
- 2) deposit to Paypal account of Marietta Arce ([marietta\\_arce@yahoo.com](mailto:marietta_arce@yahoo.com))
- 3) cash in envelope in PO Box 65 (Marietta Arce Valverde) in Atenas.

**In all cases be sure to include your name and what the money is for.**