

## HOW TO READ ATENAS TODAY

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

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

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

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

### **THE NEW YELLOW PAGES**

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

# ATENAS TODAY

Issue No. 80

August 23, 2011



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

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



## 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)

### In This Issue:

Publisher's Note	p. 3
Tributes to Rick Mazza	p. 4
Dennis Easters - Building Your Dream House	p. 8
Elizabeth Gonzales - The Grand Guayaba	p. 10
Patricia Diekroger - About Chili	p. 12
Art Gallery	p. 13
Get out of Town: Zarcero	p. 19
Marietta Arce - Winnie, Our Pet	p. 20
Gordon Klatt - Tech Talk 17	p. 22
G.W. Thomas - Writing Flash Fiction	p. 23
Community Bulletin Board	p. 25
Yoga Retreat	p. 26
Calling Chili Cooks	p. 27
For the Bloggers	p. 28
Classified Advertising	p. 29
Advertising Rates and Policies	p. 30

## Publisher's Note



I write this greeting on a perfect August afternoon in New York. The synergism produced by existence of laptops and memory sticks; the cooperation of my friend, Fred Macdonald; and the magic of the Internet has allowed me to travel, play and *still* meet our publishing deadline! I am grateful to live during these exciting times and (much to my delight) I am steadily mastering both the hardware and the software of my various devices.

We are currently enjoying a beautiful lush landscape in our county; perfect for early morning walks and welcome, refreshing naps on our hammocks in the afternoon while the rain pounds our roof rhythmically. Marina Zampieri, our energetic photojournalist has submitted some pictures of Güisaro for this issue and we look forward to receiving pictures of other neighborhoods to share with you in future editions.

The Atenas ex-pat and local community alike, mourn the loss of cherished and uncommon resident Rick Mazza on July 30<sup>th</sup>. Rick's ability and willingness to be a friend to all was evidenced by the magnificent assortment of individuals present at the memorial service kindly organized at Poco Cielo by Bruce Jones and his parents.

We have received permission from Mariano Alvarado (photographer), Bruce Jones and Ray Akers to share their impressions of Rick with our readers. I will always remember Rick's smiling face as he made his way across the park that he had grown so fond of in the years he lived here. I believe that Rick is still smiling and would enjoy knowing that we remember his contributions to Atenas today and every day.

All the best!

*Marietta Arce*  
*marietta.arce@gmail.com*

## Remembering Mr. Atenas

Richard Mazza  
1954-2011



A tribute by Bruce "Bud" Jones,  
Ray Akers, and Fred Macdonald

### BUD JONES:

I don't know exactly what to say about my dear friend Rick Mazza, except that he was the best friend a person could have!! When you were down and blue he might not always tell you what you wanted to hear, but he would always tell you what you needed to hear.

This man had more passion in his little finger, for children, than most have in their entire person. Rick was an orphan in California. He talked once or twice about meeting a grandfather, but I am not sure of the details.

As soon as he was able to join the service, he joined the U.S.M.C., where he stayed for around 7 or 8 years. This led him many places like Japan, Philippines, Panama, Colombia, and more. He was involved with the special operations groups with the Marines. After returning from overseas and leaving the military, Rick started working with General Motors selling fleets of autos. He sold more autos than any one in the world. This took him to driving racecars in the GT 1, 2, and 3 circuits. This was a true passion for him. He loved to drive more than he loved to breathe. He loved it so much he took a job as a taxi driver in Las Vegas, Nevada. He would sit with his loud Hawaiian shirt on and tell me about all the different people he would take here and there, and their stories.

The small town of Atenas, Costa Rica where he lived for the past 7 or 8 years, is what he called his real home. He loved this little town as much as the people here loved him. He

had the first Internet cafe in Atenas, where he did many things such as car rental, real estate, and A LOT of helping people.

Someone was always coming in asking him for directions or to translate something with his Spanglish, he could even tell you where to get that impossible-to-find part you needed.

Rick and I would walk through the park to go have coffee and it would take us sometimes 30 or 40 minutes because everybody had to stop us to speak to Rick. He was very loved in this town. He always would make everyone feel so welcome with a "Welcome home!", he would never miss saying it either. This is how he came to receive the nickname of "Mr. Atenas". He will be very missed.

I would like to personally thank all of his friends for all of the donations towards the funeral expenses. We raised a total of about \$1700, which was used for the cremation expenses, and the services. All of the extra money was given to the orphanage here in Atenas. This would have made Rick very happy, which is all we wanted to do.

On **September the 4th** there will be a race dedicated in his honor at La Guacima Race track. I would like to invite everyone to come out and see the races.

PLEASE TRY TO KEEP HIS MEMORY ALIVE BY HELPING SOMEONE IN THE PARK TODAY AND ANY TIME YOU SEE SOMEONE THAT NEEDS HELP.

P.S. "I ain't mad at ya bull"

**RAY AKERS:**

A very close friend and neighbor of Rick's said something that really sums up the true spirit and character of Rick Mazza. The friend said that for four years, each and every time he returned to Costa Rica, Rick met him in the apartment parking lot with a smile and a "Welcome Home". It's not going to be the same without Internet Cafe Rick.

Rick had many friends here in Costa Rica and he gave them all a place to be themselves. If he was not helping locals and travelers from his Internet Cafe, he was sitting on his porch lending an ear to all.

He had been in the hospital where the doctors had found, and surgically removed, two blood clots. The doctors mentioned that he also had a heart problem but then, after testing, changed their minds and told him his heart was fine.

He had been out of the hospital for a couple of weeks and was having a really good week. He told his friends it was the best he had felt in years.

Rick was an orphan and those close to him knew that the local orphanage was very

important to him. Any additional funds that are collected beyond those needed for his cremation, and a few other miscellaneous expenses, will be divided between the orphanage and possibly a plaque or some type of remembrance in honor of Rick. Rick was a giver, not a taker.

Rick's closest friend that I'm aware of for the last couple of years was Bruce (Bud) Jones. Bud visited Rick in excess of 10 times per week. His parents Frances and Bruce were also very close to Rick. Bud and his girlfriend Maillyn Mora were right beside Rick for the last few months even while he was in the hospital for three weeks while undergoing surgery. Frances Jones was with Rick during the last hour of his life. These people were his family and they showed it everyday. To them we all owe our thanks.

### **FRED MACDONALD:**

Rick Mazza was the first person I interviewed when I was starting up Atenas Today. It was in 2007, and Rick had recently bought the Internet Cafe. He was new in Atenas and wanted to get involved with the community. There were few internet options in those days, and Rick's Cafe became a central meeting place for us gringo residents and tourists.

But it was Rick's friendliness as much as the internet access that drew people. He loved to talk with his customers and promote community activities. In our interview I asked him what he liked most about running the cafe, and he answered: "The most important thing to me is the community aspect. It's a meeting place for gringos, tourists, and the local kids. I like supporting the orphanage and the local health services. Every other Saturday night I put on a free movie for the young people of Atenas."

Rick's support of the Linea Vital health service was instrumental in helping them get established. He asked me to meet with him and Jorge of Linea Vital, and together we worked out a membership plan that would attract the gringo community and provide the needed revenue for the business.

Another of Rick's community activities was his support of local motorcycle racing. A race car driver himself in earlier years, he loved the sport and did what he could to promote it for both Ticos and gringos.

Optimism was a part of his nature. He bought the Internet Cafe from a man who had absolutely no records of sales or expenses. It seemed like a viable business in a good location in a good town, and that was enough for Rick to give it a try. He made it work, but he saw that internet services were coming to people's homes and internet cafes were going to become obsolete. He decided to sell the cafe and try his hand at the coffee business. He had it all worked out, but was having trouble getting investors to share his optimism. The last time I talked with him he told me that he wished he still had the cafe.

Rick did not have an easy life. He dropped out of high school to join the Marines, and spent many years in Southeast Asia. He was in Vietnam during the evacuation of Saigon in 1975. After leaving the Marines, he owned a small farm in Mexico, but lost everything when the Mexican government nationalized the local bank. A serious back problem kept him in a wheelchair for long stay in a VA hospital.

I always liked seeing Rick in town. He was invariably smiling and upbeat, ready with a word of encouragement about Atenas Today or some other community endeavor. A heart attack at age 57 has taken a true citizen leader of Atenas.

**From The Publisher:**

A memorial service was held for Rick at Poco Cielo on August 3. Many of his friends were present and shared their memories with sadness, fondness and humor. I will miss Rick greatly. I feel blessed to have known him and our consolation must be that he undeniably made his mark and left a big family in Atenas.



# BUILDING YOUR DREAM HOME IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY!



*by Dennis Easters*

So this is the scenario: You have been working hard and saving your money for the past (30) years and now you are thinking of moving to paradise and building that dream home for you and your sweetie. Sounds like a great idea, a dream come true.

Building a home, whether it be in your home country or a foreign land can be a daunting task with ups and downs, twists and turns, and issues you never even thought were possible. Has your dream turned into a nightmare? In the past 16 years I have seen dreams turn into NIGHTMARES overnight. In most cases these nightmares could have been avoided but lack of due diligence, communication, and knowledge on the consumer's end caused unnecessary heartache. I have outlined some simple steps you can follow to help ensure your dream home becomes a reality, without the nightmares.

- Use the knowledge of qualified professionals. Professionals like Realtors, Lawyers, Surveyors, Architects, Engineers, and Contractors can be invaluable to a successful construction process. If you were diagnosed with a life threatening disease, would you accept treatment from just anyone? Of course not! When you are going to make major decisions in life, you should seek out qualified professionals and use their knowledge and experience to your advantage.
- Real Estate Agents will know the restrictions, and zoning (use of land) for the land you are buying. This is something you too can easily check by paying a quick visit to your local municipality and asking for a USO DE SUELO. This will easily tell you what you can do with that dream property. In addition your agent can give you the history of the property, make suggestions about improvements, and be a guide for pricing and future costs involved in your adventure. Your Realtor can be invaluable in helping you with other contacts that will help

- make your dream home become a reality.
- A Lawyer will check the title of the property (title search) to make sure it's "clean" and without encumbrances. Your lawyer will also do all the paperwork for the purchase transaction like setting up corporations, and writing closing documents, and contracts you will need for service people (like your Contractor). More often than not, your lawyer acts as the escrow agent for the transaction, so make sure you are comfortable with the one you choose.
- The Surveyor will verify boundary lines and property size so that you don't end up building part of your house on someone else's property (yes this does happen and it can be VERY COSTLY to resolve).
- In Costa Rica, your Architect/Engineer not only designs your house, but also acts as your inspector throughout the construction process. Your Architect/Engineer should visit the construction site at least once per week to make sure the contractor is building the home to the specifications of the plans. Plans are approved by the College of Engineers, according to building practices and regulations in Costa Rica. What is standard practice in your home country may not be in Costa Rica. When designing your home be SPECIFIC about what you want. Dot all your I's and cross all your T's, and don't sweat the "small" stuff!
- When choosing a contractor it is important that you are CAREFUL and do your due diligence. Get references,

and go see VARIOUS projects. Look at details. How are finishes installed? God is in the details and that can be a tell tale sign of the quality of workmanship! Have your lawyer draw up a detailed contract, using a "draw" system for payments. For example we always break our payments down monthly over the time of construction. NEVER give large amounts of money up front! Go to the job site often. We go to our construction sites every day! If you cannot go every day, then at least 4 times per week. If you are out of the country hire a project manager. Fees range from 15-20% of the construction cost, but could save you much more in the long run. DO NOT BUILD WITHOUT SUPERVISION!

When it comes to going for your dreams I believe you go all the way or don't go at all. Life is short, live it, enjoy it. There are pitfalls everywhere in the world. Do your due diligence, make firm, informed decisions and building your dream home is paradise will be relatively stress free. It will take time, and effort, but in the end you will be glad you did your homework. Remember Gerardo and I are here for you. If you have any questions, need help or just advise, our doors are always open!

Pura Vida,  
Dennis

# The Grand Guayaba



by Elizabeth Gonzalez

**Guayabas (or guavas)** are plants in the myrtle family that contains about 100 species of tropical shrubs and small trees. Although they are native to Mexico and Central and South America, they are now cultivated throughout the tropics.

The term "guava" probably comes from the Arawak Indians guayabo or "guava tree" and changed by the Spanish to guayaba. Guavas are typical **Myrtoideae**, with tough dark leaves that are opposite, simple, elliptic to ovate and 5–15 cm long. The flowers are white, with five petals and numerous stamens.

The fruit releases a strong, sweet, musky odor when ripe, may be round, ovoid, or pear-shaped, 2 to 4 in (5-10 cm) long, with 4 or 5 protruding floral remnants (sepals) at the apex; and thin, light-yellow skin, frequently blushed with pink. Next to the skin is a layer of somewhat granular flesh, 1/8 to 1/2 in (3-12.5 mm) thick, white, yellowish, light- or dark-pink, or near-red, juicy, acid, or sweet and flavorful. The central pulp, the same color or slightly darker in tone, is juicy and normally filled with very hard, yellowish seeds, 1/8 in (3 min) long, though some rare types have soft, chewable seeds. Actual seed counts have ranged from 112 to 535 but some guavas are seedless or nearly so.

This tasty fruit is not only eaten with gusto by humans, it is also coveted by many mammals and birds. It is believed that guavas are introduced into other areas as animals eat the fruit and disperse the seeds in their droppings.

The guava thrives in both humid and dry climates and shows no strong soil preference. Ripe guavas bruise easily and are highly perishable. Raw guavas can be eaten as they are, but are usually seeded and sliced or cooked to make jams. A popular dessert throughout Latin America is a cooked guava 'shell' filled with cream cheese.

Here are some recipes for you to try:

## Cheese-Filled Guayaba Shells

### Ingredients:

2 lbs. ripe, unbruised guayabas  
3 cups sugar  
3 cups water (plus water for boiling)  
1 medium lime

### Procedure:

Peel, halve and seed guayabas carefully. Boil in sufficient water for about one hour. Transfer 3 cups of water to another pot and add the sugar, lime and the cooked guayaba shells and let everything rest for about 45 minutes. Your shells are now ready to be filled with your favorite white cheese (cream

cheese, goat cheese, etc.) and place in pretty bowls for serving as dessert.

## Guava Cheesecake

### Ingredients:

1 3/4 cups sugar, divided?  
1 1/4 cup graham cracker crumbs?  
4 Tbsp. butter, melted  
? Cooking spray  
? 1/2 cup water?  
1/2 cup lime juice?  
8 ounces guava paste, cut into small pieces (about 1/2 a bar)  
? 5 large egg whites, divided?  
1/2 cup sour cream?  
2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened?  
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract?  
1/8 tsp. salt

1. Preheat oven to 400°  
? 2. Coat a 9-inch springform pan with cooking spray  
3. In a large bowl, combine 1/4-cup sugar, graham cracker crumbs, and butter. Press mixture into bottom and 1/2 inch up sides of the springform pan  
4. Bake at 400° for 7 minutes. Cool on a wire rack  
? 5. **Reduce** oven temperature to 325°  
? 6. Combine 1/2-cup sugar, 1/2-cup water, lime juice, and guava paste in a small saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cool slightly.  
7. Pour mixture into a blender, and process until smooth. Cool completely. Stir in 1 of the egg whites.  
8. Combine remaining ingredients: sugar, sour cream, and cheese in a medium bowl; beat with a mixer at low speed until smooth. Beat in vanilla and salt. Gradually add remaining 4 egg whites, beating well after adding each one.

9. Pour cream cheese mixture into prepared pan.  
10. Drizzle guava mixture over cheese mixture.

11. Swirl them together using the tip of a knife.

12. Bake at 325° for 45 minutes or until cheesecake center barely moves when touched. (It may crack a little along the edges.)?

13. Turn the oven off; cool cheesecake in closed oven 30 minutes.?

14. Remove cheesecake from oven. Run a knife around outside edge.

15. Allow it to cool to room temperature.?  
16. Cover and chill at least 8 hours before serving.



### REFERENCES:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guava#Types>

<http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/guava.html>

<http://www.squidoo.com/guava-shells-recipe#module54511062>

<http://tikitikiblog.com/for-the-love-of-guava/#axzz1VZkUmlaM>

## I Didn't Know Beans About Chili



*by Patricia Diekroger*

Since I am on the committee for the 5th Annual Atenas Chili Cook Off (early reminder: please keep the Feb 12, 2012 date open) I decided to do a little research about chili.

I was surprised to learn something any true chili cook already knows: chili doesn't have beans! I also learned that Chili peppers were native to the New World and were used centuries ago by the Indians of Central and South America.

Some people claim that chili, as we know it, originated in Mexico. That is possible, however, to Mexicans chili refers only to the spicy vegetable not to any particular dish. In 1737 an immigrant in Arizona first described a stew made with chili peppers, lard, and meat. Though it wasn't until the mid 1800's, when a San Antonio settler ground some dried spices and chili peppers, that a blended chili powder was created. This led to the spread of chili stew recipes across the southwest and onward.

There are many stories of how and why "Chili con carne" became popular, but almost all agree Texas was the place of origin. There are stories of "chili queens" in San Antonio. These Mexican women were first hired to feed the military in San Antonio. Later, they became street vendors who arrived in the plazas in the evening with aromatic caldrons of chili to dish out.

Many stews like chili became the food of choice among the poor: they could stretch a small piece of meat with lots of chili peppers and disguise any bad taste or odor with the spicy seasonings.

There are theories that chili was served to jail inmates for the same reasons. There are records of chili con carne pemmican, in which meat, lard, and seasonings were pounded together into a concentrated food that could be taken on trail journeys.

By 1890 chili was being served in cafes in Texas. By 1893 chili made its big debut at the Chicago World's Fair at the "San Antonio Chilly Stand". And the rest is history. Until... somewhere down that spicy road someone decided their chili was the best chili ever. And the chili wars began, but that's another story.

# 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.



"3:26 P.M."

Al Alexander

*jeanandal@gmail.com*



Luna de Miel de Las Ranas Pequeñas

Evelyn Levtchenko

*levtchenko.art@gmx.eu*



In the Moo'd

Diana Miskell  
Dragonfly Animal Portraits

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

<http://dianascostaricablog.blogspot.com>

# Güísaro In Pictures

*By Marina Zampieri*

*zmarinacr@gmail.com*



CAJA CLINIC



RECYCLED PLASTICS 'MUSEUM'





calle guizaro



calle guizaro



calle guizaro



calle guizaro

## GET OUT OF TOWN!!!



The charming town of Zarcero is located in the San José Highlands. It is approximately 1800 meters above sea level; about 67 km northwest of San José. Zarcero is the capital city of Alfaro Ruíz county in the Alajuela province.

Zarcero is surrounded by coffee plantations and its proximity makes it a feasible day trip or a nice setting in which to retreat for a few days. The town's beautiful church boasts many religious paintings and pastel stencil work.

Across from the church is the famed topiary garden of Parque Francisco Alvarado which offers the visitor a chance to pick out animals, dancers and an ever-changing variety of shapes in the well-manicured shrubs.

Buses leave for Zarcero from the Coca Cola bus terminal in downtown San José.

## Winnie, Our Pet



*by Marietta Arce*

One of the promises my husband and I made to our children when we were moving to Costa Rica from New York was that we would finally be able to have a dog. We knew that our children would adjust to the significant change even without the promise of a pet, but we are both fond of dogs so it seemed like a pretty good idea. After we were reasonably settled, we began our search for the right puppy to welcome into our family.

We were aware that many puppies were abandoned on a weekly basis in Costa Rica so we decided that we would visit a shelter in Heredia in hopes of finding just the right one to fit our needs. Our requirements were very modest. We were looking for a young, healthy and friendly puppy that could grow up with our children and be part of our family for many years.

The dismal conditions at the shelter and the fragile health of the animals disturbed us. We left without a puppy, convinced that we had witnessed the last days of a few cats and dogs and frustrated that we could do nothing to save them. As we were heading to our car, an employee of the shelter came out to ask us to follow her home and see a puppy she had and was unable to keep.

The puppy's name was Winnie, a cocker/golden retriever mix almost six months old. I fell in love with her immediately and she responded favorably to my husband and me as well. We asked the woman to hold her for a few days so we could purchase the items necessary before bringing her home. We decided to keep the news a secret to surprise our children.

I went to pick Winnie up on a beautiful December day just before I was to pick up our children from school. Winnie and I bonded at once. I can still recall her big brown eyes looking at me as she tentatively rested her head on my shoulder as I drove. When I got to school to pick up the kids, they were overjoyed and surprised to have a puppy at last. We drove home intoxicated with a new type of energy and I became very aware that I had just made a lifelong commitment to our dog.

Winnie was a quiet dog. She never barked and I was convinced that she was deaf. We moved to Atenas when Winnie was almost three. We were not sure how she would handle the transition from San José to Atenas but she was happy in the country, following us around and learning to know the boundaries of the property.

One day Winnie got lost. We asked our neighbors to help us look for her. I felt heaviness in my heart, Winnie was such a part of our lives, I could not imagine myself without her. Fortunately, Winnie chose that day to bark when we walked past our neighbor's garage. We had closed the door behind us without realizing she had followed us in, quietly.

When our children were younger, Winnie would stand by them protectively if she perceived irritation or anger in the way I was interacting with them. I can honestly say that observing her gravitate to their side would be enough to make me pause and try a different approach. She was like a warning bell, helping me becoming a better, more mindful mother.

Winnie turned 12 in June. She has cataracts and her hair is graying but she is still energetic, especially at meal times. She is very intelligent and can sense alterations in our family before they actually happen. The last year has brought several changes to our household: our son left for college, and our daughter has taken to spending some weekends in Heredia with her friends. Winnie appears to ponder the changes and lies by the front door waiting for whoever is out to return home.

We now own a total of four dogs. I hold myself responsible for this because two of those dogs appeared and were adopted by us when my husband was away. Dogs seem to know we are animal lovers and I have been unable to turn away a grateful, unwanted or injured animal.

I had no idea, twelve years ago, of the impact Winnie would have on our family. With the passing of time, I realize that we have to prepare ourselves for whatever the future holds for Winnie and our other three dogs. For now, however, I am content to watch them interact with each other and us with their unique and amusing personalities and cherish them for however long we are together.



Winnie

## TECH TALK

by Gordon Klatt



According to a report released by PandaLabs, Costa Rica ranks seventh worldwide in computer malware infections, malicious programs that include trojans, rogues, viruses, and worms. A study done in the second quarter of this year found that 44% of Costa Rican computers tested were infected. This is above the world average of 39.79% and puts the country in seventh place, behind China, Thailand, Taiwan, Turkey, Russia and Brazil.

This is an astonishing number, although I'm not too surprised, as about a third of the computers I repair are malware-infected. In most cases an infected computer can be repaired, but sometimes the malware is so invasive that the only remedy is to reformat the drive and reinstall everything.

There are a number of free PC anti-virus programs available, so keeping your computer protected is easy. I use Avast's free anti-virus software.

<http://www.avast.com/en-us/free-antivirus-download>

Another company that has a free version of their anti-virus software is AVG.

<http://www.avg.com/us-en/free-antivirus-download>

There was a time when Mac users didn't need anti-virus software, but those days are gone. As Macs have become more popular, they've become a bigger target for hackers. There are a few free anti-virus programs for Macs, learn about one from Sophos here.

<http://www.sophos.com/en-us/products/free-tools/sophos-antivirus-for-mac-home-edition.aspx>

All of these companies have a free version of their anti-virus software, as well as a 'deluxe' version that you have to pay for, so be sure to click on the link to the free version download.

## In The News

Last month, when the last vestiges of telecommunications company Nortel were sold off in an auction encompassing some 6,000 patents and patent applications for various technologies, several big name tech companies were involved in the marathon 4-day bidding process, but Google turned some heads with its unusual bidding strategy. They began with an initial \$900 million bid, which they upped to \$1,902,160,540 and then to \$2,614,972,128 and finally \$3.14159 billion. Normally, bidders opt for rounder numbers, but the mathematically inclined quickly identified a pattern in Google's bids. Their opening shot was Brun's constant, followed by Meissel-Mertens constant, and finally pi. One source commented on Google's bidding, saying "either they were supremely confident or they were bored."

Sadly, their whimsically mathematical bids weren't enough to carry the day. The final price for the patent materials was \$4.5 billion, purchased by a coalition of companies comprised of Apple, EMC, Ericsson, Microsoft, RIM, and Sony.

Last week Google announced their acquisition of Motorola Mobility, and its 17,000 patents, for \$12.5 billion.

Google is beta-testing their new social network, Google+, hoping to soon become a player in the market now dominated by Facebook.

Netflix has announced they will soon be expanding their service to Central America. The US-based company originally offered DVD rentals through the mail, but has changed focus to downloading content. Should be interesting, considering Costa Rica's lack of high-speed infrastructure.

## Tip of The Month

With today's high resolution and wide format computer displays, web pages can be a little small and hard to read. To enlarge web pages in Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and Google Chrome, type <Ctrl> <+>, to make smaller type <Ctrl> <->.

# Writing Flash Fiction

By G. W. Thomas

With the advent of the Internet, editors are looking for shorter works, more easily read on a computer screen. The current term is "flash fiction", a tale between 300-1000 words long. Longer than micro-fiction (10-300 words) but shorter than traditional short stories (3000-5000 words preferred by most magazines), flash fiction is usually a story of a single act, sometimes the culmination of several unwritten events.

This article will offer several strategies for writing flash fiction. Used by themselves or in combination, the writer can focus their story to that brief, interesting event.

## 1) The small idea

Look for the smaller ideas in larger ones. To discuss the complex interrelationship of parents and children you'd need a novel. Go for a smaller piece of that complex issue. How kids feel when they aren't included in a conversation. What kids do when they are bored in the car. Middle child. Bad report card. Find a smaller topic and build on it.

## 2) Bury the preamble in the opening

When you write your story, don't take two pages to explain all the pre-story. Find a way to set it all in the first paragraph, then get on with the rest of the tale.

## 3) Start in the middle of the action

Similar to #2, start the story in the middle of the action. A man is running. A bomb is about to go off. A monster is in the house. Don't describe any more than you have to. The reader can fill in some of the blanks.

## 4) Focus on one powerful image

Find one powerful image to focus your story on. A war-torn street. An alien sunset. They say a picture worth a thousand words. Paint a picture with words. It doesn't hurt to have something happen inside that picture. It is a story after all.

## 5) Make the reader guess until the end

A little mystery goes a long way. Your reader may have no idea what is going on for the majority of the story. This will lure them on to the end. When they finish, there should be a good pay off or solution.

## 6) Use allusive references

By using references to a commonly known story you can save yourself all those unnecessary words. Refer to historical events. Use famous situations from literature. If the story takes place on the Titanic you won't have to explain what is going to happen, who is there or much of anything. History and James Cameron have already done it for you. Beware of using material that is too obscure. Your reader should be able to make the inferences.

## 7) Use a twist

Like #5, the twist ending allows the writer to pack some punch at the end of the story. Flash fiction is often twist-ending fiction because you don't have enough time to build up sympathetic characters and show how a long, devastating plot has affected them. Like a good joke, flash fiction is often streamlined to the punch-line at the end.

Let's look at these techniques in my story "Road Test". I wanted to write a story about taking my driving exam. I didn't mention the pre-test or practicing. Just the test. (#1 THE SMALL IDEA) This narrows our subject down to a manageable scene.

I didn't have room to describe the driving examiner in detail. I set my main character in two sentences. (#2 BURY THE PREAMBLE) "The man in the government-issued suit sat down without looking at the person across from him. We've established the main character and his chief flaws. (He's mediocre and probably hates his job.)

I started in the middle of the action by having the driver very quickly go from good driving to dangerous driving. Johnson, the driving examiner realizes the driver is not human but goat-headed (#3 START IN THE MIDDLE). "He had changed. The beard was longer, the skin darker and two large curved horns crowned his skull." This creates tension and has created an image: a man trapped in a speeding car with a monster (#4 A POWERFUL IMAGE). It pushes the reader on because they want to know what will happen next, maybe why is it happening? We won't tell them until the end (#5 KEEP THEM GUESSING).

The monster keeps yelling the same word, "Pooka!" Johnson begins to understand. He knows the old fairy stories about the Pooka, about how they pretended to be horses so they could drown their victims. (#6 ALLUSION)

Now is the time for resolution, our great twist ending that no one sees coming (#7 TWIST ENDING). As the monster crashes the car into a pond, Johnson realizes a modern-day Pooka wouldn't look like a horse, but would use a car. The car crashes and we finish with: "They would die, only Johnson would live long enough to feel those large goatish teeth chewing the flesh from his bones. The souped-up V8 hit the slick surface of the pond like a fist into jello. Windshield collapsed under tons of water, washing away the high, shrill laughter of the driver."

"Road Test" clocks in at 634 words. It is essentially a man gets killed by a monster story, but the crux of the idea is "How would mythological creatures adapt to the modern world?" This is really the small idea. The allusions to the Pooka will work for some, but I gave enough explanation to help those that don't know about the old stories.

This example story was chosen because it illustrated all 7 methods. Using only one in a flash story can be enough. Writing flash fiction is a great way for writers to write everyday, even when larger projects seem to daunting or they are pressed for time. Using these short cuts can have you writing in minutes.

-----  
G. W. Thomas has appeared in over 100 different books and magazines. His micro story "Nano-Hunk" won the Zine Guild Award for Best SF Micro Fiction 2000.



## 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.**

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

August 24<sup>th</sup>

September 7<sup>th</sup> - RECYCLING CAMPAIGN CENTRAL PARK OF ATENAS 9A.M. - 5 P.M.

September 8<sup>th</sup> - Sewing at Hogar de Vida; 9:15 a.m.

Contacts [MargMacik@hotmail.com](mailto:MargMacik@hotmail.com)

or 2446-3223, cr 8989-0765, Helen Smith at the Hogar 2446-6212

September 13<sup>th</sup> - Local Writer's Group meeting at Kay's Gringo Postres at noon

For more information, contact Larry Rusin at 2451-8063. Bring material you have written so you can share with the group.

September 15<sup>th</sup> - Costa Rica Celebrates Independence Day

September 29,30 Yoga Retreat - (See flyer attached)

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE FIFTH ANNUAL CHILI COOK OFF IN 2012 (FLYER ATTACHED)

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT [www.atenaslife.com](http://www.atenaslife.com) FOR REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES.

## **Yoga and Serenity Retreat**

You are cordially invited to participate in a two-night Yoga and Serenity Retreat in the beautiful, soothing sanctuary of the 5-star El Silencio Lodge. This retreat is offered to all who are seeking a short respite from every day life and wanting to attune to nature.

El Silencio Lodge, close to Sarchi, is surrounded by 500 acres of natural reserve. Situated in Costa Rica's "Volcanic Valley", the area provides a biological corridor between Juan Castro Blanco and Poas national parks. This internationally-acclaimed resort is an ideal destination for Yoga enthusiasts, bird watchers and nature lovers. ([www.elsilenciolodge.com](http://www.elsilenciolodge.com))

The spacious yoga platform is surrounded by lush tropical forest, gentle flowing waters, and whispering breezes. Certified Yoga Instructor, Leah MacLauchlan will be your guide on this magical journey of self awareness. Birdwatchers and nature lovers can enjoy the mystic trails of undisturbed peace, spectacular waterfalls and an opportunity to spot birds in their natural habitat. This retreat is open to everyone – not just yoga enthusiasts! Come and enjoy a peaceful retreat in nature's paradise!

### **THE RETREAT (SEPTEMBER 29, 30) INCLUDES**

- Two nights accommodation
- All meals provided
- 5 yoga classes
- Guided hike and meditation

All suites offer privacy, a viewing deck, outdoor hot tub, fireplace and stunning mountain or river views.

All food served with local flavor and fresh ingredients picked from the organic on-site garden.

**\*\* Special rate based on triple occupancy, \$249 per person (normally \$370) \*\***

**\*\* Special rate based on double occupancy, \$289 per person (normally \$420) \*\***

**This is a fantastic opportunity to experience this wonderful resort!!!**

**For reservations or further information please contact:**

**Leah MacLauchlan at 2446-3150 or at [nomosno21@gmail.com](mailto:nomosno21@gmail.com)**



## Calling all Chili Cooks

**Enter the 5th Annual Atenas Chili Cook Off  
founded by Kay's Gringo Postres... today!**

**When:** Sunday, Feb. 12th, 2012

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Where:** Quinta Romavista, Barrio Mercedes, Atenas

**What time:** 11:00AM to 4:00PM public - chili cooks set up at 10:00AM

Chili will be cooked off-site and brought to the competition

**No entry fee for chili teams.**

**See website:** [www.atenaschilicookoff.com](http://www.atenaschilicookoff.com) for details and registration.

**Or Pick Up Your Entry Form at Kay's**

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

In addition to some great-tasting chili, there will be:

- ÿ Live music, including country & western
- ÿ All day raffle with great prizes
- ÿ Contests and games
- ÿ Beer and wine garden
- ÿ Hot dogs, chicken wings, pies and cakes, and other goodies

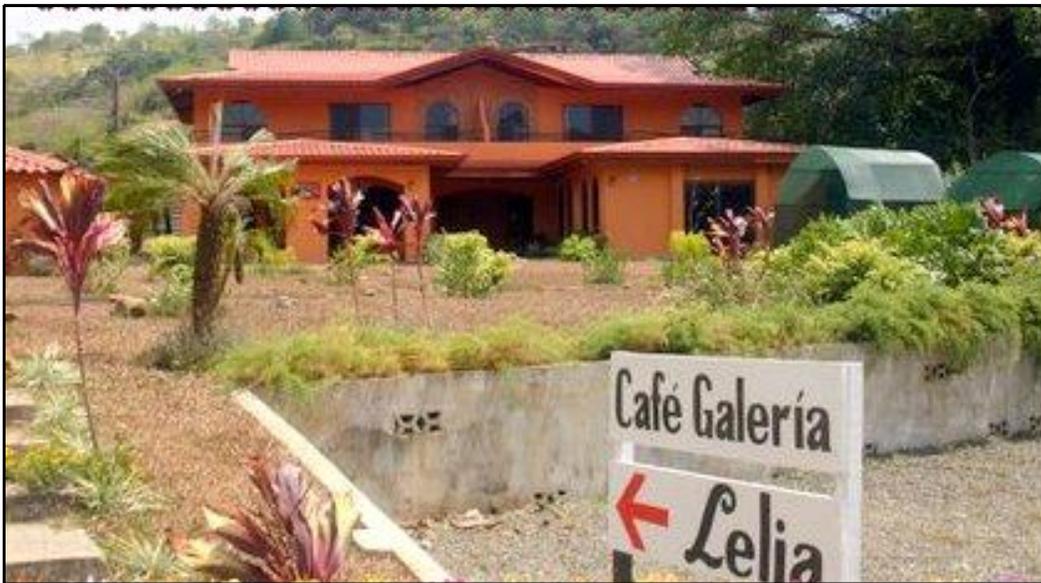
## For the bloggers...



**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 therein. Please contact us if you have any other blogs of interest that you would like to share.**

Biolley Buzz	<a href="http://bcrcoffee.com">bcrcoffee.com</a>
De La Pura Vida Costa Rica	<a href="http://delapuravida.com">delapuravida.com</a>
Fabulista De Costa Rica	<a href="http://fabulistadecr.blogspot.com">fabulistadecr.blogspot.com</a>
The Very Worst Missionary	<a href="http://theveryworstmissionary.com">theveryworstmissionary.com</a>
Julie and Rick in Costa Rica	<a href="http://julieandrickincostarica.blogspot.com/">http://julieandrickincostarica.blogspot.com/</a>
Mi Chunché	<a href="http://michunche.com">michunche.com</a>
New Life in Costa Rica	<a href="http://www.anewlifeincostarica.com/nuevo_vida/">http://www.anewlifeincostarica.com/nuevo_vida/</a>
Pura Vida Mommy	<a href="http://puravidamommy.blogspot.com">puravidamommy.blogspot.com</a>
Rubiatica	<a href="http://rubiatica.blogspot.com">rubiatica.blogspot.com</a>
Somewhere In Costa Rica	<a href="http://somerwhereincostarica.com">http://somerwhereincostarica.com</a>
The Real Costa Rica	<a href="http://blog.therealcostarica.com">blog.therealcostarica.com</a>
The View From Here	<a href="http://theviewfromherecr.blogspot.com">theviewfromherecr.blogspot.com</a>
Going Like Sixty	<a href="http://goinglikesixty.com">goinglikesixty.com</a>
Lois and Jim Craft	<a href="http://adventurecraft.blogspot.com">adventurecraft.blogspot.com</a>
Dovile Vaigauskaite	<a href="http://www.powerofindividual.org">www.powerofindividual.org</a>
Diana Miskell	<a href="http://dianascostaricablog.blogspot.com">http://dianascostaricablog.blogspot.com</a>

## **Café Galería Lelia**



Sabana Larga, Entrada a Vista Atenas/Entrance to Vista Atenas  
Abierto martes a domingo de Mediodía a 7 P.M.  
Open Tuesday to Sunday from Noon to 7 P.M.  
Reservaciones/Reservations: 2446-6469

## Atenas Today Advertising Rates and Policies

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

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

Payment can be made in any of the following ways:

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

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