

## 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



Veraneras (Bougainvillea)  
Flowers of the Summer Season  
photograph: Marina Zampieri  
zmarinacr@gmail.com

**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 500 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.



Issue No. 108

December 23, 2013

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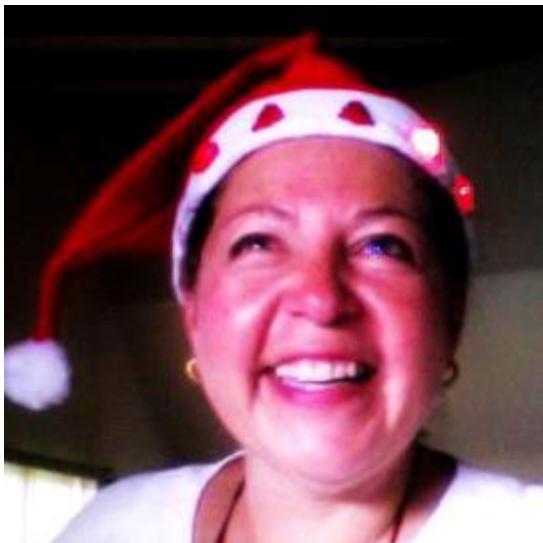


## DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

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)

## Publisher's Note



Here we are again! Another December is quickly reaching its end. I am grateful and happy for all the blessings 2013 has brought me and I am hopeful that all our readers can say the same thing.

We are welcoming visitors and preparing ourselves to ring in a new year! For the last several years, I feel that the days, weeks and months are getting shorter and shorter, don't you? I am nostalgic to say goodbye to 2013 but more than excited to say hello to 2014 and all the projects and activities that will come my way.

This month's issue is another collection of wonderful works from most of the columnists and artists you have been enjoying all year. Aside from admiring them, I thank them all for sharing their talents and spending their time preparing items of quality for your reading pleasure.

Let's all begin 2014 with an idea of how we would like to spend our time, remembering that we have many choices before us and that time is precious.

My best wishes for health, happiness and prosperity. May success, however you define it, also be yours in 2014.

I renew my 'resolution' to continue to bring you the best of Atenas, today and every day!

Warm Season's Greetings,

Marietta Arce  
[marietta.arce@gmail.com](mailto:marietta.arce@gmail.com)





## 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](mailto:atenastoday@gmail.com) by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

December 24<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Eve

December 25<sup>th</sup> - Merry Christmas Everyone!

December 26<sup>th</sup> - Annual Traditional TOPE in San José!

December 28<sup>th</sup>- January 3<sup>rd</sup> – Traditional Fiestas in Calle Pavas, San Isidro de Atenas. Don't miss out on these festivities which include a Tope, dance music and lots of traditional foods!

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> (please confirm) Atenas Bridge Club meets at Don Yayo's  
January 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> Restaurant 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. No partner required.

December 29<sup>th</sup>, - Buddhist Book Discussion at Roca Verde (SEE FLYER)  
January 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>

December 31<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Eve

January 1, 2014 - A Happy New Year to ALL!!!

January 6<sup>th</sup> – Three Kings Day (Epiphany)

January 8<sup>th</sup> - Writer's Club meets at Colinas del Sol, at Noon. Contact L. Michael Rusin @ [crcaseyboy@gmail.com](mailto:crcaseyboy@gmail.com) (2451-8063) for more information. Please confirm.

January 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> (Please confirm with Sara or Kay 2446-0664)

*Atenas Wednesday Women*  
informal get together at Kay's Gringo Postres  
every Wednesday afternoon at 12:30 PM

January 13<sup>th</sup> - 4 p.m. Abandoned Animals of Atenas Foundation meeting  
at Antaños Please contact Virginia 2446-5343 or Sylvia 8868-1386

January 14<sup>th</sup> – PLEIN AIR ART GROUP. Art activities as varied as the members. Contact Jan Yatsko at 2446-0970- or [janyatsko@gmail.com](mailto:janyatsko@gmail.com)

January 15<sup>th</sup> - Recycling in Atenas from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Plaza in front of the Central School, near the volleyball court.- Recycling of glass, aluminum, metal, plastic, paper, cardboard and tetrapak - NO ELECTRONICS, STYROFOAM or EGG CARTONS Please rinse and separate your recyclables before dropping them off. Thank you.



## Buddhist Book Discussion

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\*\*\*\*\*

**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,  
from non-Buddhists to  
experienced Buddhist practitioners**

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 email:

Adrienne and Richard Baksa  
2446-8509  
[adriennebaksa@me.com](mailto:adriennebaksa@me.com)  
[rbaksa@mac.com](mailto:rbaksa@mac.com)

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## REMEMBERING ANDRES CRUZ CASTRO



May 21, 1971 – March 27, 2013

On Tuesday, March 26, 2013 a forest fire in Cerro Tárcoles of Turubares was reported. The blaze spread quickly and destroyed 300 hectares of brush and grass on private farms before evening fell. The fire was threatening the humble homes in the nearby community of Purires de San Pablo de Turubares when Andres Cruz Castro received a request to assist fellow firefighters combat the flames. He was asked to join the efforts the next morning.

Although Andrés had made plans to go on a family outing to celebrate his sister-in-law's birthday, his widow Karol says she understood his heart of gold and solidarity. She sensed he felt it was imperative for him to do his part to protect a community of families. He knew first-hand that fighting fires was dangerous. She agreed to let him skip their outing and in exchange he rearranged his schedule to allow him to spend that evening at home rather than at the station.

Andres Cruz Castro, husband, father, son, musician, community leader and volunteer firefighter lost his life on Wednesday March 27, 2013 when the winds changed direction suddenly and sent the flames to an area that he and several other firefighters were working to clear. The brush burned quickly and the thick layer of smoke and complicated topography made it impossible for him to get to safety. He died as a result of smoke inhalation. He was 31 years old. His father proudly remembers that Andres' efforts prevented ten homes from being destroyed in the fire.

Karol says that Andres prepared her for his death and always assured her that if he died while fighting a fire she should not consider it a tragedy. He would have died doing something he loved.

I met Andres in 2007 when I attended a community meeting that he had organized. He was working on a project to raise awareness about our duty to protect the environment by planting trees, by recycling, by not burning, among other proactive actions. I was completely mesmerized by his energy. I admired his easy smile and I realized early on that he was one of those people who affected everyone he met because he was unaware of his own charisma.

Andres was originally from Desamparados, San José. I asked him how he ended up in Atenas and he happily explained that his wife was a native ateniense who convinced him they should move here, especially since they had a young family. It was love, he said. Of all his loves, Karol's was the most important and she has my profound admiration for the way she has been able to bear this loss with strength and dignity. She is an example for us all, especially her daughters. Andres is surely smiling and proud of her!

Andres was a music teacher, but more than that, he was a mentor to his young students who loved and appreciated him. He and his groups participated in whatever cultural activities they could. During the Climate Fair one year, he set up an obstacle course with the firefighters to the delight of the young children in town. I remember asking him about it and it was then that he told me that becoming a volunteer firefighter in Atenas had been the culmination of a childhood dream. He was so happy that I forgot for a moment that the dangers of a real fire are always present in the lives of these brave men and women when the call comes.



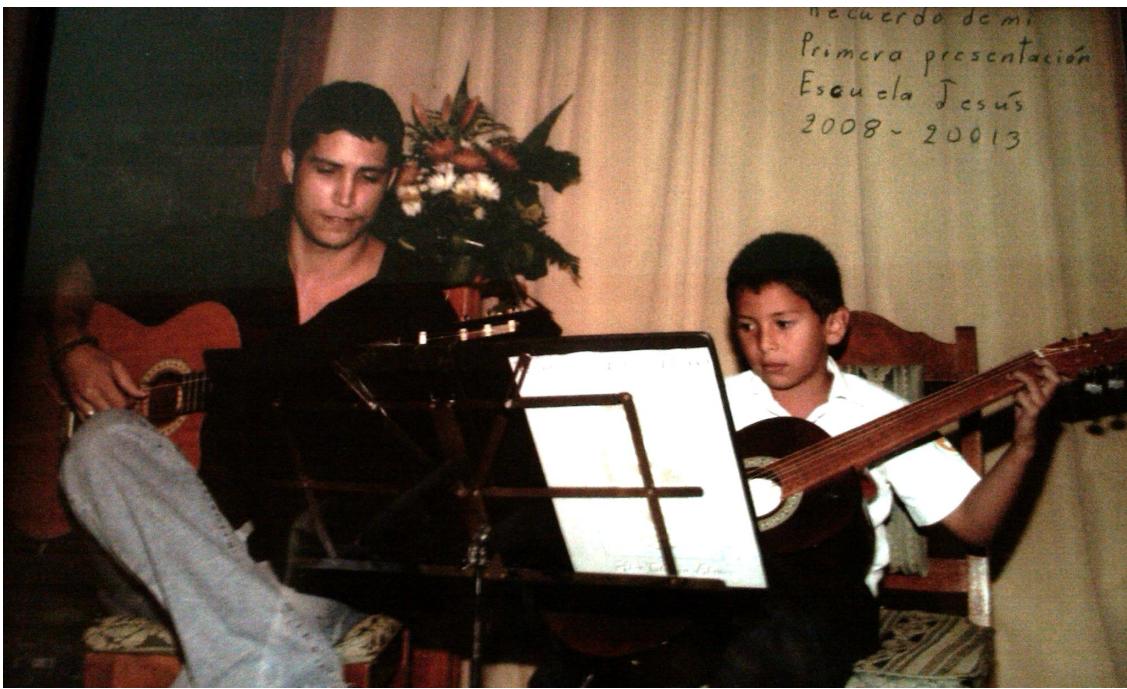
Andres and Diego

Andres had previously spoken to Karol about the procedure to be followed in the event of his death. He told her he did not want a large or showy funeral. This was one wish that Karol was not able to grant him. Andres' death was the first in the line of duty for a firefighter in ten years. As soon as news of his passing reached the different stations, the flags were lowered in respect. His affairs were all in order and Karol and her family were never left alone to make arrangements. Firefighters show their gratitude and respect for fallen heroes by helping the families as their own.



Karol, Andres, Sofía, Alyssa and Milena

Andres received a funeral of honor. Firefighters from all over the country accompanied him in a convoy that travelled from the Medical Examiner's offices in Heredia, past the airport where personnel and equipment rendered homage, continued with sirens on through the road to San Ramon and arrived at the fire station in Atenas for the wake. This was later followed by a mass in the filled-to-capacity church. Karol was able to address those present with grace and serenity and the assurance that Andres had had a good life and was heading home. The services concluded and a helicopter flew overhead to accompany Andres to his final resting place in the Atenas Cemetery. Afterwards, the flag that covered the casket was given to his parents and his helmet to his widow.

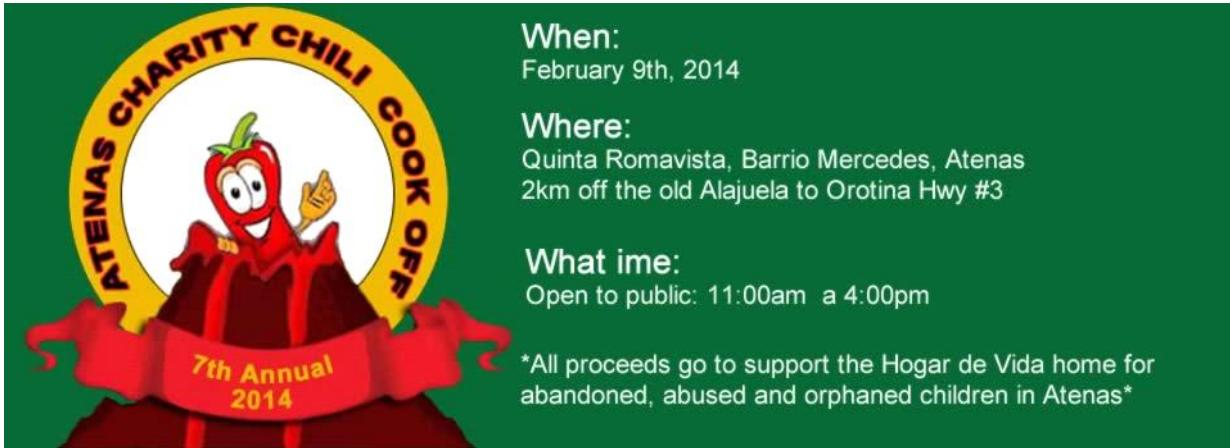


I have countless wonderful memories of Andres, as all who knew him surely do. It was very touching to see the turnout of expats in Atenas who did not know him personally but were moved by his story. It is just another example of just how special the people who choose to live here are. Andres was one of them.



Karol Chaves Loría and Andres Cruz Castro

[marietta.arce@gmail.com](mailto:marietta.arce@gmail.com)



**When:**  
February 9th, 2014

**Where:**  
Quinta Romavista, Barrio Mercedes, Atenas  
2km off the old Alajuela to Orotina Hwy #3

**What time:**  
Open to public: 11:00am - 4:00pm

\*All proceeds go to support the Hogar de Vida home for abandoned, abused and orphaned children in Atenas\*

## "GEARING UP THE TASTE BUDS FOR CHILI"

[www.atenaschilicookoff.com](http://www.atenaschilicookoff.com)

By Judy Timson, Committee Member  
Atenas Charity Chili Cook Off  
jteci@yahoo.com

### Just Six Weeks Until the Atenas Chili Cook Off Mark Your Calendar: Sunday, February 9<sup>th</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Atenas Chili Cook Off is literally just around the corner, and the Committee has been gearing up to set the stage for another fabulous event. We are now meeting weekly to help ensure you ALL have a fantastic day. NEW, this year – we'll have an array of live music – a little mix of everything awaits you! Next month you will hear MORE details of the day and what we are offering to those attending. We will also be posting regular updates on our Facebook Page – to join as a member, just search Atenas Chili Cook-Off and we will be happy to add you to the group.

### It is About the Chili, Right?

It sure is – it's a big part of the event. We have already tapped out with 25 Chili Teams registered – so all you need to do is come and join us and bring your taste buds with you – you'll get to choose your favorite chili for the "People's Choice Awards.

This year we filmed a winning team – you all know Jalapeno's in Alajuela? Well, Norman, the owner, has won a few titles with his winning chili. We had the pleasure of interviewing him and have put together this video to describe his experience as a chili team. Although he is not competing this year, we have invited him to be a head Judge, an honor he accepted. Thank you, Norman, and all the Chili Teams that will be participating this year!

To enjoy and view our interview with Norman, please visit our website at [www.atenaschilicookoff.com](http://www.atenaschilicookoff.com)

## Chili is the Glue that Allows Us to Make a Difference

That's right, we could not have a successful fundraising event for a good cause, if it didn't start with the fabulous Chili Teams that have already signed up. They are all vying for top honors so they can proudly own those bragging rights to making an award-winning Chili!!!! We thank them for helping to set the stage, so that we can support *Hogar de Vida*, a local children's home here in Atenas, that has been helping these at-risk children for almost 20 years. They shelter up to 35 children, age birth to ten years old, and provide love, protection and spiritual guidance to all. Their mission helps to meet the children's daily needs by offering a stable home, good nutrition, clothing, education, and trustworthy authority figures.

We plan, with your help, to be even more successful this year in making a difference in the lives of those children at *Hogar de Vida*.

So, plan on joining us....AND....saving your Koins for Kids – see below!

### Koins for Kids – Making a Difference Right Now!

Don't forget about the new *Koins for Kids promotion*! Please start saving ALL your coins between now and the Chili Cook Off – preferably the bronze coins, but we'll take it all! We will have a fun way to acknowledge each and everyone's coins as they drop into the Koins for Kids bucket. Save, save, save!



SAVE Your Koins for Kids!

To learn more about Hogar de Vida or the Chili Cook Off, please visit [www.atenaschilicookoff.com](http://www.atenaschilicookoff.com). Or feel free to contact me at [jteci@yahoo.com](mailto:jteci@yahoo.com). Interested in sponsoring, donating, or volunteering? Let us hear from you! See you ALL on February 9<sup>th</sup>.



Reality Farm South; Christmas 2013

Pepe, Raul, Pati & Gaggle

## Merry Christmas 2013

Paul Furlong

Of

Father Fuzz's Blue Jean Ministry & Motorcycle Repair

(Don't forget to ask about our Winter Mower Tune-Up Special)

*It's not very often we can write about miracles; the Father and Son without being tagged as a nut. But I might just pull it off on Christmas.*

Christmas lights and presents made my childhood bright. One Christmas eve in East Orange, our apartment building was on fire. At three in the morning, hook and ladders passed over our windows, trucks were parked in front; firemen rushed in and climbed the stairs. Mom kept saying,

“Chippy, look at the fire trucks, look at the fire trucks!” But I was into getting stuff. I took a cursory glance at the trucks and went back to my presents, ripping and tearing at the lovingly wrapped boxes to get to the meat of Christmas.

I must have been eleven or twelve before I began to see the Spiritual nature of it; Jesus and a vague notion of God. I watched Oral Roberts as often as I could on our black and white TV in Camden Delaware. I so *needed* to believe in his miracles! I repeated every word, got on

my knees and prayed to have the money to send to this purely dishonest man. It was about that time that mom tried to teach me the two-step. She said it was important to learn how to dance. I tried; after all, I wanted to touch a girl very badly then. But dancing to Dean Martin was like marching on stilts. How did putting my feet in the right place improve my chances of having sex with a girl? My body was erupting with hormonal concoctions that made the sixties look like the fifties; even the sight of a bra strap made it impossible to stand for the Star Spangled Banner.

Then rock & roll crashed down from the firmaments and struck me between the eyes. Suddenly my feet had wings and I was never told where to put them on a dance floor again. I was transported past ol' crooning Dean, the loaded dice and landed, toda la pata; in Rock & Roll heaven. Elvis Presley, Little Richard and Jerry Lee Luis showed us how to be ourselves and gave us a way to touch the girls without throwing a ball or tackling them. Suddenly things got cool, all of it natural, all of it without programs or fulfilling the desires of our parents or school authorities. The movie, Rebel without a Cause, (me and James Dean) was a javelin to the heart, my first brush with freedom and sovereignty, "Good God Almighty! Free at last; Free at last!" I waited out my sentence at the back of the class in my black leather jacket. I sparred with my teachers and spent time studying the principal and his authority.

“ ”

In Tucson there was a Methodist church that held Friday night dances. My brother and I began to attend. If God plays rock and roll music he's cool, especially since the last song was slow and they turned the lights low. Soon they expected to see us on Sundays. I went with an open mind. There were steps of knowledge that were supposed to make me a better Christian. But, like school, they talked about stuff that made no sense to me. My girlfriend kept poking me to see if I was getting it. I told her I wasn't, but that I really wanted to. It was Christmas when she asked, and it was still Christmas when she told me *it* was over. Thus I paid the first consequence for not believing and then telling the truth about it.

Years passed in the muddy creek of knowledge and washed me clean for the rebirth of Rock and Roll. The sixties ripped our clothes off and snapped our minds open. We questioned everything; mysticism, Eastern music, Eastern ideas, alpha brain wave surfing and we even stopped a war. I experienced union with God in breathtaking moments, but mostly the things I learned were on an intellectual level. I've carried these lessons and kept them warm until, in my reading, I realized I needed to *experience* them.

“ ”

I've had my mouth open and my nose down with political idiocy most of my life. Like most unsupervised kettles, the scum had risen to the surface again and threatened to blow the place up. I did my best to make myself heard; but you know logic or ethics have no effect on the

deaf and blind, or *forgive me Lord*; the stupid. Then I realized it was going to take something else to calm our troubled waters. We need to change ourselves: it's got to come from us. I turned off the news, canceled my subscription to, "Gay Nazi's for Peace" and doubled up on fixing me. I'm not likely to be born again or join a church. I'm a mechanic. I need to see how the piston is connected to the crankshaft and run through the drivetrain to end up moving the wheels. Quantum Mechanics does this for me; my experiences in the sixties were valid, and my studies of Christ Consciousness by Joel S. Goldsmith make sense.

“”

How do we separate the celebration of Christmas from the theater of politics or the religion of dancing the Funky Chicken? They're all one giant play and each of us is a star in his or her role of playing God. We're all one; all one with God, all one with each other, all one with the planet.

Yes, and One with Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Mohamed and other great teachers. The idea of pitting holy men against each other has got to stop right now. We're being pegged as zealots, racists, anti-Muslim, anti-Christ, anti-Jew anti-everything by a whorish mainstream media. Look, just follow these threads to their sources; they stop at the desks of sick, empty puppeteer souls. Bankers and world leaders; tearing open the Christmas boxes of our lives. The only power they have is the power we give them; take it away for Christmas. That's the message<sup>1</sup>.

Love and Peace on Christmas 2013

Fuzzlong@gmail.com



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<sup>1</sup> Crank up the volume! [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoDY8ce\\_3zk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoDY8ce_3zk)

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



**Stories from Mr. BudBud, Primero Perro of Lighthouse Animal Rescue.  
They were written 9 years ago when he first came to Costa Rica for a house  
sitting job.**

**7/6/2004**

**Hola!! Y'all,**

**Well today has been like being back in the old US. Mom is at it again.**

**There have been dogs in and out all day!! I told you about the Chihuahua  
puppies that the neighbor's dog had. Six of the little crumb crunchers!!!**

**Well Mom finally got the real birth date and they turned six weeks old  
today! Soooooo Mom told the little girl to bring them all to the house so  
she could vaccinate them. You want to talk about a MADHOUSE!! These  
puppies were SOOOOO cute but they sure don't have any manners!**

**They ate ALL my dog food!! They ran around behind me like they thought I  
was their mama!! They pee'd little puddles on the floor. They even  
POOPED on the floor!!!**

**The little girl was all upset about it but Mom just laughed and said, "Don't  
worry about it. It cleans right up and when you gotta go, you gotta go!!"**

**They all yelped when they got their shots. Mom said it may be because the  
needles she got from the vet store were larger than what she usually uses.  
Mom uses little bitty needles (like diabetics use) to give vaccines. It hardly  
hurts at all!!!! These needles were pretty big. Especially for tiny puppies  
like these.**

**She made the puppies stay for an hour and a half so she could watch them for reactions  
to the vaccines. Two got a little sick but Mom was standing by with the Benedryl. They  
felt better right away.**

**Then we went into town and took Enid, and Darreio with us. Darreio had a great time  
being my chauffeur all over town!! Mom had to teach him how to go down the curb and  
up the curb with my stroller but he did REALLY good!! He was VERY serious about his  
duties!!**

We went to the vet place, (vets work in the pet stores here) to buy some more worm medicine. Caja is the word for cashier in Costa Rica. The "caja" (pronounced kah-hah) told Mom to please come to the vet office because the vet wanted to meet her. He is a young man and was VERY nice. He asked Mom all about rescue and said he wished there was more love for the animals in Costa Rica. He talked about how much he cares for the animals.

Mom told him that we are looking to move here and he looked really happy!! He told her that if she comes here he wants to work with her and help the animals. He showed us a little puppy who was crying in his examining room. The owners had put a rubber band around the puppies tail so it would cut off the circulation and the tail would fall off. The tail, now, is horribly infected. The vet told Mom, "All they have to do is bring to me and say, 'Cut tail' and I do. No infection. Not that much pain. Why people do this?" Mom just shook her head and told him it the same way in America. There are people who just don't care.

Anyway, he told her to bring the puppies in next week so he can look at them and he will make sure they are healthy. No charge. He is a really nice man.

Anyway, we get back home and Mom starts cooking supper. While she was cooking the doorbell rang. It was Enid, Darreio, little Javier, and Bernice, (Enid's 16 year old daughter) They had brought their little miniature dobie to be vaccinated. Mom had told them she had an extra vaccine. She also wormed him while he was here.

When she got done and put him down on the floor he ran around for a few minutes and then he found my food.

Man!!! Did he dig in!!!! The dogs here don't usually get dog food so it is something new to them. That was why the puppies dug into it!! Dog food is pretty expensive here so the dogs get rice a lot along with leftovers! The leftovers here are not all that bad for the dogs as they are in the US. The meat is not all fat like back home. It is SO lean that the Americans, when they buy hamburger meat, will have some pork ground up in it to create a little fat. Mostly the tico cook their rice with pollo, (chicken.)

I LOVE RICE!!!! (especially with pollo!!!)

THEY love DOG FOOD!!! Ain't life strange?

Well when he was done with my dog food he ran around some more until he found my treat!!  
The little booger scarfed it right down!!!!

"HEY!!! I WAS SAVING THAT FOR LATER!!!"  
Mom told me not to worry. She said she would give me another one.

Mom told me I was a VERY good boy while all the other dogs were here today. Heck!!! I'm used to it!! That is the way it is back home all the time!!!

BudBud the sharing perro



## Exploring the mountain paradise of San Gerardo de Dota

By Shannon Farley

As we drove up into the clouds, it began to look not like Costa Rica anymore. Mist swirled around us. Large-leaved Prehistoric-looking vegetation lurked in the gloom. All windows were up; I was wearing a big fleece jacket, and I was contemplating turning on my car's heater for the first time ever.



When I told friends and family in the USA we were going to the "Cerro de la Muerte" (Mountain of Death) for Thanksgiving at the end of November, the overwhelming response was: "Sounds like fun. Not." The Mountain of Death doesn't exactly sound like a place for fun and relaxation ... unless we're talking eternal sleep. Maybe that's why places like San Gerardo de Dota and Santa María de Dota (the Los Santos region of Costa Rica), the Tapantí National Park and the newly formed Los Quetzales National Park are some of the least visited destinations in Costa Rica.



These high mountain valleys in the Talamanca Mountain Range are most popular with eco-tourists – especially from Europe. Just 55 miles (89km) south of San José, the region is renowned for its bird watching. Visitors enjoy early morning nature walks searching for the magnificently-plumed Resplendent Quetzal and the other 200 or so bird species identified in these misty tropical cloud forests.

From the chilling damp of Cerro de la Muerte, we twisted down a narrow mountain road into the sun-kissed hidden valley of San Gerardo. Cerro de la Muerte is Costa Rica's fourth highest mountain at 11,322 feet (3,451m); blessedly, we had dropped to a more pleasant 7,200 feet (2,200m) in San Gerardo.

Pure mountain air filled our lungs. The scent of cypress trees carried on crisp breezes, and the warm sunshine seemed to intensify all colors. San Gerardo is both charming and gorgeous. Little houses dot the countryside and numerous mountain lodges supply appealing accommodations. Apple, plum and peach orchards line the steep green hillsides. Rushing down the valley center





is the wild Savegre River, tumbling headlong toward the Pacific Ocean just south of the Manuel Antonio National Park. On the Central Pacific Coast, the Savegre is known for its excellent whitewater rafting. Here, high in the mountains, its crystal clear spring waters provide sustenance to some of Costa Rica's best trout fishing and trout farms.

We stayed at the Savegre Hotel, near the bottom of the valley settlement. The owners, the Chacón family, were the first pioneers to settle in the San Gerardo de Dota region, starting the community nearly 60 years ago. The family-operated lodge sits on a private reserve of 988 acres (400 hectares) with an extensive network of trails through the forest and to impressive waterfalls. Hiking and birding is fantastic, and it is also lovely to sit on the lodge's sun deck watching countless jewel-toned hummingbirds zip around flowers, feeders and tree branches. *Travel tip:* Definitely go for the Junior Suite cabin with a wood-burning fireplace, and the all-inclusive meal plan.



*Constantly changing weather means bring warm clothes and rain gear.*

<http://www.savegre.com/> for reservations.

The Trogón Lodge is another lovely mountain hotel in San Gerardo. Located a little higher up in the valley, it lines a bend in the river and offers comfortable cabins, hiking trails and a canopy zipline tour. <http://www.trogonlodge.com/> for reservations.

## Important links:

Information on Tapanti National Park:

<http://www.costarica-nationalparks.com/tapantinationalpark.html>

Information on Los Quetzales National Park:

<http://www.costaricainfolink.com/en/los-quetzales-national-park-cost-a-rica/>

Video about Savegre Lodge:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CytM4oO\\_o&feature=share&list=PLvZhvm4x7U8BEtExGg3xHhsv-hXtqXOm](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CytM4oO_o&feature=share&list=PLvZhvm4x7U8BEtExGg3xHhsv-hXtqXOm)

## A Holiday Workshop!



Carmen Campos' traditional crèche  
by Marietta Arce  
[marietta.arce@gmail.com](mailto:marietta.arce@gmail.com)

Although known by many different names (nacatamal in Nicaragua, humita in Peru, bollo in Belize, pastel in Puerto Rico) the tamal is an ancient food that we Latin Americans have had in common for many, many centuries. They can be made of different types of dough, filled with different ingredients, and wrapped in different leaves, but the one thing they all have in common is that their recipes contain *love* as a main ingredient no matter what country they are being made in!



Wikimedia photo

This time of the year, with its holiday parties and celebrations, is also a time of reflection and family unity. Tamales are traditionally a December staple in Costa Rican homes. It is not unusual to learn that our neighbor has consumed four or six

in a day (or even every day!) during this month! Because each family has its own almost 'proprietary formula', exchanging tamales with our friends and neighbors routinely results in delightful shared surprises over that ever-present cup of freshly brewed coffee.

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, some fifteen women (expats and locals) gathered in the home of Carmen Campos of Calle Pavas in San Isidro de Atenas to participate in a workshop on making this delectable component of the season. We all had a wonderful time as we experienced the spirit of generosity, solidarity and fun that is still present in the rural homes of our county. The day was spent in easy harmony and ended with a lovely tasting of food and local color!

Unexpected and unscheduled maintenance of the local ASADA (water supplier) forced the participants to walk fifty meters to the nearest house in search of water.



An unplanned trip to gather water at the neighbors!

Our hosts were friendly and gracious and before leaving, I was able

to take a picture of this wonderful structure that has been home to doña Gemma for over 56 years! She proudly showed us her plants and invited us to come visit again in the future.



A hidden treasure worth exploring soon!

After getting the water, the rice was made, the pork was boiled, and the rest of the ingredients were chopped and set aside. The masa was 'cooked' to the perfect consistency (like polenta) and then the fun really began as we assembled our little piñas!



Chopping Ingredients



Cooking the "Masa"



Doña Celia adding salt to the masa



Doña Celia explains assembly procedure



Piña all tied up



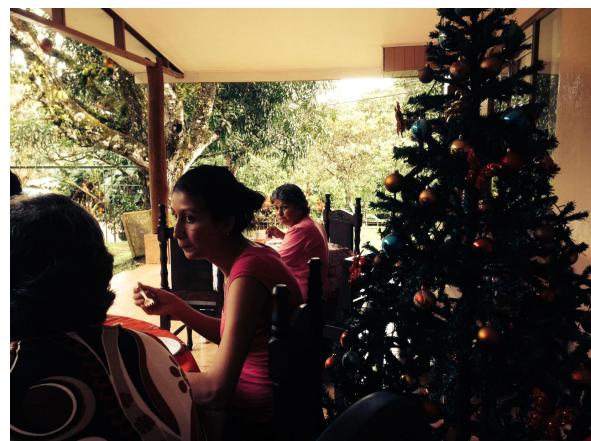
Piñas Boiling

When my family moved to New York 50 years ago, we exchanged our tico traditions for new ones that would allow us to assimilate successfully into our new culture. I can honestly say that although I missed a lot of things, it was the wisest decision my parents made for us. I do remember, however, that come Christmas time my mother would bravely (like she did everything!) make tamales from the materials available in the local grocery stores in Brooklyn.

It was the early 1960's, before Latinos were plentiful and plantain leaves became normal items in the grocer's freezers. There were times that biting into a nice piece of masa meant being surprised by a tiny bit of the aluminum-foil wrapping lodged there! My mother was not the best cook in the world, but in those funny, fat parcels that required no string (aluminum foil kept its shape even after boiling), I could feel and taste that essential ingredient: *love*.



A well-deserved luncheon



Merry Christmas to All!

## LA ISLA DEL ENCANTO



by Marietta Arce  
marietta.arce@gmail.com

In the early 1980's when I was in my mid-twenties, I made a decision to move to Puerto Rico. Although my decision was made after receiving several verbal assurances from a friend that a glamorous job as an executive assistant in her fashion-design firm awaited me, I have always taken responsibility for my choice.

While I was waiting for my position to be created at my friend's firm, I lived in a nice apart-hotel in San Juan. I ordered my breakfast every morning and spent the rest of the day touring and learning about the culture. After living in New York and New Jersey, I was happy for a change in climate. Although my Spanish was fluent, I realized quickly that my Costa Rican Spanish was a little different from theirs. After a while, I became fluent in their version of Spanish too!

Everything about Puerto Rico appealed to me: the music, the complex and colorful contrasts, and the gastronomy. I loved the newness of the adventure and the fact that I felt so at home. Most of all, I enjoyed the warmth and generosity of the people who

delighted in hearing about my Costa Rican roots. It was paradise and I was living in it. I wanted to stay forever.

After three months of this dreamlike experience, however, my 'emergency' funds were shrinking and no job had materialized. I realized I would have to seek employment if I really wanted to stay, which I did. I was eventually hired as the Export Coordinator in the tiny export department of a large multinational corporation. Even though I had been trying to get away from the shipping industry, I threw myself into my work wholeheartedly and had an amazing time doing it.

My position required me to travel to several locations within the San Juan area so I was not expected to report to headquarters every day. Every once in a while, however, I did manage to arrive for a coffee break or lunchtime in the cafeteria and this gave me a chance to mingle with the rest of the employees. I could sense some resentment against our small department but I brushed it aside and made friends with the people who rose above petty office politics and gossip.

One day I became aware of the subtle change in the relationship between one of the executives (Mr. Greene) and a woman (Esther) from the accounting department. I had never exchanged more than a greeting with Mr. Greene because his responsibilities did not extend to our department. I had only a passing acquaintance with Esther because we had very little in common in almost every aspect of our personal life and nothing in common at work. However, we were friendly and although

I was curious about their relationship, I didn't pry.

Soon new rumors about Mr. Greene and Esther reached my ears. I made no comments since I knew little about either of them but I did listen with interest to the conclusions being drawn by the employees. I was able to gather that Mr. Greene's wife suffered from depression and that Esther's husband beat her in front of her children. All I really knew about Esther was that she had two young children and that she worked hard to support them. She was a very quiet, modest woman who dressed simply and did her work well. Mr. Greene impressed me as a taciturn executive who had many problems on his mind. I thought the gossip about Esther was mean-spirited and that Mr. Greene was being judged as taking advantage of his position. I kept my own counsel and avoided the lunchroom for a while.

Several months went by and we learned that Mr. Greene and Esther had married quietly and were on their honeymoon. Esther would not be returning to work afterwards because corporate policy prohibited it. Aside from that, her new role required them to entertain visiting executives and she was busy learning how to do it.

Esther came to the office one day when I was not there. I was sorry to have missed her because their fairy-tale ending made the romantic in me very happy for them. I would have liked to wish them well. One of my friends commented that she was surprised to see the dress Esther was wearing on her visit. I asked her what was so surprising and she answered that Esther was

wearing the same simple off-the-rack clothes she had always worn. My friend expected that Esther's new status would 'improve' her taste and style.

I remember laughing at this honest but superficial assessment. I reminded my friend that it was the inner qualities rather than the outer garments that made Esther special. I also recall feeling proud of Esther for holding on to the person Mr. Greene had fallen in love with. I hope they have had a good life.

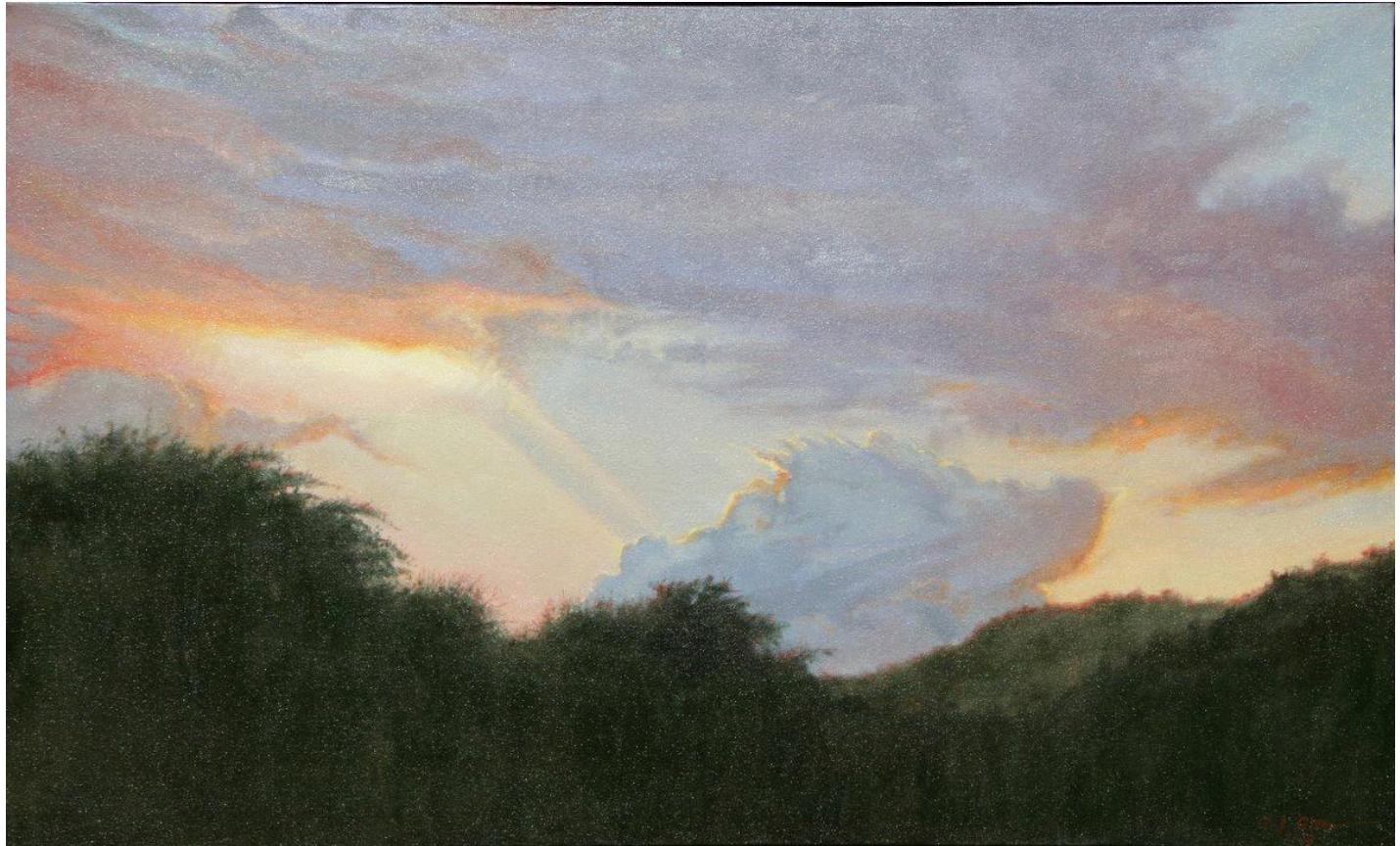
I returned to New York in 1984. It is a long story for another time. Although I left Puerto Rico, it didn't totally leave me and I am always delighted when I hear that unique version of Spanish spoken. I am indebted to "La Isla del Encanto" for many things and I hope to return one day to be enchanted anew.



San Juan Convention Center  
Wikipedia image

## **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.



**Evening Sky**

**22" x 36"**

**Oil on Canvas.**

Al Alexander  
*jeanandal@gmail.com*

**Artist's Statement:** I tried to capture that evasive luminosity that the evening sun gives us.  
I used red oranges, warm and cool violets against a deep green



**Colors of Costa Rica / Colores de Costa Rica**

Acrylic on Gallery Wrapped Canvas

16" x 18"

Diana F. Miskell

Horse and Cattle Art: [www.dianamiskell.com](http://www.dianamiskell.com)

Costa Rica Blog: <http://dianascostaricablog.blogspot.com>

**Artist Statement of Work:** I specialize in cattle and horse portraits, and will paint the occasional dog and cat. Horses and cattle are amazing creatures, with fabulous bone and muscle structure.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The November Issue featured this same painting but this is an improved photo.



**Tom Duffy**

**tom@duffyportraits.com**



A Little Visitor  
Photograph by Peter Boyer  
[pebo2@me.com](mailto:pebo2@me.com)

## For the bloggers...



We are providing a list of *blogs* that might be of interest to our readers. By providing this information, we are not endorsing or accepting responsibility for any content found therein. Please contact us if you have any other blogs of interest that you would like to share. These are alphabetized for your easy reference.

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Costa Rica: Sisters in Transition (Judy & Roxi)	<a href="http://costaricasistersintransition.blogspot.com">http://costaricasistersintransition.blogspot.com</a>
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G. Martin Lively	<a href="http://fishinginandaroundcostarica.blogspot.com">fishinginandaroundcostarica.blogspot.com</a>
Going Like Sixty	<a href="http://goinglikesixty.com">goinglikesixty.com</a>
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Lois and Jim Craft	<a href="http://adventurecraft.blogspot.com">adventurecraft.blogspot.com</a>
Marietta Arce	<a href="http://marisundays.wordpress.com">http://marisundays.wordpress.com</a>
Mi Chunche	<a href="http://michunche.com">michunche.com</a>
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Paul Furlong	<a href="http://shootright.blogspot.com">http://shootright.blogspot.com/</a>
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The Real Costa Rica	<a href="http://blog.therealcostarica.com">blog.therealcostarica.com</a>
The Very Worst Missionary	<a href="http://theveryworstmissionary.com">theveryworstmissionary.com</a>
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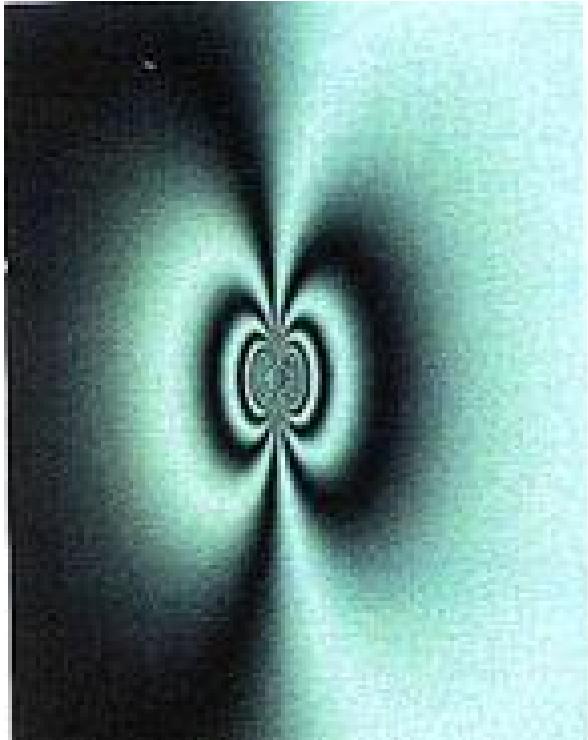
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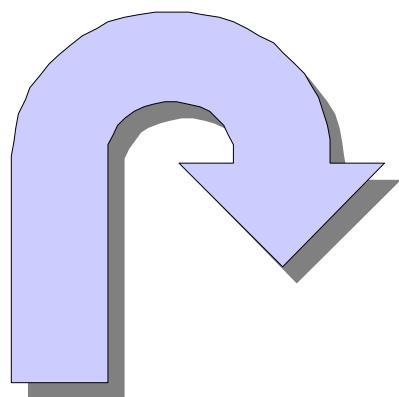
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