

# ATENAS TODAY



Issue No. 61

January 17, 2010

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*ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 250 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at [fredmac222@yahoo.com](mailto:fredmac222@yahoo.com).*

*Compositions from back issues are archived by category 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.*

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



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

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to [fredmac222@yahoo.com](mailto:fredmac222@yahoo.com).

# Memories of Dorothy

by Fred Macdonald



*Dorothy Dessarzin, December 21, 2009*

Once again we have lost a very special member of our ex-pat community in Atenas, Dorothy Dessarzin. As a tribute to her memory I am offering this brief biography of her life, based on my friendship with her and information I have gotten from her grieving husband, John Dessarzin.

Her many friends in Atenas remember the cheerful woman who, in spite of being confined to a wheelchair with MS, was always smiling. She was a very active member of a women's book club, reading usually two or more books a week and anxious to discuss them. On Christmas Eve, several hours before she died, she was singing Christmas carols with friends at my house.

Dorothy was born in 1942 in Melville, New York. Her mother was a British Catholic, and her father a Russian Jew. He was very successful as the first dis

tributor of Sanyo radio and television products in the United States, and Dorothy grew up in a happy family. She had one sibling, an older brother named Allan, who is now living in Arizona and like his father is a successful distributor of Japanese-made products.

Dorothy was raised on Long Island, attending high school in Rockville Center. She was a cheerleader, attractive and popular. This coming May she and her husband were scheduled to attend her 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion in Rockville Center.

Her main interests as a young woman were skiing and music, and all her life she loved to sing. John told me that she knew all the words to every popular song ever written. In 1963 she graduated with a degree in history from Syracuse University, and then spent some time as a model in the Manhattan fashion industry. By all accounts she was a very beautiful young woman.

Shortly after graduation she married her college boyfriend, Lenny. They lived in New York, where Dorothy became the first saleswoman for The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. In her spare time she had a business working with a friend to design custom furniture. One of her tables is now in John's house in Vista Atenas.

She and Lenny were married for 20 years and had two sons, Peter and John. Peter lives in Utah and works as a stunt man for films and TV shows. One of his jobs was to do stunts for Harrison Ford in the well known movie "The Fugitive."

He also appeared in “Master and Commander”, “Mission Impossible”, and “Law and Order”, among many others (Google ‘Peter Epstein’ for interesting details). Peter has two sons, one of whom was born just a week after Dorothy died.

Her younger son, John, is a pianist living and working in Florida, playing mostly “blues” type music. He is not married.

In 1987, six years after her divorce, she met John Dessarzin at a friend’s wedding, where John was the photographer. Somehow John ended up with more pictures of Dorothy than any of the other guests. They had their first date over dinner at the Carlyle Hotel in Manhattan, New York.

At the time Dorothy was working for a high end real estate company in New York, and going north to ski at every opportunity. John was also a skier (being from Switzerland), and he saw his opportunity. Together they rented a ski house in upstate New York, where they went just about every winter weekend for the next five years.

On December 26, 1991, they were married. Six months later in June of 1992, Dorothy complained of a tingling in her hands. Then one morning she had difficulty seeing out of one eye. After consulting with a couple of doctors she was given a MRI and diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. She was 49 years old.

MS is a relentless, incurable disease, but it usually progresses slowly. Dorothy could no longer be on her feet doing real estate sales, but she was able to work in the office for Reuters (Geo Medica), the first medical news for Internet use by

doctors and hospitals around the world. She took various drugs, both to slow the disease and to ease the pains she was feeling in her legs.

None of the drugs worked very well, but she was able to function. John took care of her and told me that she never complained. It was incredibly bad luck, but she made the best of it.

Then in October of 1999 she fell and cut her leg. It was a small cut, and after taking an antibiotic, she forgot about it. But the bad luck persisted, and an infection developed. Three months later in one 12 hour period a huge abscess grew on her leg. John was away on a photography assignment, and when he got home he learned that his wife was in the hospital. What followed was a horror story of continuing infections and skin grafts. For two and half years Dorothy was in and out of hospitals and nursing homes. John did not think she was going to make it.

Finally a burn specialist successfully got her skin to heal, but the ordeal took its toll and she was confined to a wheel chair. It is not clear whether it was the MS or the infections that took away her ability to walk.

Seeing his mother house bound in the cold climate of New York, her son Peter suggested they consider moving to Costa Rica. Peter had visited Costa Rica many times to go surfing, and knew what a great place it was. John looked on the internet and was struck by a statement that Atenas was known for having “the best weather in the world.” That was exactly what he was looking for to give Dorothy a better life.

They first came in 2003 and confirmed that Atenas was where they wanted to live. The next year they rented a house for six weeks in Pica Flora, and after a short search found the present house in Vista Atenas.

Dorothy was much, much happier in Costa Rica than she had been in New York. Her medical problems seemed to fall away. Only once in her five years here did she have to seek out a MS specialist. Their house had a beautiful view, and a wonderful terrace where she could enjoy it.

A friend gave her a German Shepherd named Garbo, an affectionate dog that became her constant companion. She would spend her days on the terrace reading and running her fingers through Garbo's fur.

Gradually she and John made more and more friends, and she went to many events and parties. After she died the word spread and a week later 65 people attended a celebration of her life at their house in Vista Atenas.

Garbo is still confused. She waits by her chair for "Mommy" to come back from wherever she has gone. John looks into the dog's intelligent eyes and tries to explain, "Mommy no mas."

I remember Dorothy's enthusiasm whenever she was going to be coming to our house to see her friends. She would always call just to be sure of the time and what she was supposed to bring. When she arrived she would be elegantly dressed and vivacious. She was the one who suggested we sing carols at the Christmas Eve gathering.

There was no sign that night that she was sick, although she did tell my wife that she had had heartburn for a couple of days. It apparently was not heart burn, but a symptom of a blood clot. She died suddenly and painlessly a few hours after returning home that night.

Good bye, Dorothy. We miss you.



Life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat; the redeeming things are not happiness and pleasure but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle.

*F. Scott Fitzgerald*

## What We Need To Know

*A special report for our readers*

We as a community were shocked and grieved to learn of Dorothy Dessarzin's very sudden passing in the early morning of Christmas Day. She was such a vital, loving and intelligent person, it was very hard to believe that Deep Vein Thrombosis had taken her life so quickly. Our hearts go out to her husband, John, who was so devoted to her.

This jolt of reality regarding the fragility and tenuousness of life led this reporter for Atenas Today to begin asking questions of ourselves and friends as to our own planning for what will inevitably come to us all. Most of us have chosen Costa Rica as our adopted home, but how much do we know about *what to do* if faced with the situation in which John found himself?

So, Atenas Today went in search of answers and understanding to the people who will be, for most of us, our first call: Dra. Candy Midence and her EMT husband, Jorge, who helped John through that most difficult night.

**AT:** Dra. Candy, we in the ex-pat community in Atenas, need to know how to prepare ourselves in the event of a death in our adopted country, Costa Rica. We would probably know what to do in our original countries, but many of us don't know how to navigate those waters here. What should we know of local customs and legal obligations?

**DC:** Well, if there is a death in your home, first call your doctor. For those who belong to Linea Vital, that would be

me: 2446-7440; emergency telephone: 8381-9595. If I know your medical history, as I knew Dorothy's, I may be able to determine the cause of death.

However, if I, or any doctor called, does not know the person, the police in Heredia, or Organismo Investigacion Judicial (O.I.J) will have to be notified, come pick up the remains, take them to the Medicatura Forense for autopsy to determine cause of death. This can be a lengthy process, both in terms of how long it takes them to get to the person, and how long it will take to determine the cause, which can take 4-6 weeks, as there is only one place that performs autopsies.

If O.I.J. cannot come immediately, the local police must be notified (2446-5063,) and both the doctor and a local police officer must remain with the person until the O.I.J. get there.

**AT:** If you are able to determine the cause of death, do the police need to be called?

**DC:** No. I can fill out the paperwork, and if the family is satisfied that it was due to natural causes and they don't need to have an autopsy to confirm it, that's it.

**AT:** So, it seems that it would be important to keep you up-to-date if there is a change in our health, determined by, say, another specialist at CIMA.

**DC:** Yes, so we can have current medical information in our charts.

**AT:** It is my understanding that there is only one crematorium in Costa Rica, and that it is in Heredia. It would be helpful to have information as to who to call if we want to go that way. Also, the cemetery in Atenas is at capacity, so what do those who want to be buried in the traditional manner do?

**DC:** As John didn't know what to do, I first thought of Jardines del Recuerdo in Heredia, so I called them, and they were able to take over. It took quite some time to get to Atenas, but they were very good.

**AT:** John said that they were wonderful. But, it is important to know that you need to have either cash or a credit card to pay them at least 50% when they arrive. The total cost was \$2000 US, so it was unnerving to think of how to take care of this in the wee hours and without warning!

**DC:** Yes. When I called them, they explained that they would need to be paid when they arrived.

**AT:** So, we need to plan, and either set up an account that can be easily accessed for cash, have it on hand in a safe, or have a credit card available that can cover immediate needs. Can the whole \$2000 be put on a credit card?

**DC:** Yes, all of it.

**AT:** In the EEUU, most states have a cremation society, and for \$750, they will come to your home when called, take care of everything. Do programs such as this exist in Costa Rica?

**DC:** Let me call Jardines del Recuerdo and find out.

**AT:** Wonderful!

**DC:** I spoke to Magnolia Posada (8814-7617), and she said that she would be happy

to come to Atenas and discuss planning. They have a lovely place in Heredia, and packages available for all kinds of arrangements. They have packages for families, couples, individuals, whatever, whether you want cremation or burial. They can keep the ashes or return them to the family, or burial plots that are in beautiful gardens. They are running promotions for the month of January and would be happy to discuss them. They also have a place in Alejuela where funeral services can be performed.

**AT:** Dra. Candy, several of us were curious about the legality of scattering ashes on our own property, or of even burying a person on our own property.

**DC:** Scattering ashes on your own property is not a problem, and, I think, burying a body would be the same, but let's ask Jorge.

**AT:** I wonder about contamination of water tables when a whole, unembalmed body is buried. Wouldn't you need a permit of some kind to protect other people?

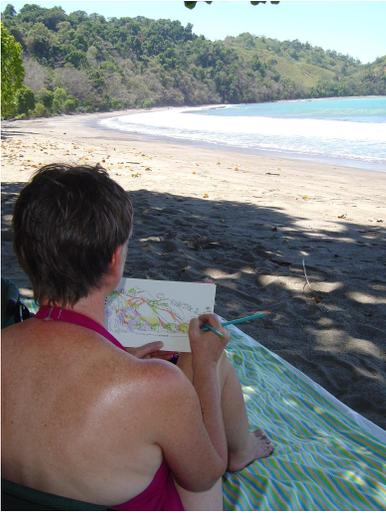
**Jorge:** I'm not sure, but if an autopsy is performed and the body is returned to the family, it is theirs.

**AT:** What else should we know?

**Jorge:** If you have an accident away from your home, the police will be involved, and it will be a long and complicated process, and will require an autopsy, so be prepared for that. These things can be long and painful in Costa Rica.

**AT:** Dra. Candy and Jorge, you are a treasure to this community, and I think I speak for all of us. You were there for John and Dorothy on the worst night imaginable, and we all love you for it. Thank you for taking this time to help us take care of ourselves. You are both wonderful. Feliz Anos, our amigos.....

## Do you want to join a “Conjunto de Artistas” (a group of artists)?



After all, there was the Degas group, the Gauguin group, the American Impressionists at Old Lyme group and even “The Junto” of intellectuals and artisans formed by Ben Franklin.

Throughout history groups of people have banded together for reasons of mutual support, inspiration, growth and shared contacts.

When Tom and I arrived in Atenas 11 years ago, I was one of few artists and the only foreign artist in town. One by one, more creative souls arrived attracted by the light, climate and natural inspiration.

**The main objective for the “Conjunto de Artistas”:** For a group of people to gather together at different specified locations each month to sketch, paint, collage and/or journal in “plein aire”. The locations will be within a short driving distance (5 minutes to 1.5 hours) from Atenas.

**Secondary Objectives:** To exchange ideas and information regarding art techniques, materials, exhibits in Costa Rica, art marketing, etc.

**Anyone** with a curious mind and the desire to create art, grow and share is welcome to join this group.

An initial meeting will be held on January 11, 2010 at A taño Restaurant (Atenas centro, 50 meters North of Mercado, next to El Rayo store) at 2 o'clock. Please meet each other and to plan our first plein aire activity to be held on January 18.

Please RSVP for this January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting and to indicate your interest in joining this group to Jan “Juanita” Yatsko. Phone: 2446-4039

E mail: [janyatsko@ice.co.cr](mailto:janyatsko@ice.co.cr) Website: [www.janyatsko.com](http://www.janyatsko.com)

# A Close Call

by Fred Macdonald



It happened so fast I did not have a chance to take a breath. Suddenly the raft was jerked up at a ninety degree angle, and all of three of us on the downhill side were dumped into the swirling water. The raft did not capsize, but slid back down. The three people who had been on the other side of the raft ended up in a tangled pile on the floor.

My two friends in the water with me bobbed to the surface and were quickly pulled back on board. Unfortunately for me, I came up under the raft.

I was on my back with my face pressed up against the raft bottom. My life jacket was pushing me upward, holding me against the raft as we both continued downstream in the middle of class four rapids. It was like I was a beetle stuck on flypaper. Instinctively I gasped, but there was no air space under the raft and I began to swallow water.

We have all been taught that becoming panicked in the water can make a bad situation immeasurably worse. Aimlessly thrashing around you use up your oxygen at a furious rate. But when you are suddenly unable to breathe it is almost impossible not to panic. If you are lucky your actions or those of someone else will free you from the

situation and you will survive. If you are unlucky you will drown, and many do.

Unquestionably I was panicked. I didn't know where the edge of the raft was, or how far. My lungs were screaming for air. There was no time to think about what to do, but suddenly I remembered the instruction the guide had given us: *if you find yourself under the raft, crawl upside down across the bottom until you reach the edge.*

The combination of the upward pressure from my life jacket and the friction between my hands and knees and the rubber bottom of the raft gave enough purchase to be able to crawl. After what seemed like forever I found the edge and popped to the surface.

How sweet the air! The water was not too rough at that point, and I relaxed, thinking the emergency was over. My \$500 trifocal, variable tint glasses had been ripped off, but I was glad to find them hanging on the safety strap around my neck. The raft was then some distance away. I raised my feet in front as I had been taught and let the current take me, glad to be alive.

However the rafting company professionals knew that the emergency was not over.

There were more rapids coming up fast, with lots of rocks. In this part of the river you want to be in the boat, not in the water. Quickly I was approached by a young man in a “safety kayak”, one of several who followed us, taking pictures and standing by to help.

These guys were experts and could maneuver in the rapids to get to swimmers in a hurry. The person in the water was supposed to grab the handle at the rear of the kayak and let the boat drag you to safety. I did this and was taken up to the next raft coming down the river, where I was promptly dragged aboard. Later I was transferred back to my boat.

It was as close as I have ever come to a fatal accident. Without the training about what to do under a raft, I might well have been trapped under there long enough to drown. That part of the training had made an impression on me, because it was not something I had thought about on my own.

The instructor had emphasized that you should not attempt to lift the raft off of you, or to go deeper to swim away, but you should crawl with your hands and knees in one direction until you reached the edge, and then your life jacket would take you to the surface.

I have always been an advocate of “what if” preparation. Knowing my tendency to be hesitant in crisis situations, I try to anticipate things that might happen and decide ahead of time what I would do. In this case that approach, along with some very good training, may well have saved my life.

My experience in the water came near the end of a wonderful day of shooting the rapids on the Paquare River on the Atlantic slope, just two days before Christmas. It is a

beautiful river, lined with dense jungle, cliffs, and waterfalls. We were rafting on an 18 mile section that was mostly class two and class three rapids, but that had half a dozen really exciting class four stretches.

People fell out of rafts into the warm water all day, and generally enjoyed it. But the last class four turbulence included what the rafters called “a hole”, which is a powerful whirlpool that will upend a raft in a split second if you get sucked in.

I cannot say enough about the professionalism of the Rio Tropicales rafting company. Their facilities, scheduling, transportation, food, etc. were all first class. The guides knew their business and did their best to make sure you were safe while you had fun. It was my first white water rafting trip, and I am glad I did it.

Would I go again? Ummm.... Maybe if my children were encouraging me to go with them. However, at 70 years of age I have other bullets to dodge. After my stay under the raft I was not anxious to go in the water again, even when all the others enjoyed their final swim in the calm waters at the end of the trip. Never-the-less I encourage every adventuresome person to do it, at least once.



# New English Speaking Church in Atenas

by *Marlene Reed*

On January 10, 2010 (01-10-10) at 8:30 a.m., Atenas will have an English speaking church. The church service will be held at Finca Huetares, 2 miles east of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles, Atenas.

Pastor Bob Reed and his wife, Marlene, moved to Atenas on September 29, 2009. Originally from Ohio, Bob served in Hospital Administration before entering the ministry 30 years ago. For the last 16 years, both, he and Marlene founded the Willow Lake Baptist Church in Northeastern Alberta, Canada. The church was turned over to two national pastors in October 2008. With winter temperatures hitting -40 to -50 degrees below zero, they felt it was time to warm up. Through a series of trips to Latin America, Bob felt the call of God to move to Costa Rica. In July of 2008, Bob, Marlene and their daughter, Tiffany, visited Costa Rica and immediately fell in love with the Ticos, their culture and the climate.

Upon arriving, God revealed to Bob immediately that an English speaking church was needed right here in Atenas. It was exciting when they realized that God had also been speaking to others of the same need and preparing their hearts. In God's sovereignty, our paths all crossed right here in Atenas!

The Reeds are looking forward to meeting everyone who is interested in a time of fellowship, praise, worship and hearing God's Word preached on Sunday mornings. For additional information about the church, you can call Bob or Marlene at 2446-8090. Bob's email is [ktjmbreed@ymail.com](mailto:ktjmbreed@ymail.com) and Marlene's email is [marlenereed@ymail.com](mailto:marlenereed@ymail.com)



Bob and Marlene have three children. Kristi (36) and her family live in Ohio. Tiffany (28), who is very active in ministry in Kentucky and their youngest, and Jonathan (26), who with his family live and work as missionaries on the Amazon River.

## New York Times article lauds Costa Rica

An influential columnist recently published an article that praises Costa Rica and predicts a great future. It is well worth reading. Go to this web address:

[www.nytimes.com/2010/01/07/opinion/07kristof.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/07/opinion/07kristof.html)

# Valentine's Day Celebration



On Sunday, February 14,  
**Finca Huetares** in Los Angeles will celebrate Valentine's Day and the grand opening of their new

## **Iguanas Miniature Golf**

All day buffet, starting at noon, with music and dancing.

Rodriguez Brothers guitar and music mix from noon to 3pm

Marvin Suarez performs from 3pm till 6pm

**2446-4147**

Cost is 12,000 person, with alcohol available for purchase. Reservations required.

DISCOVERING YOUR INNER AUTHOR:  
A 5-DAY CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

February 22 – 26, 2010

**with Alison Tinsley and Ann Rohovec**

This workshop will consist of directed writing exercises (such as writing a descriptive essay from a visualization) designed to yield material for future pieces of writing you would like to produce.

The exercises will involve a process of self-discovery in which your experiences can be the basis for our instruction of writing techniques, including description, dialogue, organization, creating a scene, characterization, etc. These techniques can then be applied to whatever genre of writing you want to pursue: essays, articles, fiction, poetry, memoir - or even business and professional writing. The ultimate goal will be to produce a polished piece of work by the end of this workshop. At the end of the workshop, we'll also give you additional material to continue your writing development.

Alison and Ann have many years of experience teaching writing at the University level and have published works in all of the above genres. Alison is the co-author of *Sleeping With the Toucans: 100 Great Places to Stay in Costa Rica*.

The workshop will start at 9 a.m. with an informal breakfast session, then instruction and writing practice will be scheduled from from 10 a.m. – noon. We'll have a celebratory luncheon on the final day.

The 5-day workshop, including breakfasts and the final luncheon, will cost \$125/person. Enrollment is limited to no more than 10 people.

For additional information or to sign up for the workshop, call Alison at: 2446-0458 or 8345-3738 or email her at [alisontinsley48@gmail.com](mailto:alisontinsley48@gmail.com).

For those who would like to participate in a yoga class prior to the workshop, Leah MacLauchlan is offering yoga sessions from 7 – 8:30 a.m. daily at her usual rate of 2000 colones/class.

**Seeking Bridge Players**

**If you would like to play, please call me,  
AlisonTinsley, at 2446-0458, or 8345-3738,  
or email at the address above.**

## FEAR OF HEIGHTS *by Alice Constantine*

I've always been afraid of falling from a great height. Get me near the edge of anything and I feel dizzy, shaky, even nauseous. I know where I learned this fear: I remember my parents always stuck to the inside lane going over bridges, and my mother would close her eyes, never looking down. My father would not take a window seat in an airplane, and my mother avoided elevators whenever an escalator was available.

Over the years I've tried to overcome this fear by skiing high slopes, even though I shook on the way up in the lift, and I've lived in two mountainous areas—California and Atenas--where the road twists through steep passages. I can now look down when on the beach road from San Mateo to Atenas, a real accomplishment.



This brings me to our recent trip to Petra, Jordan with our friends Lydia and Roger. Petra is a rose-red city carved out of rock where 30,000 people lived 2,000 years ago. My husband Jim and our friends convinced me that I could ride a camel despite the fact that they are at *least* 8 feet tall and it felt like I was 15 feet off the ground. I felt giddy and brave. There were more "heights" to conquer, however. . .

After lunch, Lydia suggested that she and I travel up a steep, winding gorge with 800 steps to see a fabulous monastery. Our choices were a two-hour walk or a twenty minute donkey ride with a guide. We chose the donkeys, who were named "Whiskey" and "Gin." Our guide Akmed assured us they were sure-footed and gentle.



Going up was not so bad, because we were on the inside of the steep gorge. Plus, there were vendors along the way to distract us. When Lydia told them in Arabic that we had no extra money for their trinkets, they would gleefully call out in English, "no money, no honey!" And the monastery was truly beautiful. We sipped mint tea in a large Bedouin tent and marveled at the architecture.

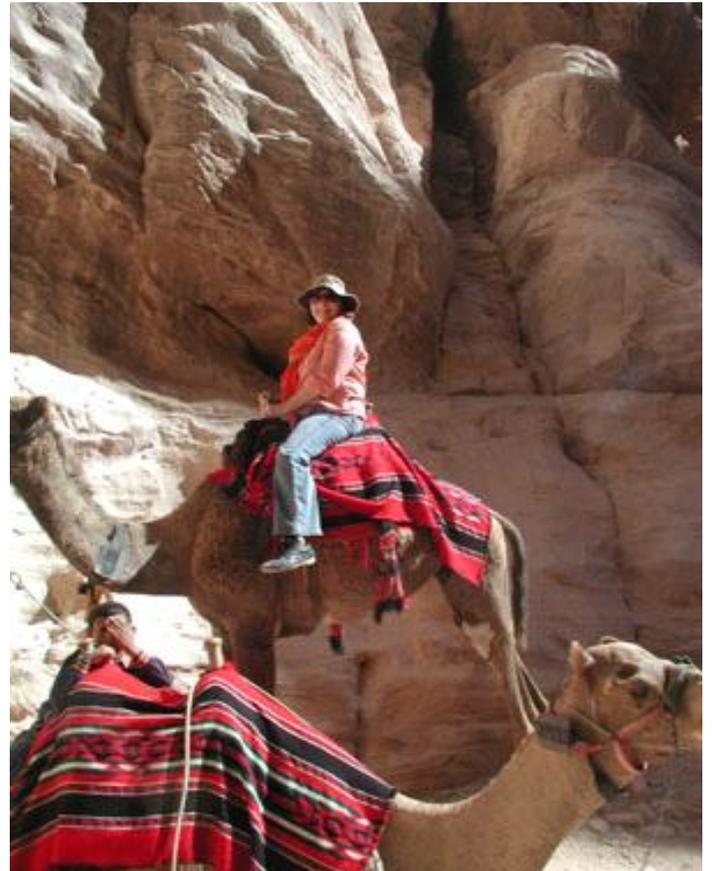
Getting down the mountain was where I became nervous. This time the donkeys were on the *outside* edge of the path. They were not just sure-footed, they were very anxious to return home and let nothing stand in their way.

The "steps" were uneven rocks at least a foot tall in some places, producing quite a jarring ride. It didn't help that our guide kept yelling at the people walking up the mountain towards us, "OUT OF THE WAY! OUT OF CONTROL!" I saw a blur of white faces and backs flattened against rocks.



Our guide must have seen that I was pretty pale myself, so he took the reins of my donkey and started telling me stories to distract me. He said he had married his "childhood sweetheart" when he was 15 and she was 13. Now 18, he had two young children and dreams of owning a herd of 10 donkeys. (I wondered briefly if he would name them after other drinks, like "Rum" and "Vodka.")

He also told me that while he had little formal schooling, he spoke seven languages, including Russian. When asked what he could say in Russian, he replied, "donkey," and "cheap." His English was quite fluent, however, and before I had much more time to think about it we had reached the bottom of the gorge, exhausted but exhilarated.



I realized that because of the beautiful scenery, the company of a good friend, and the stories of our guide, I had forgotten to be afraid of heights. As we dismounted, Lydia raised her arms high and exclaimed, "Alice, isn't it GREAT to be so ALIVE!" Yes indeed, my friend, it is.

*With fond thoughts of Dorothy Dessarzin, who seemed to truly appreciate the sheer joy of life.*

# Our Columnists

## Testament

*by Diane Holman*



I love life.

I love the life of animals. One morning, on my drive to work from Laguna Beach to Irvine, I observed the cows roaming the fields of the Irvine Ranch and realized I could no more eat them than fly to the moon.

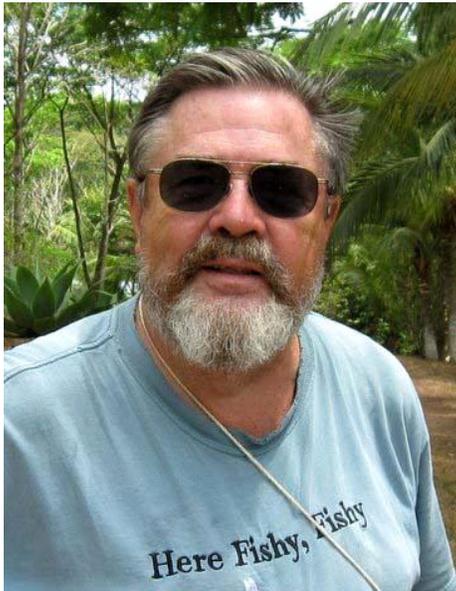
I love the life of women. I know what it is to be pregnant and to give birth to babies and—more significantly—what it is to raise babies to young adulthood. I know that women—and women only—should decide whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term.

I love life and therefore abhor war. I love life and therefore abhor the death penalty. I love life and therefore abhor the killing of doctors performing legal abortions.

I love life and so disdain all moralities that deny it in the service of some religious belief and all economies that disregard it in the service of profit. I love life and sex and growth and dancing. I love the pulse at my wrist and new green shoots of plants and my dogs (and your dogs, too, I'm sure, if I should happen to come to know them).

At night, when I sit on my deck with my martini, I breathe in the fresh sweet air and let it sing through me.

## ...longing for the simple life...



*by Martin Lively*

When we lived in Northern Virginia near Washington, DC, I guess I had, over the years, become hardened to things which now unsettle me: bumper to bumper traffic, not just at commute time, but all day every day; an urgency and speed to shopping in places like Walmart and Costco that approaches the feeding frenzy of sharks; rampant excess in the number and nature of huge cars, the volume of fast food restaurants; and the lack of courtesy, knowledge and helpfulness of the staff of stores, restaurants and doctor's offices. No one knows anything, few seem to care about the customer/patient, and almost no one seems happy, or looks like they are enjoying themselves.

I am not comfortable in the United States anymore. There is just too much. Too much of everything. Too much noise. Too much traffic. Too much consumerism and advertising and shopping and buying and

acquiring stuff. My friend's homes are piled high with things, with stuff. The kid's rooms have trails across the floor through the leaf litter of wall to wall toys.

I needed a box of band aids and went to the local Harris Teeter grocery store. The band aid section is five and six shelves high, it is over eight feet long on the aisle. There are hundreds of boxes of different brands and sizes and shapes and varieties of band aids or curads as they are called in Costa Rica. Is there really a need for hundreds of different packages of little strips of tape with a piece of gauze? It just boggles my mind. I'm not at peace here.



The sense of urgency and the excited rush of shopping in the malls carries over into the food courts at the malls where shoppers race from fast food purveyor to table where they seem to be consuming without tasting while chattering about the great sales and "Did you see the shoes at...? It was so loud that I could not hear Jean's voice from just across the little table, and had to shout to make myself heard.

I remember from when I commuted from Northern Virginia into DC, that the peak rush hour was unpleasant. Now to go to the shopping center mid-morning or the doctor's office mid-afternoon presents a worse picture than the traffic at that time. Huge dark windowed SUV's jockey for position at stop lights and then race forward with so little space between them that every few miles a wrecker is loading a rear ended vehicle while a traffic cop hands out another ticket.

So enjoy the peace and quiet of the Mercado Central, the smile and preliminary chatting of Jesus the green grocer before you get down to the business of selecting some produce. Savor not only the flavor of the gallo pinto at Tres Hermanas but the joy and smiling faces of the women behind the counter as they cook for you and serve you and know that they please you. Even forgive those potholes on the road home, they slow you down and allow you to see the thousand shades of green the lands presents to you.

<gml><



# Atenas Foundation for Abandoned Animals



Today we got  
two emergency cases

*by Lori, Sylvia, and Lorna*

First case:

Extremely skinny huge female dog - I guess Grande Dane mix - with 11 (!!!) puppies. There were 14 but 3 of them died. We need to find homes for the puppies. The female has a "home" but in bad conditions - no food, fleas, no sufficient place to lay down - and owners want to keep her.



Second case:

(pure?) Boxer, adult female, only skin and bones, lives in the street, has something with her eye that needs surgery, was "owned" and abused (!) by drug addicts in the past. Needs foster home asap, or better permanent home of course.



## Christmas Bird Count along the Costa Rica Bird Route



by Lorna Smith

Three Atenas biologist/birders, Lorna and Darrell Smith, and Fred Ball, recently traveled to the Sarapiquí/San Carlos region in northeastern Costa Rica, (part of the San Juan/La Selva Biological Corridor), to lend a voluntary hand to a very worthy effort. The three of us made up one of the volunteer birding teams sent into the region by the Rainforest Biodiversity Group to conduct an annual bird survey. The effort is part of the annual Christmas Bird Count conducted in different locations around the globe in order to establish population trends, and indirectly, habitat quality for world's bird populations. The survey results will also be used to highlight the rich birding to be had along the Costa Rica Bird Route.

The Costa Rica Bird Route in northeastern Costa Rica is the project of the Rainforest Biodiversity Group. The Route was established as a means to bring attention and ecotourism to lodges and accommodations in the San Juan/La Selva Biological Corridor (which includes the Rio San Carlos.) This area is home to the Great Green Macaw, the signature bird of the Rainforest Biodiversity Group, and hundreds of other species. In the case of the Great Green Macaw, the

almendro, or almond species, *Dipteryx panamensis* provides both its primary food source and trees for nesting cavities. Few big old almendros trees remain. The wood is valued for furniture and home construction, and much has been cut. It is now illegal to cut this species of tree in Costa Rica. Large, standing trees can still be encountered within the San Juan/La Selva Biological Corridor.

Much of this region along the San Carlos, San Juan and Sarapiquí Rivers is given over to agriculture (especially pineapple, and forestry) and it is essential to protect the remaining old forest habitat and promote reforestation wherever possible. Through the promotion of birding tourism it is hope that the Bird Route:

*“will bring economic opportunities for local landowners and local communities via visiting bird watchers and other ecotourists, providing an economic incentive for habitat conservation.”* Rainforest Biodiversity Group

So far that effort is paying off. Twelve lodges/reserves are enrolled as part of the program, and habitat management plans will be developed for all the sites.



Our team was assigned the area encompassing Mi Pedacito de Cielo, a lodge and private reserve on the Rio San Carlos near Boca Tapada. We spent 14 hours straight in sometimes rough terrain conditions, covering as many kilometers as possible and counting every species and individual bird that we observed or heard. We topped a hundred species for the day, including some fairly unusual birds such as the Rufous Mourner and the Scarlet-rumped Cacique. The other team we encountered and birded with Sunday afternoon at Laguna Lagarto Lodge following our official count at Mi Pedacito, was composed of ace birder, 15 year old David Segura and his father, Alberto from San Jose, Costa Rica. David may be only fifteen, but with his keen ear and bird knowledge he is well on his way to being a top bird guide!

Both Laguna Lagarto Lodge and Mi Pedacito de Cielo are official sites included on the Costa Rica Bird Route. Both operations have dedicated substantial time, money and effort to providing habitat and restoring degraded areas. Both places are enrolled in the Costa Rican Payment for Environmental Services Program, meaning they have agreed to abide by certain conservation standards for their hundreds of hectares of forest land.

Once the bird count census information is compiled and the results analyzed, the information will feed into management recommendations for the private and public reserves along the bird route, many of which are adjacent to, or partially inside the newly formed Maquenque National Park.



Today, Maquenque National Park near the border with Nicaragua exists mostly on paper. Lacking funds to purchase and manage all areas in the Park, the Costa Rican government and cooperating agencies are working to establish mutual goals and habitat approaches for the area including private land-holdings and reserves.

If you would like more information about this biologically rich region of Costa Rica, or would like to arrange a trip there, contact Darrell and Lorna at 2446-8452 or visit their website at [www.birdingonabudgetcr.com](http://www.birdingonabudgetcr.com). Also, check out the website for the Bird Route [www.costaricanbirdroute.com](http://www.costaricanbirdroute.com).

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**Frank Schornenberg**

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Asking price \$60,000.



Contact Fred Macdonald, 2446-0440, 8848-7632, fredmac222@yahoo.com.

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Birds are simply the most visible, colorful, and noisy animals on earth. This small beautiful country has almost 900 different species. — about the same number as the US and Canada combined! However, *Costa Rica is only 1/400 the size of North America!* What a truly astonishing richness and concentration of bird life in such a small area! Birding is contagious and we would like to share the experience with you, your family and friends. Here's what we offer:

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## Atenas Today Advertising Rates and Policies

Atenas Today is sent out monthly to over 250 email addresses of people who live or vacation in the Atenas area. Display ads up to half a page in size cost \$20 for six months, or \$35 for twelve months. Small changes can be made in the copy month to month at no charge. Classified ads cost \$5 per insertion, with a maximum of 50 words.

Payment can be made by putting cash in an envelope and depositing it in Post Office Box 292 (Fred Macdonald) in Atenas. Be sure to put your name and the amount on the outside of the envelope.

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