

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



Tiger in The Tree Forest
Original Art by Jocelyn Farquhar

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 470 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Marietta Arce at atenastoday@gmail.com.

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



DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

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

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

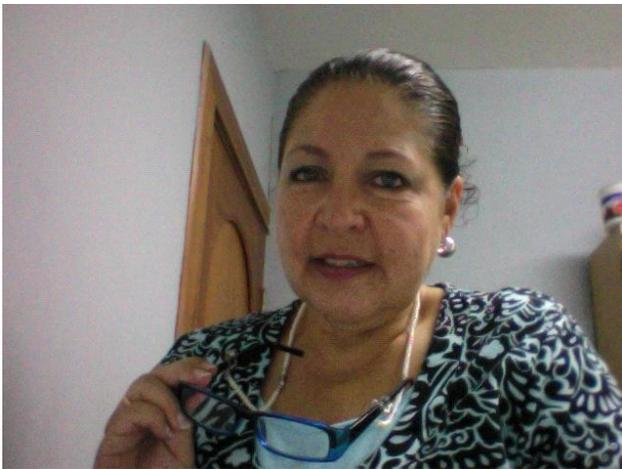
Issue No. 94

October 23, 2012

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Publisher's Note



When I stop to think about it, having almost 500 subscribers to our publication leaves me speechless. Anyone who knows me can attest to the fact that this is not something easily done! I am acquainted with many of you and I hope that the future will provide opportunities for me to become friends with many more.

I consider you an important following for the publication. Moreover, I think of you as vital components and resources for our ever-growing community of expats and locals. Thank you all for your feedback, it is always appreciated and taken seriously.

Each month, we add new names to our list of friends and it is wonderful to hear about the connections Atenas Today has made possible among you. Many have described the publication as informative and **friendly**, something I confess is one of the attributes I consider vitally important.



Happy Halloween!

Another month quickly reaches its end. Delicious warmth will soon embrace us as we transition from the rainy season to my favorite month of the year: November, with the gorgeous landscape provided by the flowers of the sugar cane and Thanksgiving, a day set aside to meditate on all our blessings.

We will bid farewell to the year soon by hosting and attending many parties and celebrations. Whether you are just visiting for a while or settling in permanently, let me be the first to invite you to partake of the bounty in Atenas today and every day.

Happy Halloween, Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Reading!

marietta.arce@gmail.com



Sugar cane flower- Wikipedia



COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

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

October 23rd – 6 p.m. Mass at San Rafael Church in center to begin celebrating Patron Saint

October 24th – Festivities celebrating San Rafael Parish in the Center of Atenas begin.

October 27th – The Art of Tea in Atenas, for full details see the Classified Ads section.

October 27th - Halloween Party at Kay's Gringo Postres, see attached

October 29th, 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. ART CLASSES with Mary Park. Please call or

November 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th email to: mandgpark@shaw.ca; 8330-3274

October 30th, - Atenas Bridge Club meets at the new, renovated Don Yayo's Restaurant.

November 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th --- 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. No partner required.



October 31st - Halloween!!!

October 31st (Please confirm with Sara or Kay 2446-0664) and

November 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th

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

November 7th & 21st Recycling in Atenas from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Plaza in front of the Central School, near the volleyball court.– Recycling of 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.

November 10th – 7 p.m. Su Espacio's Annual Festival of Dance at Salon Parroquial (Church Hall) – Admission 1000 colones. Come early to get a seat! The Dance event of the YEAR!

November 13th 3 p.m. Abandoned Animals of Atenas Foundation meeting at Kay's Gringo Postres. Please contact Virginia 2446-5343 or Sylvia 8868-1386 for more information. Volunteers are needed and welcome.

November 14th - Writer's Club meets at Colinas del Sol, at Noon. Contact L. Michael Rusin @ crcaseyboy@gmail.com (2451-8063) for more information.

November 19th - PLEIN AIR - A group of people with curious minds who meet the 3rd Monday of every month at a different location to explore and express their creativity through visual art and writing. Contact Jan Yatsko at 2446-0970 or janyatsko@ice.co.cr to find out where we have been and where we are going.

November 22nd – U.S. Celebrates Thanksgiving





Halloween Party

Don't forget that Kay's Gringo Postres' annual **Halloween Costume Party & Dance** will take place on Saturday, October 27th, from 8:00pm to 11:30pm. Cost is €5,000 per couple, and €3,000 for singles (to offset cost of the DJ). Prize for the best costume. Snacks will be provided. BYOB.

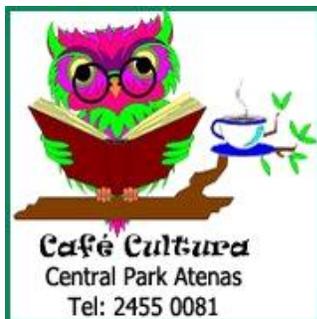
From the librarian at Kay's Gringo Postres:

We have received a large and very nice collection of magazines related to interior and garden design. They are boxed in shelf/display boxes and would like a good home since we do not have space to add them to the collection. Anyone who is interested can stop by Kay's and take what they would like.

Guest Chef Night

Beginning in November, we will be hosting a guest chef once a month, to prepare a special dinner for your dining pleasure. The first "Guest Chef Night" will be Nov. 3 from 5:30pm to 7:00pm. The menu will feature braised, citrus-glazed Osso Buco, creamy garlic mashed potatoes, sauteed vegetables, bread and butter, and for dessert, brownie triangles topped with ice cream and caramel sauce.

Beer and wine will be available for purchase. Price is €10,000 per person for advance tickets, or €11,000 at the door (if still available). Space is limited to 20 people, so to secure a spot advance purchase is advised. Tickets can be purchased at Kay's.



HAS RE-OPENED!!!

**\$ (0-10) · [New American Restaurant](#) · [French Restaurant](#) · [German Restaurant](#) · [Burger Restaurant](#) · [Deli](#) · [Italian Restaurant](#) · [Latin American Restaurant](#) · [Breakfast & Brunch Restaurant](#)
2455 0081 Open 9:00 am - 7:30 pm CLOSED TUESDAYS**



TONINO'S KIOSK - Located In the Central Market - Specializing in Asian (Filipino) Foods – Stop by and see what's on the menu!



Su Espacio has been doing an Angel Tree for seven years. By October 12th, 325 angels were on the tree. Each year it grows and grows and Su Espacio thanks volunteers that put the information on the angels and hang them on the tree, post flyers. Most of all thanks to the wonderful people who buy the gifts and those who help with the party and keep 300+ kids and parents under control! This is not a project that relies upon government or company donations. This is directly from the community of Atenas, all of us that live here, and many who have left but still want to help. If you want to help, come on by and pick out your angel. Gifts should be brought to Su Espacio before the end of November.



*Calling ALL Chili Teams – we are looking for you! For more information to sign up, please contact Mary Cook at 2446-7138 or email her at wmmcook@gmail.com . Do you know a company or individual interested in being an event sponsor? Please let us know by contacting Stef Bogatinoff at 2446-6234 or email her at stef@costaconcierges.com. **CHILI COOK-OFF FEBRUARY 10, 2013***

Mónika Valerio de Ford Immigration Specialist



by *Dennis Easters easters3@msn.com*

When I was growing up, the world seemed so large. As a child lying in the bed of my father's pickup truck, watching the clouds drift by, I would often day dream about distant lands and places like London, Hong Kong and Paris. How would it be to visit and live in such exotic destinations? Today with globalization the world has become a much smaller place and we can travel and live almost anywhere we choose. In every corner of the world it seems that the topic of immigration comes up. It's an interesting subject, one that the majority of people never really think about until they actually are faced with the dilemma of needing to immigrate!

For Gerardo and me in our real estate business, aside from general questions about real estate, most of our clients' major concerns are about immigration and how they will be able to legally remain in the newfound paradise they have discovered in Costa Rica. The process can sometimes seem difficult, complicated, overwhelming, and intimidating, especially if you don't speak the language (Spanish). Laws seem to change overnight due to the fast evolution of people's and governments' needs, so staying informed is necessary. However, with proper guidance; being aware of your options to obtain a residential status; and a little legwork before your big move, the process can be manageable and not as unpleasant as one may think. It is important to point out that you can take on the process alone, filing all the paperwork on your own, but be warned, a good lawyer is worth their weight in GOLD! I repeat, a GOOD LAWYER!

I had the good fortune of being introduced to Monika Valerio de Ford through a mutual friend and attorney in Grecia. I quickly learned that Monika was not only an Immigration and Administrative attorney, but she had actually represented many of the expats living in the Atenas and Grecia areas. I asked around town and everyone was more than pleased with her professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness. We soon forged a great working relationship and I, too, knew firsthand what a professional this dynamic lady

was. Because the topic of immigration is so essential to our business, I asked Monika if she would be willing to share some of her expertise on the topic as well as learn a little more about her as a person. In my humble opinion, it is important to get a feeling for who someone is, where they are from, and their background. This is especially important when there is business that requires an extreme amount of trust. I started my interview with Monika by asking where she is from, about growing up in Costa Rica and for her to share a little about herself. Monika replies "I was born and educated in San José but I now live in Alajuela where my family is originally from.



"I am from a tight knit family and was educated at the Methodist School, being a Catholic and in combination with being a part of CISV (Children's International Summer Villages) as a youth, I learned to share and learn from people of very different racial, social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. I am in love with my country and our identity, however I am not blind for its need to improve many things. I am respectful of my fellow human beings, and I am a firm believer in our capacity and obligation to contribute in the construction of a better place. I see the good and potential in everything."

Monika, where did you study law? Monika states, "I studied Law at the University of Costa Rica. I followed in the footsteps of my father, a man whom I admire and whom I've worked with since I graduated. He gave me the opportunity to work with him and from the start; I sensed the respect he inspired among everyone who knew him. I knew I had to meet his high expectations, and give my best at every moment, so I could help him maintain his reputation as I built my own."

What is your background in law? Monika says "We (my father and I) always dedicated our practice to Administrative Law, which involves advising companies that are doing business with the government here in Costa Rica. Basically we assisted our clients in establishing their agencies and business in Costa Rica by securing contacts with-in the public sector. We do risk assessment, preparing tender documents, verifying the execution of the contracts and deployment of the projects, including all sorts of in-house agreements and elaboration of the contracts with the financial entities, subcontractors and purveyors."



Monika, how did you become involved in immigration law? Monika tells me "This was a very positive accident in my career. I was invited by a friend who owns a very important academic business in Atenas, to share some "Hints for a comfortable stay in Costa Rica" with her students. I tried to cover as many aspects that I thought could be of interest to the students and to my surprise, immigration was one of the issues they were most interested in. One of the students asked me if I could help her get her residency. Since then, this has become one of our main activities. We love it because it has a very human side, dealing with individuals and families, which is nice to combine with our regular practice that deals with corporate interests."

Over the years Costa Rica's popularity as retirement destination and vacation home paradise has exploded. It is always important to hear from locals (Costa Ricans) how they feel about expat's living in their country and if they see positive impacts being made by the expat community. Monika gives a very positive response by saying "We feel very proud of the people we've helped get their legal status in Costa Rica. It is a great responsibility to represent someone who wants to live in the country we love and where our children thrive. We've always represented people who want to come to our country because they find here in Costa Rica some values, wonderful things they cherish and want to share and reinforce. We love to see how many children are learning other languages because they want to

share with the expats. We enjoy seeing expats show our people how much they appreciate our country, our values and nature. Sometimes, Costa Ricans don't see many of the wonderful things we have, and when someone from abroad tells them how valuable they are, it's easier for them to recognize what they have been taking for granted. We admire many expats who have created homes and shelters for children and elder people, who have made a big impact on our communities."

What are the ways that retirees and younger individuals can obtain their residency in Costa Rica? Monika explains "There are different categories established by law that allow individuals to seek residency. The basics I would mention are:

Retirees "pensionados"- Must prove a life time pension with a minimum of \$1,000.00 U.S. dollars per month.

Renter "rentista"-Individuals have to prove a minimum monthly income of \$2,500.00 U.S. dollars in a permanent and stable way for at least 2 years.

Investors "inversionistas"- Who have to prove an investment of at least \$200,000.00 U.S. dollars (including personal investments in owned properties) Prior to the rule change in 2010, the investments had to be in projects that would benefit the community.

There are also other special categories that allow for residence status. Some examples are: technicians, artists, or people with special skills. Also religious people like missionaries also can qualify for status as long as the religious institution is registered with the government. Of course, in each of these cases the applicants will have to hand in proof of how they fit into the corresponding category."

Once someone knows what category they are going to file under, what is the process like?

Monika continues "After gathering the necessary documents, and having them legalized in the country of origin, applicants need to complete a formal request, a filiations form, get fingerprinted and registered at the Consulate of their country of origin. The requestor must file his documents, including complete copies of their passports during the validity period of their entry stamp (typically 90 days, but can be less), which varies depending on the country they come from, how many times they have been in and out of Costa Rica. Once submitted, the Immigration Department will take 3 months before they review the file. (This time frame has been increased due to the fact that a recent rule provided some transitory articles allowing people in special circumstances to regularize their situation, so the amount of people requesting services from the Immigration Department has increased considerably. This amnesty period will end on November 17, 2012, partially and totally by February 2013). Our hope is

that after this special amnesty expires, the wait time will be reduced to 2 months instead of 3 for the files to be reviewed.

It is important to check the file after this “wait” period to make sure the case resolution is not delayed. As long as the file submitted is complete, the resolution should be ready within 4 to 6 months and in some cases sooner. The Immigration Department has made a big effort to become more efficient and has had very good results.”

What documents are needed to successfully apply for a residency status in Costa Rica? Monika tells me “Basically all categories will require: Birth Certificate, Police Record, Marriage Certificate (if applicable), and proof of income. These documents must be certified apostles by the Ministry of Foreign or Government Affairs in their country, or Secretary of State in the State in which they were issued. Sometimes income proof can be obtained very easily at certain consulates, depending on the kind of pension or country the applicant is from. Depending on the category, there could be a need to submit certificates from accountants, notary publics, or public institutions, such as CCSS (Social Security) or the Ministerio de Hacienda (Costa Rican tax department), in order to verify the kind of investment being made or in the case of academic titles to verify the special skills the applicant claims. It is important to bear in mind that most of these documents are valid for only 6 months.

Many people are intimidated by the process and never bother getting their residency in Costa Rica. I wanted to know why Monika believes it is important to have a legal status in Costa Rica. Monika states “It makes things a lot easier and more transparent if you have your residence. You don’t need to leave the country every 3 months and you avoid being considered irregular, penalized or even forbidden to enter the country.”

Can you give us a general idea about costs involved in obtaining your residency in Costa Rica?

Monika explains “As we do with all of our practice, regarding Immigration, we are proud to provide our clients with honest and professional advise, helping them find the best category to apply through. We make sure their file is submitted in a way that success is just a matter of time. Regarding the costs, there is a “migratory fee” to the government of \$250.00 U.S. dollars per person. You need to have your documents officially translated at an average cost of \$120.00 (U.S. dollars)(depending of the quantity of pages). Once the status is granted then a \$300.00 (U.S. dollars) as a guarantee, and \$123.00 (U.S. dollars) for the issuance of the document, for a total of \$423.00 (U.S. dollars). In total the expenses may be about \$800.00 (U.S. dollars) in Costa Rica (Government fees and translation).

Regarding the attorneys fees, it is important for people to know that they can file on their own, and don’t need an attorney to do so. Nevertheless, having an attorney can make their path somewhat easier, because we can verify the completeness of the files, and make a close followup on them. Our fees depend on the category and the amount of people requesting the services, but people can contact us and we will happily give individual quotes on a case by case basis.”

As the world becomes smaller, migration for individuals becomes a more viable option everyday. Destinations such as Costa Rica with it’s dynamic beauty, amazing climate and warm, open culture are top choices for many people looking to retire or relocate. Being informed on the immigration policies and options of your destination is one of the most important pieces of information you will need in making a life changing decision. The process can be overwhelming, but by having a competent professional on your side, things can be much more simple and you will be grateful in the end.



For more information about the immigration process or immigration laws you can contact Monika and her father at:

Fernando José Valerio Sánchez Mónica Valerio De Ford
Abogados Asociados
Bufete Valerio, Casafont & Asociados
Tels. (506) 8810-9004, 8824-1600 Fax. (506) 2433-2635
fvalerio@racsa.co.cr; movalerio@racsa.co.cr
mailing address:
De INCAE 200 oeste,
Residencial Los Viveros # 30
Alajuela, Costa Rica

The Art of Tea

"If a man has no tea in him, he is incapable of understanding truth and beauty." JAPANESE PROVERB



by Suzanne Mark
Suzanne@suzannemark.com

Here in the coffee zone, we have a healthy respect for the rich, smooth taste of excellent Costa Rican coffee. For most, the low acidity and the lighter roast preferred by many give a lift and do not usually promote nervousness or "the coffee jitters". Coffee provides a quick break and some fast energy to focus on a task and do the pressing work that needs to be done. The coffee culture runs deep here, and some even give "café con leche" to infants, allowing them to sip the sugary brew from a spoon. While the health implications of this are debatable, there is a deep respect for coffee here, and one can certainly taste why. Many agree that Costa Rican coffee is amongst the best in the world.

To me, coffee is a big part of our past. In order to grow nations and empires; one needed the highly caffeinated, bracing brew that gave quick energy, even when you were dead on your feet and pulling a double shift. Coffee is about going OUT and getting it done. There are many climatic and geopolitical reasons why coffee has a foothold in the Americas, just as tea has in many other parts of the world. Coffee is "sturdy", and can be made very milky, sugary and caloric. My Yugoslavian miner forefathers made it that way to eat something they called "dumplings" – fatty, sugary bits of chopped up, fried, pancake dough which they served in big bowls to spoon into coffee, and then fish out the crunchy bits with a spoon. This calorie-rich mixture moved many tons of #9 coal. Chemically, coffee comes out of the body quickly and in sharp drops. For many, this can cause the jitters, depending on the variety and the roast. If you are a dyed-in-the-wool coffee drinker you tend to need another cup later in the day.

In the same way, and although it certainly has a long history, I think that tea is a big part of our future. Tea is about pausing, going WITHIN and cultivating a state of peace. Tea invites introspection in a way that coffee does not. Don't get me wrong, a big cup of black tea can give you a jolt not unlike coffee, but the lighter, less fermented varieties like white, green or oolong have an altogether different effect on the body and mind. Depending on the level of oxidation, tea gives a peaceful, gentle, sustained energy that lasts and is refreshing. Chemically speaking, it comes out of the body in a slow, gradual curve. This causes fewer jitters unless you are drinking strong, black tea. Most people do not like green tea, as they pour boiling water over it and it makes it bitter. Delicate teas like white tea and green tea do not brew well with boiling water, while a black tea ("te rojo" in Costa Rica) can take it.

I once attended a Tea Expo in Atlanta, and one of the speakers was a self-described “dual caffeinator”. As soon as he gets up in the morning he has a big cup of green tea. About a half an hour later, he started to crave his espresso fix, and he would go downstairs for a shot. He noticed that the green tea he had drunk earlier mitigated the over stimulating effects of the espresso, and that he had no ill effects at all. Without meaning to, he was bringing coffee and tea culture together in a novel way.

In our new class, The Art of Tea, artist and seminar leader, Jan Yatsko, and I are exploring the culture of tea and the moment of pause and introspection that it can provide. Tea lore tells that tea was popularized by monks who used it to stay alert and to achieve deeper states of meditation over hours and days. Those who know tea seem to agree that it provides more refreshing, sustained energy, when it is brewed properly and the proper caffeine level is chosen per the variety. (White and green are lower in caffeine and oolong and black pack more of a kick.)

I notice that I tend to have a better, more buoyant, focused day when I drink tea. There is a really a big shift from when I don't have it.

Apart from the boost that tea gives, the biochemical advantage of good tea is that it can lower LDL, decrease or even eliminate the symptoms of depression, and encourage weight loss, among many, many other well-documented and profound benefits, some of which we discuss in the class.

The trouble with tea in Costa Rica is that for obvious reasons, there is little tea culture. It does not grow well here, although a few intrepid souls are trying. Most Costa Ricans think that “tea” is a thing you drink when you cannot sleep – te de manzanilla (Chamomile) or when you have an upset stomach – te de menta (mint) or maybe when you are constipated – te de senna. While all of these herbs are laudable friends throughout life, they are NOT TEA! Strictly speaking, tea is tea. It comes from Camelia Sinensis, the main variety of bush from which many different types of tea are made. Most people have not acquired the habit of enjoying tea, as they use it for medicinal purposes, and they have an unappetizing association not unlike ours with cough syrup.

However, there are beautiful, complex teas that range from delicate and flowery, like a Japanese Jasmine Green to a full, Muscatel scented Darjeeling from Northern India. Like fine wines with varietals and many regions and types, there is no limit to the types of tea that are available. The idea is to appreciate the range and breadth of the teas available. To develop the subtle palate needed to taste real tea with a minimum of flavorings. Loose leaf tea – tea that is in dried leaf form – has a totally different flavor profile than the low-grade tea dust that you find in most bagged tea. To taste the loose leaf variety is an altogether different experience.

In the next Art of Tea in Atenas or in San Jose, at Galleria Talentum, we will explore the meditative and technical aspects of tea as well as produce several pieces of art to take home using tea and multi-media. This class is suitable for non-artists and artists and tea lovers and yet-to-be tea lovers alike. Each tea is sampled with a canapé that complements it.

The next Art of Tea is in Atenas on Saturday, October 27, 2012 from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. For more information, or if you would like to host an Art of Tea in your area, please contact Jan Yatsko at janyatsko@ice.co.cr or Suzanne Mark at Suzanne@suzannemark.com or online at: suzannemark.com/tea-meditations/

Get your tea on

Conversations



by Diana Whitelaw
dianaw@snet.net

A frequent visitor to Costa Rica, I have always been on the look out for a volunteer opportunity that would allow me to give back in some small way for all that I enjoy about this wonderful country. In July, I came upon the following advertisement in Atenas Today:

English as a Foreign Language major at Universidad Tecnica Nacional, Alajuela, is seeking volunteers to become part of the English language major as guest conversational partners for students,
Live an enriching cultural and friendly experience with college students learning English as a major.
Please contact us at utnile@gmail.com 24355000 (ext 1248)

I emailed the University and Jose Soto, director of the program, responded immediately, informing me that he was setting up a meeting for volunteers right here in Atenas with the help of Marietta Arce. I attended the meeting with Marietta, Jose and Profesora Emilena, one of the professors in the program. They were all so friendly and helpful, describing the program and answering all our questions over a delicious offering of mango/papaya fruit salad and coffee. I signed up immediately to meet with students once a week for an hour, in small groups of five students to allow for maximum participation in the conversations.

I can't tell you how much I have enjoyed this experience. If you have struggled personally with learning Spanish, you will better understand how intimidating it can be to try and converse in a foreign language, yet these students are all so eager and willing to try. In addition to attending college full or part-time, most of them also work full or part-time; some are married with children, yet they all choose to come to the University, in the little spare time they have, to participate in this volunteer program. Their English is much better than I anticipated and we had wonderfully interesting conversations about Costa Rica, the United States and England. Sadly, I had to leave Costa Rica at the end of August, but am looking forward to new conversations with students when I return in December.



If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity, here is your chance. I strongly recommend you contact Jose Soto immediately and start your conversations with these amazing students.

Diana Whitelaw



In Pursuit of Tattoo Heaven

Paul Furlong



Opportunity knocked last week with a call from R.J. Faddis, the beans behind the gas that runs Moto Tours Costa Rica. A man is coming from Nicaragua who needs a guide. RJ explains that he and Wayne, brother and owner of the business, will be out of town. Am I interested?

I arrive early on the day of the tour and Thomas, care taker and old friend greets me at the gate. I reach down to pat chubby Diesel. Petrel wags his tail but I give him a warning look, pura vida only goes so far...¹

Willy, mechanic and barrio dandy, shows up and we begin a last check on the bikes. Soon Tito, company driver and consultant in the ways of life, arrives. Willie tinkers while I pack my bike. As we work, there's a backdrop of continuous banter between us, emphatic declarations, crude jokes and re-lived memories that pick up where they always leave off; with a kind of pride in knowing each other, friends who'd worked and often rode together for Wayne.

A taxi arrives with our customer about 9:00 a.m. Conversation drops off as we wait to see who he might be.

Robert is about 5'10", with the narrow features of a serious man. If I had only one word to describe him, it would be *stoic*. I'm drawn to his left arm and the skeletal tattoo running down to his fingertips, but it's time to go, it'll be raining soon in Arinal. I focus on getting Rob signed up and introduce him to his bike. As he packs, I explain the peculiarities about riding in Costa Rica and give him a general agenda. I'd made no reservations or plans except to hit towns that might need a serious tattoo artist.

As we ride, I become clear there's gonna be no sporting about on our thoroughbred "Ready to Race" KTM's. Rob wants *slow*, as few turns as possible and it's my job to give it to him. So I slip into my troll mode and we putt gracefully up to La Fortuna and Volcan Arenal. We stop on the way for coffee and I get a better picture of our mission and a closer look at Rob's tats. It's all there in black ink, when his mom was born and when she died, his dad, too, with an image of the shield he wore as a Chicago cop. I ask what he plans for his other arm.

"I'm done," he says.

Having been in the Navy and worked in bike shops throughout my life, it's hard not to be curious about people's choices of tattoos. Some are like stamps placed on a canvas with other stamps. Tigers, panthers, hearts and roses picked off the wall in a tattoo parlor. Others are works of art, planned over a lifetime with artists chosen with care. I'm surprised that Rob is done. I thought he might be a work in progress.

We ride to the town of La Fortuna and find a hotel in the middle of town. Rob seems content to leave me to my lap top and explore on his own. We have dinner about nine and I go to bed. Rob quietly slips in around one in the morning, thereby establishing instinctive habit for the tour. It's refreshing that Rob speaks Spanish well enough not to need me hovering nearby.

We sleep late and leave at nine. If these are to be my bourgeois golden years, it's okay, I'll adapt. On the bike, I'm still having trouble with the putt putt pace. Traffic is passing us! I looked for signs of discomfort in Rob but he's cool. I begin to drift. Costa Rica is truly a beautiful country. I've never seen it slow before and wish I'd brought my video cam. This landmass, Costa Rica, only pushed out of the ocean five million years ago; like fifteen minutes in a man's life... twenty in a woman's. I picture waves lapping up the various mountains, you can see the wear marks, that used to be under water and I wonder at the deep gorges below where raging rivers run. Why, only four million years ago they filled the whole valley! Imagine the little islands poking up where the Pacific and Caribbean meet.

We stop to see Thomas at the German Bakery in New Arenal. He has a new baby and is very proud. Proud, too, of his tattoos, big and broad across his chest. Funny how you start noticing them... he offers Rob a place to stay if he should choose to spend a few weeks taking care of business.

We pass through Tilaran and continue to Cañas where we turn north toward Liberia. It's hot by the time we pull into Playa Coco and check in. The town is bustling for this time of year with new shops and an air of prosperity. We pick a bar for beer and hamburgers. Waitress's smile, people look, Rob gets respect without the slightest effort. It's like walking around with an icon.

Rob comes back in the wee hours. I work on my story in the morning over countless coffees, I'm done, I think, the rest of the trip is mine to enjoy. It's day three, we pack up, mount up, and ride out.

We arrive in Tamarindo a few hours later. This is the first town I think will fully support a tattoo parlor. We get one of the best rooms of our trip, can't remember the names of these hotels, good price though, and a view of the pool with the ocean just across the street.

I spend the day relaxing in the air while Rob goes swimming. Later when it's cool, we head out for dinner and drinks. Rob delights in the whiskeys I drink and buys me more. Accommodatingly, I lay my life bare in a torrid

stream of consciousness. Friendship was happening. I fell into bed late and was only awakened when Rob came back for more money. He quietly let himself in around three, good lad.

We leave around ten and ride down to Samara, a small practicing Bohemian beach town. I always stay at Casa del Mar. After years of trying other hotels, I find the location, steady ownership and accumulated friendship over the years important enough to be loyal.

I suggest that this might not be the most happening town on the beach but it would have locals and tourists in high season who'd love to have a tattoo by the light of the moon one day. We talk about a half year gig, where Rob would come down and follow a circuit, staying in towns long enough to get work and move on when it seemed appropriate. I think, borrowing from a personal dream, that a box van with living quarters and tattoo station might be just the thing. Low rent, no one has to hear your jokes more than once... come to think of it, Rob never makes jokes. I make the jokes. I get a patient smile out of him, that's it. He should see a doctor; I think he's missing his funny bone. We're like Abbot and Costello, he's the straight man.

Beach towns are for drinking. So that's what we do. We talk about bikes, firearms and the dichotomy of relationships. Once we agree the deck is stacked, there's no need for politics. Rob's done with romance, finished with sermons of any stripe and likes being alone. The way he dresses works for him. Outlaws generally aren't criminals and don't make victims; they simply don't recognize authority over them, I have no problem with that. You?



Rob seemed content with his phone. He was on face book and could do things with that thing that made my computer blush.

Next morning we head out through the town of Nicoya, down past Naranjo, over lumpy dirt road to Paquera, Cobano and plunge through a twisting dervish downhill with a stunning panorama of infinite Pacific Ocean turning in periferia as we descend. Down, down into a time warped revelation of the sixties. Montezuma is six or eight blocks of tight tourist community with hand crafted souvenirs and Rasta tranquility. Its nick name is Monti-fuma, (fuma means smoke, as in "left hand Lucky" smoke). I find us a room with a fan on the beach. Pura Vida mi! Rob, catlike in his own way, mellows out in a hammock for the afternoon.



We wake in a funk of dirty laundry and the feeling that we've seen enough sand, sea and people dressing for each other. But I've been saving the best for last. Jaco is the closest beach to San Jose, a serious party town, and like

most beaches in Costa Rica, were surfer beaches first. Surely *this* might be Tattoo Heaven. Indeed, if it's true that *we're all One...* and that's *The One Power*, then it's only natural that God's got more than a few tats Himself.

We have a late breakfast and a leisurely ride to Cabo Blanco; just up and back before heading to the ferry. I wasn't sure Rob would notice beauty the way some people do, but he does! We play with our cameras in the movie mode. Riding one handed while holding 'err steady is comical.



I never get good pictures here. How do you photograph an experience?

There's a section of twisty road between town and the ferry with tight curves and blind surprises that are always fun to ride fast. I ache to let this 690 loose and re-live an edgy moment or two. I tell Rob I'll wait for him at the ferry and take off in a rush. The first turn comes up and I ease into it waiting for passion to pick me up. Not much happens. I push a bit harder, but I'm alone and uninspired. There must be a pill for limp riders I think as I run into a blind canyon bend watching for debris and cow turds. I commit myself to the next turn, a left, with fair gusto. But I'm already feeling foolish. I gas it some more but that flat vanilla feeling persists. I finish the ride like a hurried errand, arrive at the ferry, pass cars to the front and take my helmet off. Rob arrives seconds later. I'm deflated. He seems not to care, a self contained man. I buy the tickets and ride onto the ferry.

It's a new ship, designed by and for people with no vision. Sanitized with signs to keep our luggage off the seats, don't even *think* about smoking; tables and chairs bolted to the floor and adjusted for tall third graders with long arms and legs. Modern and uncomfortable. The water was rough and we rocked and rolled our way to Puntarenas. I miss the old tubs with benches you can crash on.

Passing through Puntarenas gives me a sense of opportunity lost. There's a nice beach and dock where tour ships tie up. But a port is a port and this one's never reached the grandeur of its potential. Still for guys like Rob and me, there's a funk factor that's a-peeling. We leave it for another day and ride out.

Jaco is the Atlantic City of Costa Rica; you can have anything you want, even Alice. It's gone through a metamorphic change over time. Today there's certain saltiness about the town. It survived Jacks Beatle Bar, corruption on all levels and sudden irresponsible growth, but at the same time, Jaco has earned its stripes as a cool place to go. Police have made it safer and people are making a living there. I walked by a vender on the sidewalk last time I was there, and he cooked me up a great burger and a small Coke for a red one, a thousand Colons, two bucks. I stood on the sidewalk and spoke with him and the people who walked by as if I were in New York City. Very cool...

Rob and I made no reservations at all on this trip, just took what was available, really, mostly everything off season. But Jaco on a Saturday night; no room at the Inn. I try Copa Cabana... bingo! Small rooms but we got ambiance, and some kind of funk fusion band that had us moving, well, *me* moving. Rob just sat there being cool; don't know how he does it.



We stayed another night. Rob had a huge lobster dinner and a tattoo. But first the pool.



A woman with a tattoo and duck on her chest is hard to say no to, somehow Rob did. People come to Jaco for a good time. She was no exception.

This has been a tattoo trip. Here's what I learned: People's taste in tattoos are as varied as country music to string quartets, varied as the people who wear them and as different as the moments and moods of a lifetime. I saw people in peacock colors, Hawaiian Island stripes, classic sailor black and little decorator motifs. These people tend to take more chances, go with the flow and not sweat the small stuff. Naturally they gravitate to motorcycles.

Maybe tattoos are only one of many personalities. Properly translated, they tell a story. There may be others inside just as interesting; a "happy" node waiting for a tickle, a scar on the heart looking for revenge, or a belief of some kind, hovering translucent in the ether.

Like a new pair of boots, each tattoo has an image which the owner must adjust to. Artists will tell you more than half of the tats they do are cover ups. The tattoo on the woman above on her right arm is of Marilyn Monroe. She has no clue why it's there. She was with her husband one day and wanted a tattoo. So she got one.

Our second night in Jaco, we stop in the "Tattoo House" while walking the drag. A fleshy woman is getting a large tattoo on her left side. There's a lot of ground to cover, so we walk up to a seafood restaurant. I'm fascinated as Rob eats what looks like ten pounds of lobster, more than he's eaten on the whole trip. Gorged, we walk back to the tattoo place and meet "L.A." Meyers just after closing. Cool, hip, and literally up to her neck in tattoos, L.A. happily opens the store for us. Check out da pitchas...



At home at last, Rob plays his hand, an example of his own work



But L.A. has a hand of her own, and undoubtedly, tricks up her sleeve



Rob in the zone. It was tit for tat.



L.A. Came from New York to do art. She's been doing this for 21 years and wants to express herself. 2643-2934 & 8811-337E



A souvenir of Costa Rica. Pura Vida!

Did Rob find Tattoo Heaven? Is it a place, a time or a flavor? Could the trip we took be *that place*? Like a seven course meal, might each stop be a bite to go with that beer... a beer in Tattoo Heaven? Or is it just the country of Costa Rica? The cool thing is, people who wear tattoos aren't fixed in time or space either. Rob said he was done with the tats... seven days later he gets a tat. Wanna make somtin' of it?

ⁱ See September's story for more information on dogs and pura vida

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



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

6/12/2004

Hola!! Everyone!!

Guess what!!!!

We went to Grecia today and Dad bought me a baby stroller!! Mom never thought to pack one of mine from home and she says "strolling" me is a lot easier than trying to carry me everywhere. SOOOOO.....I am RIDING IN STYLE like I do back in the states!!

We went into an ice cream store today and got milk shakes. While we were there another man came in with his little boy and ANOTHER PERRO!!!! It looked like a little schnauzer I think.

We see a lot of cockers, schnauzers, poodles, chows, dalmations, and chihuahuas here. Most of the street dogs are mixed breeds and Mom says they are all beautiful. The dogs who own humans are usually one of the breeds I mentioned. The Tico's like the chihuahua's because they are small and inexpensive to feed. Some of the Tico's are afraid of larger dogs and only have them for protection.

Mom got a call from another american we met here. Somebody dumped a boxer and it came to their house. They are trying to protect it from the neighbors. The neighbors want to kill it. Mom is trying REALLY hard to find a place for it here. She doesn't really know a lot of people here so it is not going to be easy. She has found a couple of shelters and is going to call them Monday but she is betting that they are already full up.

They say the dog is really sweet and has a collar. He keeps wanting to come into their house so they think

he might have been a house dog.

They have cats so they are afraid to let him in the house.

The neighbors, who are Tico's, keep saying boxers are vicious and they want to kill him.

I guess I will just never understand some humans. How would they feel if the shoe was on the other foot and we dogs were in charge?

Of course us dogs have a much better sense of "right" so actually the humans would be treated really good.

Oh well.....Mom is going to try to help the boxer so y'all say a prayer that she can find a place for him.

We looked at a house for rent today. It is REALLY pretty and the property it is on looks like a private park!!

There's a caretaker who lives on the property too and he takes care of all the grass, plants, flowers, and stuff.

Mom and Dad say it depends on how much it costs to rent it. We had heard it is \$500.00 a month. Some friends are going to check it out for us.

We went to the outdoor market today too!!! It is always on Saturday morning. We got some vegetables and fruits.....but no cornmeal. sigh.....

OH!!!!!! Something else they can't find over here is horse radish.

I laughed at Mom today. She was telling me that until she was about 30 years old she would not eat horse radish because she thought it was made from horses!!!!!!!!!!

She's SOOOOO goofy!!!!

I really miss my friends back home. I did meet the neighboring Tico's little chihuahua this morning though. He is a nice enough little guy. I hope they will let him come back and play with me.

Well, gotta go. Mom is going to bed and wants me to help her go to sleep.

Boy!!! A perro's job is never done I guess.

More tomorrow!!!

BudBud the lullaby singer

Learn the Secrets to Healthy, Long Life!



By Shannon Farley Atenas (shannonfarleycr@gmail.com)

Did you know that the Nicoya Peninsula is considered a “Blue Zone”?

What is a “Blue Zone,” you ask?

It is a place where people live happily and healthily for a very long time.

The term was popularized by author-educator-explorer Dan Buettner in his 2008 book, *“The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from People Who’ve Lived the Longest.”* (<http://www.bluezones.com/>) Published by the National Geographic Society, Buettner identified places in the world there is a high concentration of persons over age 100, and there is a substantial disability-free and disease-free life expectancy.

Why are they called “Blue Zones”? The name comes from a 2004 demographic study called *“Identification of a Geographic Area Characterized by Extreme Longevity in the Sardinia Island: the AKEA study”* (*Experimental Gerontology* by Gianni Pes and Michel Poulain, among other authors). The study identified Sardinia’s Barbagia region as an area with a very high concentration of men over age 100. As the authors discovered more clusters of long longevity in the world, they began drawing blue circles around them on maps, referring to the areas as “Blue Zones.”

To my delight, Costa Rica has its own Zone – the Nicoya Peninsula! According to Buettner’s studies, the Nicoya Peninsula has the world’s rates of middle-age mortality and the second highest convergence of male centenarians. Costa Rica indeed does celebrate its elderly citizens; every person who has a 100th birthday is featured on the national news. As of 2012, our tiny country reported 417 citizens over the age of 100; the country’s official population is more or 4.5 million.



Blue
lowest
June
less

101-year-old Panchita, one of the Nicoya centenarians interviewed

Costa Rican Photographer Mónica Quesada is creating a book and video documenting Ticos who have lived a century. More information at: www.indieogogo.com/CRCentenarians.

Buettner’s research with National Geographic also turned up longevity hotspots in Okinawa, Japan; the Aegean island of Ikaria, Greece; a Seventh Day Adventist community in Loma Linda,

California; and we already know about the mountainous Barbagia region of inner Sardinia, off the western coast of Italy.

So what's the secret? Buettner's team of researchers and specialists found interesting similarities among the Nicoyan centenarians that are **common characteristics in all of the other Blue Zones**:

- Have a “*plan de vida*,” or **reason to live**; it also can be called “why I get up in the morning”. Centenarians say they feel needed, with a sense of purpose that often centers on their family.
- **Focus on your family and friends**. Having a good relationship with their family and maintaining a strong social network contributes greatly to centenarians’ sense of purpose and well-being. Gathering daily to laugh with friends and/or family is crucial to shedding daily stresses.
- **Have Faith**. The Nicoyans’ strong belief in God and their “faith routines” help relieve stress and anxiety. Almost all of the centenarians interviewed around the world for Buettner’s book belonged to a faith-based community of some form.



Keep active with friends like these Japanese centenarians

- **Work hard**. Nicoyan centenarians maintain a strong work ethic, which keeps them active and healthy while contributing to their sense of purpose. Moderate physical activity is a normal part of daily life – walking, bicycling, gardening, cooking, keeping up the house, taking care of animals, etc. See videos from Dan Buettner’s trip to Nicoya, including interviews the 101-year-old Panchita who still splits logs with an axe and cuts her own grass with a machete!
(<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9415EB21E924208A&feature=plpp>)

- **Healthy diet**. Most of the various Blue Zone residents in the world eat a primarily plant-based diet, especially legumes (all kinds of beans, peas and lentils). They also eat rich, colorful fruits – in Nicoya, they eat *marañon*, the red-orange cashew tree fruit that has more vitamin C than oranges, and *noni*, a pear-like fruit rich in antioxidants. Nicoyans eat their biggest meal during the day and their smallest meal at night. Japanese centenarians have a rule to eat only until their stomachs are 80% full to avoid being “overstuffed.”



Eat beans & legumes!

- **“Wine at 5:00”** – in most of the Blue Zone communities, centenarians drink a small amount of alcohol on a near daily basis. For instance in Sardinia, they drink a particular dark red wine called “*Cannanau*,” made on the island, which is rich in anti-oxidants. In Japan, it is saké. In Costa Rica, sugarcane rum called *guaro*!

- **Get some sun.** Nicoyans enjoy healthy doses of daily sun, enriching their bodies with Vitamin D. Getting at least 15 minutes every day can decrease the risk for osteoporosis and heart disease, experts say.



Getting daily sun & being active = long life

- **Get Sleep.** Nicoyans sleep an average of 8 hours per day. They more or less go to sleep soon after nightfall and wake with the sun.
- **No smoking.** Smoking is not common in Blue Zone communities.

Most of the foreign community in Atenas has come here for its great lifestyle possibilities. Follow these healthy long-life tips and you'll be in the rhythm of Blue Zone living!

Salud!

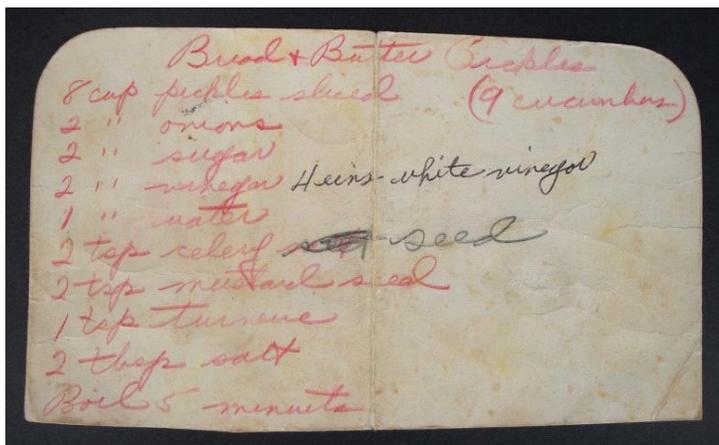
The Power of Handwriting



by Jan Yatsko
janyatsko@ice.co.cr

I am an only child. When my mother died several years ago I was faced with the daunting task of removing all of my mother's things from the house. My mother was from the generation of "the hoarders" and she saved everything from a hamper filled with used light bulbs to a stack of yellowed cardboard inserts from men's shirts. It took me five trips to the US and five weeks to complete the task. As I waded through all of this stuff, I carefully opened each drawer, each envelope and each wrapped item hoping to find a hidden and meaningful treasure that could be a memento of my mother. I found it on my fifth visit in a plastic bag tucked between the pages of the recipe booklet Aunt Jenny's Favorite Spry Recipes. My mother was not a fancy cook but she was known for three things: her sour cream cookies and cranberry relish during the holidays and her bread and butter pickles during the summertime. What I found were her original recipes, in her handwriting and written on the cardboard inserts from men's shirts.

So what was so significant about my find? It was my mother's handwriting. It is said that handwriting comes directly from the writer's brain in a unique personal style. It is a key to our souls. Handwriting is a living thing and it changes as we pass through different phases of our lives. Experts in graphology can reveal a writer's personality and character through the analysis of letter formation, spacing between letters and even the spacing of margins. I just knew that having a sample of my mother's handwriting was probably one of the most personal items I could have and I lamented the fact that I never saved her letters to me during my university years.



Communication today is a quick letter written by email or "Twittered" in a phrase limited to a number of letters and deleted after they are read. For future generations, there will be no record of their parent's,

spouse's or friend's thoughts and nothing written by hand. In the book "The Missing Link: The Lost Art of Handwriting (and why it still matters)", British author Philip Hensher says that "we have surrendered handwriting for something more mechanical, less human, less telling of ourselves and less present in our ups and downs of our emotions". Mr. Hensher requires that all of his university students hand in work partially written by hand and when one of his students suddenly died; her handwritten work took on more meaning to him and to her family.

In my September article I posed the question "What is your story?" and the importance of recording your wisdom, experience and passion and to leave a legacy for future generations. Equally important is to handwrite some of these thoughts. According to Philip Hensher, "A diary written by hand is far more interesting than a bloody blog!"

New Gym in Town



By Kat Sunlove

You may have noticed the big blue and gold sign across the road from the entrance to Coopeatenas Supermercado and wondered what on earth is a "VGym"? Your curiosity may have been further piqued by the sub-head: "*mas que un gimnasio*" or "more than a gym." It begs the question, "more" of what exactly?

The answer is more personal attention from the petite vivacious co-owner Viria "Villi" Alfaro. That nickname is pronounced "Vee Gee" and was the inspiration for her singularly titled establishment. Totally devoted to her clientele, Villi strolls through the two big exercise rooms observing carefully to be sure her patrons are using good form, and working with the equipment properly to avoid anyone getting hurt. In her excellent English, Villi says, emphatically: "We want no injuries!"



Villi greets everyone with a smile

Avoiding injury is something Villi understands well, since she holds accreditation both as an Assistant Physical Therapist and also as a Certified Personal Trainer. A native of Atenas, she worked some years ago at a gym in San Jose, but at the time lacked the credentials needed to offer personal training so her work with clients was limited. But the experience taught her that helping people with their physical conditioning was a job she could love.

After moving to Jacó, she was trying to help a friend get an *au pair* job in the United States when, in a spontaneous decision, she accepted the position herself and headed for Santa Clarita near Los Angeles, California. After a few years in that job she applied for a position with L.A. Fitness, a large health club chain, and based on her experience back in San Jose she was hired. Happy to resume her career in physical fitness, she began taking the necessary classes to obtain that all-important personal training certification as well as enrolling in a physical therapy program. After five years at L.A. Fitness and fourteen years in the States, she was ready to return to Costa Rica.

Her dream was to offer a different kind of exercise experience, a program welcoming all ages and designed for the kind of person who might not go to a more standard gym -- the kind with lots of hard body young people, loud rock music, big weights and intense conditioning programs. Villi knew that older people, some with infirmities or illnesses, overweight people, young people or anyone

seeking a more moderate workout would appreciate a place where they could go and feel comfortable, plus get the kind of personalized attention they need to achieve their physical fitness goals.



Villi Alfaro in the weight room

In VGym, she has done just that. Returning to Atenas in 2011, she set about finding the right location. A small Tico house set back from the main road was the starting point and with a loan from her mother, she added on two large sunny exercise rooms with slatted windows to catch the breeze -- one with stationary bikes, bench presses and weight-lifting equipment, the other with a treadmill, large and small medicine balls, rubber resistance bands and smaller free weights. One wall is mirrored and yoga mats are stacked nearby for floor work. Here evening classes in Pilates, *baile aerobico* (aerobic dance) and Zumba are held. Having only been open since January of this year, classes are still limited but Villi plans to add yoga, Tai Chi, kick boxing, a TRX workout program and morning dance classes soon. The stationary bikes can also be rented separately by the hour, day or week.

In addition to exercise classes, VGym offers massage by a Certified Massage Therapist, using techniques ranging from Swedish to sport massage to deep tissue work. To round out their healthy offerings, VGym can provide Nutritional Counseling and has plans to open a small cafe on the premises soon to serve nutritious organic foods to complement a healthy lifestyle. Then, as Villi says, you can enjoy your workout and afterwards relax with a tasty wholesome snack.



Villi shows the massage room

Along with her sister Gabriela, co-owner and business manager, Villi spends almost every waking hour on duty in the new facility. When a prospective client comes in the door, she is there to greet them with a smile, show them around and when they sign up, she provides the kind of consultation you would expect from a highly paid personal trainer. When Layne and I joined, Villi asked us numerous questions about our exercise experience and took notes on all our little aches and pains,

such as chronic tendonitis in my shoulder and Layne's occasional sciatica. She then designed a workout program tailored to our individual needs and targeted to our exercise goals. Villi obviously relishes her role as personal trainer to everyone who walks in the door and watches over all of us like a mother hen. As needed, she can turn to her friend Lorena, a registered nurse who commutes from California to Atenas on a regular basis, for consultation on medical questions.

According to Villi, her biggest challenge is in educating her patrons, helping people understand that achieving physical fitness is not a short-term project but a long-term commitment requiring a lifestyle change. It's frustrating, she says, when someone comes in experiencing pain or other issues and after a month or two on an individualized program, they begin to feel better, only to stop coming to the gym. Then two months later they return, complaining of the same aches and pains they had before. She and Gabriela work hard to enlighten their membership, in part by posting articles on fitness and explaining to patrons the purpose of various exercises. For example, currently there is a story posted on Pilates, which describes how the program works and what to expect from such a workout. As inspiration for members of the gym, Villi and Gabriela post pictures of Costa Rican athletes who are doing something to help the nation or just the community of Atenas.



VGym owners, Gabriela and Villi

You can keep up with events at the new gym on Facebook at VGym Atenas and can contact them by email at <mailto:vgym2011@yahoo.com>. Their phone number is (506) 2455-0112. VGym is open Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Pricing is fifteen thousand colones for regular membership plus a one-time registration fee of 2500 colones. A discounted price of twelve thousand colones with a 1500 registration fee is available to high school students. Seniors over 65 enjoy the same twelve thousand colones rate with no registration fee. Villi even offers a weekly rate for vacationers so you can bring visiting friends along with you to your workout.

For a well-equipped gym that is open to all ages and body types, is spacious and airy and offers an individualized workout designed by your own personal trainer, VGym is a great addition to the Atenas community!

Photos by Kat Sunlove and Layne Winklebleck

October 2012 Atenas Today Article



Hot, Hot, Hot...The Temperature Is Rising
By Judy Timson

So, do you think YOU have the BEST chili recipe....from your neck of the woods, maybe even the whole of Costa Rica....or how about the world? Chili cooks have one thing in common – they all think their chili recipe is the BEST in the world. But, there is only one way to truly settle that argument, and that is to participate in a chili cook-off, right? Put your chili recipe where your mouth is – sign up as a chili team at our Sixth Annual Atenas Charity Chili Cook-Off scheduled Sunday, February 10th. Don't cook but want to attend the festivities? Great, join us where over 25 chili teams will be vying for top contender honors and you can be part of judging. We are working hard to make this the BEST event yet – and we are geared to making a difference here in our community. Proceeds from this event will support *Hogar de Vida*, a local Atenas children's home that supports up to 35 children ages birth to 10 years old. In a future article we will tell you more about why your support is so vital to *Hogar di Vida*.



Think Your Chili Can Win This?

But now, let me share my story about “hot, hot, hot, the temperature is rising”, because I think I have the best chili around! Does that sound familiar chili cooks? I’ve always liked chili and growing up my Mom’s chili recipe was pretty basic – beans, hamburger, tomato sauce, tomato paste, ham bone, onions and miscellaneous spices. Did I say beans? Yes...and some chili teams and professional chefs will say, “there ain’t no beans in real chili”. Well, I had a real “chili” awakening in my twenties that convinced me there shouldn’t be beans in the chili.

My sister Kathy’s best friend, Mimi, was married to a Latino in the early 70’s. Her husband adored his mother’s chili – aka “Frances’ chili and torts”. Her husband insisted that Mimi learn how to make this wonderful recipe. So, one day Frances told Mimi, “today is the day you will learn to make my chili and torts, BUT you have to promise me that you will NEVER share this recipe with anyone”. Being young and in love and wanting to please her husband, she quickly agreed and the two began working side by side in the kitchen to create this true authentic Mexican chili with homemade tortillas. Fast forward a few years, the marriage dissolved, but the chili and tort recipe survived!

Through the years, my sister Kathy kept bragging to our family about Mimi’s famous chili and torts. And one day we were invited to dinner. Was I in love at first bite? Or even second bite? I have to be honest – no, I wasn’t. Sure, it was good, it was tasty, but it sure didn’t taste like any chili I had ever had before. Chili with pork and served with tortillas – what kind of chili was this?

A few months later I got invited over to Mimi’s again for her special chili. I thought, “okay, let me try this again.” Bingo – can you say hooked big time? Forget chili with hamburger, onions, ham bone AND beans – I was now a believer in chili with pork and served with torts! Sign me up – I wanted to move to Latin America!!!



Mimi's Chili (and mine) Looks Like This



Making My Torts

Over the next few years I continually asked Mimi for the recipe, but Mimi held strong to her promise to Frances. I had to have that recipe! I tried to tell her that she was divorced now and that Frances would never know if she gave anyone the recipe or not. But to no avail, she did not concede.

Chili cook connoisseurs guard their recipes carefully and when asked for their recipe they may not give the exact ingredients or quantities. And that can be frustrating when trying to recreate it. I love experimenting in the kitchen but I had no idea where to start to create this recipe – and making homemade tortillas too? And remember, back in the 70’s we didn’t have access to the internet where recipes are just a click away.

Moving forward to the late 70's and strangely enough, my sister and I moved in next door to Mimi, in a small apartment complex in Portland, Oregon. Kathy and I both lusted after Mimi's chili and torts! And we both thought, "now that the chili and tort lady lives right next door to us, we'll get this dish more often". And we did - we were in chili heaven!

I can't say for sure what changed Mimi's mind about "sharing" her recipe, but I continued to ask for many years. One Saturday morning I woke to a call from Mimi. She said, "today is the day". I'm thinking...is she getting married or what? She then proceeded to tell me, "I'm making chili and torts at 11am - if you want to come over and watch, you can". I could not believe what I was hearing and I jumped out of bed with excitement.

There was Mimi in her kitchen with all the ingredients laid out, explaining to me what she was using, but not telling me how much of anything. "It's by feel; it's by taste," she said, "just watch". And watch I did, along with a notebook in hand to capture, as best I could, what she was doing.

She always made two batches - one was "hot, hot, hot" for us adults, and for those less tolerant of the "hot" factor, a more milder batch. To lower the temperature, upon intake, we always had a good taco salad with ranch dressing to cool our chops. Once the pork chili was plated with its wonderful tasteful and aromatic sauce we'd use the torts as scoopers or forks to eat it! As I am writing this I am salivating and want to make me some chili and torts!



What's Your Secret Ingredient?

So, just what is your secret ingredient that you use for your famous chili? I can tell you that mine is a certain kind of chili. Many times I could not even get it in the Portland area and had to drive 3-1/2 hours north to Seattle, to find my "chili tepins" or "chili tepinos" or sometimes called "chili pequins" - this is my secret weapon. And plenty of packets of chili tepins came with me to Costa Rica - no mules necessary! Because making my chili and torts is by feel and taste, it usually comes out a little different each time, but strangely enough, I always proclaim, "I got a good scald on this batch - I think it is my best ever!" Doesn't every chili cook proclaim this?



My Secret Ingredient - Chili Tepin

Will I give my recipe away? No, because I don't even have it written down - it's melded into my mind forever, however. But if you are lucky enough, perhaps one day I will call you up and say "today is the day - want to come watch me make my chili and torts". It is always made with love and it is a fun-filled day of anticipation of the best chili this side of anywhere!

Calling ALL Chili Teams - we are looking for you! For more information to sign up, please contact Mary Cook at 2446-7138 or email her at wmmcook@gmail.com. *Do you know a company or individual interested in being an event sponsor?* Please let us know by contacting Stef Bogatinoff at 2446-6234 or email her at stef@costaconcierges.com.

Jocelyn Farquhar, Squibbles Designs
jocelyn@squibblesdesigns.com



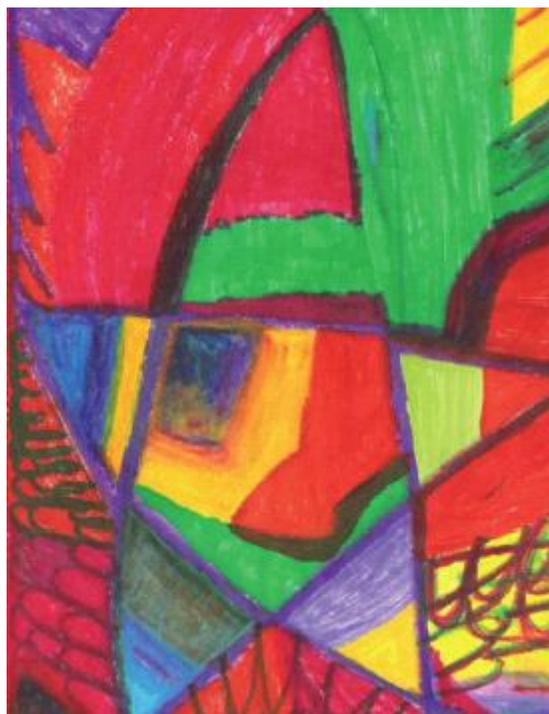
by Atenas Today Staff

Friendly, outgoing and creative are just three of the adjectives that aptly describe Jocelyn Farquhar, a young woman we recently had the opportunity to spend time with.

We visited Jocelyn at her home and studio in the Atenas neighborhood of Güisaro. She delighted us with her narratives explaining what it has meant to her to be able to create her art in an atmosphere of tranquility and surrounded by nature. Jocelyn comes alive as she shares how passionate she is about her art. Her greatest fulfillment comes from being able to turn the designs that she envisions into creations that please her and are true representations of what she has imagined.

Jocelyn and her family moved to Costa Rica from her native California about three years ago. During these three years, Jocelyn has made friends, and has become an active participant in many of the activities (zumba, aerobics, Latin dance) offered in town. Jocelyn has also been taking art classes from an experienced artist and teacher right here in Atenas. Asked if she is happy in Atenas, Jocelyn immediately replies that she feels at home in Atenas because the people are warm and friendly. She believes she will spend the rest of her life here.

Jocelyn has been an active member of the UCP (United Cerebral Palsy) community, designing holiday greeting cards. She is committed to her independence and personal growth. In addition, she has her own design company (squibblesdesigns.com) offering a selection of blank greeting cards depicting nature in Jocelyn's whimsical and original style. Part of the proceeds goes to non-profits that help others overcome developmental challenges. Jocelyn looks forward to the future eagerly and hopes that people will visit her website and enjoy (and purchase!) her creations.



Christmas Star
Created by Jocelyn Farquhar for UCP

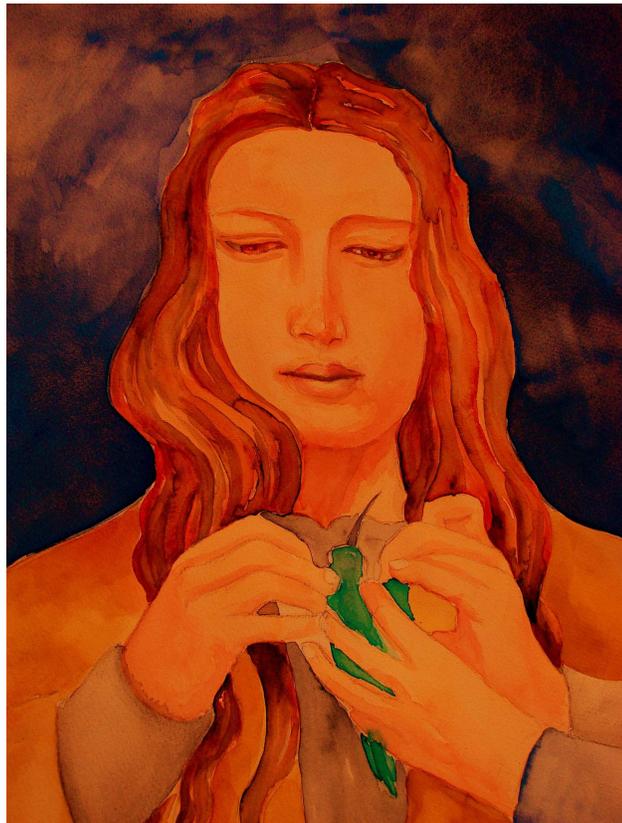
The Atenas Today Art Gallery

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.

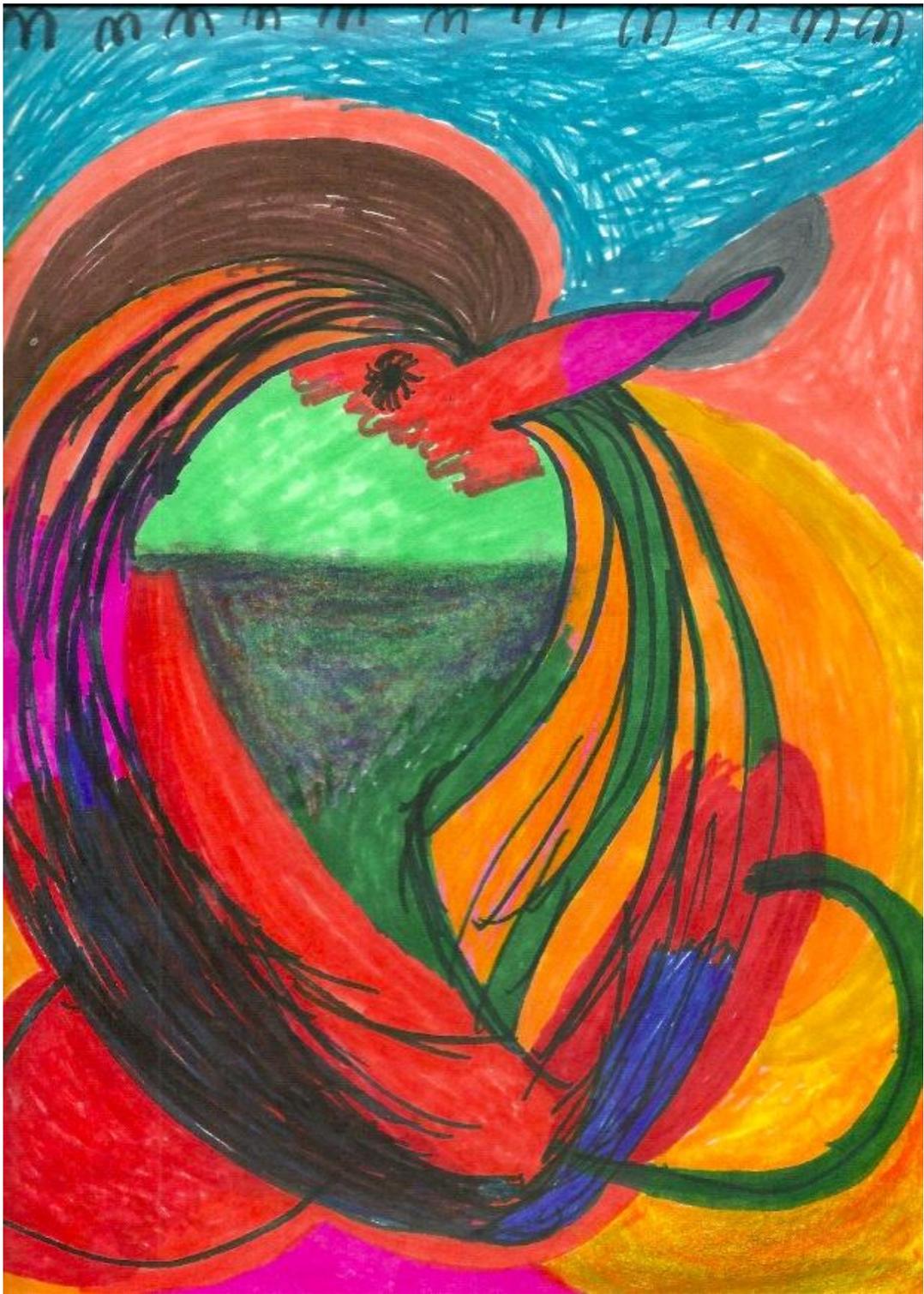


Rich Coast, 13" x 22" Oil on Linen

Al Alexander
jeanandal@gmail.com



Watercolor
gavalos@fieldstudies.org



A Bird in Paradise
Jocelyn Farquhar
jocelyn@squibblesdesigns.com



Larry Felder

"Court at Scherwillier"

20" x 16" oil on canvas

The reference for this painting came from an old French travel book from the 1930's that had photos of the French countryside in a sepia tone. It is one of a series of six paintings. I decided to try my hand at bringing these images to life, choosing color palettes for each based on a French Impressionist work.

Email: larry@feldergallery.com
Blog: www.larryfelderart.blogspot.com
Portfolio: www.larryfelder.weebly.com
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For the bloggers...



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In Atenas

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Join Atenas residents, Suzanne Mark and Jan Yatsko as they share with you their combined talents while you receive all of the benefits!

COST: 14,000 colones – Register early to guarantee your space.

SUZANNE MARK has taken two trips to India to learn about tea and has worked as a tea educator in the US. Tea is a perfect tool for inner exploration and for over 20 years, Suzanne has taught 1000's of people how to channel their natural wisdom. She loves helping people connect to the deep place within that is infinitely wise and creative.

JAN YATSKO has been a mixed media artist for 34 years. She believes that teaching a combination of different but complementary subjects can result in a richer experience for the student. For eight years, Jan led 10-day Explore and Create tours in Costa Rica that focused on art, nature, culture and food. She has combined yoga with writing and creating your own mandala. She delights in bringing out the natural creativity in her students, especially the people who think they don't have it!

CONTACT: Suzanne Mark at 2446-0674 suzanne@suzannemark.com
Jan Yatsko at 2446-0970 janyatsko@ice.co.cr

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