

ATENAS TODAY



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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 350 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at fredmac222@yahoo.com.

Compositions from back issues are archived by category 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.

Useful Spanish Phrases

Group 1

?Que hay de nuevo?

What's new?

?Lo ocupa ya?

Do you need it now?

?Como amanecio?

How did your day begin?

?Que paso con el desayuno?

What about breakfast?

¿Para que sirve eso?

What's that for?

¿Se lastimó?

Did you hurt yourself?

A ti te toca.

It's your turn.

Ya me siento mejor.

I feel better already

Termine de comer.

I'm finished eating.

Póngase serio.

Get serious.

Group 2

Digame algun chisme.

Tell me some gossip.

Este no es tan bueno como eso.

This is not as good as that.

Tanto como puede ver...

As far as you can see...

Mire esas camisetas talladas.

Look at those tight tee shirts.

Que no hace uno por amor.

What we won't do for love.

No nos llevamos bien.

We don't get along.

Despues de unos tragos...

After a few drinks...

Todo se pone mejor...

Everything gets better...

Al menos por un rato.

At least for a while.

Group 3

No sea gruñon.

Don't be a grump.

La fiesta salio bien.

The party turned out well.

La acera quedo bien.

The sidewalk turned out well.

El es listo.

He is clever.

El esta listo.

He is ready.

?Que debo hacer?

What should I do?

Me ha sorprendido el...

I was surprised at the ...

Este mango es cele.

This mango is green.

Esta pared es verde.

This wall is green.

Atenas Today Interviews Kay and Tom Costello
of Kay's Gringo Postres

AT: This place is bigger than I expected. You are a bakery, a restaurant, and an English language library. There must be over 500 books on these shelves. Do you sell them?

Kay: No, it's free. We encourage people to donate and swap books.

AT: That's a great service. Together with the food, that must bring in a lot of people.

Kay: It's great. We get to meet people from all over.

AT: Is that why you started this business?

Kay: Pretty much. I love people and have always done things that led me in this direction. Back "home" I was a waitress for 33 years. Now "home" is here and I love it.

AT: Where did you and Tom come from?

Kay: We are both from South Dakota. My first husband died, and five years ago I married Tom, who brought me here.

AT: What about you, Tom? What did you do in South Dakota?

Tom: I was a cattle rancher until the late 70's. My grandparents came to South Dakota during the gold rush and my family had been there ever since. I grew up a cowboy. Later on I started a bar and steak house.

AT: What was your life like?

Tom: For many years I had a serious drinking problem. Finally when I was 43 I got into AA. That was 34 years ago. After I sold my steak house, I spent six years working at the treatment center that helped me, and after that I did counseling

AT: AA has certainly helped a lot of people. I see signs for meetings all around Costa Rica.

Tom: Yes, but not many meetings for English-speakers. That's why I host an AA meeting in English here at 7 pm every Wednesday evening. .

AT: How did you get from South Dakota to Costa Rica?

Tom: I had a friend in South Dakota who had grown up in Costa Rica. In 1995 he organized a trip for a bunch of us to visit his relatives and tour the country. Costa Rica felt like home to me, like South Dakota used to be, open and friendly with not too many rules and restrictions. I knew then that I would be moving here, and in 2003 I did.

AT: You've only been married five years, so you must have come shortly after you got together. How did you drag Kay away from all her friends in South Dakota?

Kay: He brought me here on a vacation. It was my birthday. After being in Atenas only a few days people we had met gave me a birthday party. Forty people came. I couldn't believe it. When it was time to leave, I cried. I was still crying when we got to Florida, and we decided to get right back on the plane and return to Costa Rica. We stayed for 4 months. From then on it was a matter of settling things in South Dakota and moving.

AT: How did you originally meet Tom?

Kay: (Laughing) I fell into an oil pit.

AT: That's kind of drastic.

Kay: It's one of life's stories where one thing leads to another. I was having the oil changed in a small car. The car was over the pit, but the car did not cover the entire hole. When I walked around the front of the car, I assumed that the floor continued. Wrong.

AT: Were you badly hurt?

Kay: Pretty bad. It was a six foot drop onto a metal grate. I had broken bones and deep punctures.

AT: And Tom was there to pull you out?

Kay: Oh no. I met Tom later when I was using the insurance money to buy a trailer from him. The owner of the gas station told me that I had to sue him or his insurance company would not pay my medical bills. I protested and said it was an accident, but he insisted. So I sued and my lawyer got me enough money to buy a new trailer. Go figure.

AT: Don't get me started on the American legal system.

Kay: Anyway, after my first meeting with Tom I told my friend that I was going to marry him.

Tom: Yea, I took her dinner to celebrate her buying my trailer and that was it. We were married a year later.

Kay: Just think, if I hadn't fallen into that pit, I would never have met Tom and never discovered Costa Rica.

AT: Did you intend to start a business when you moved to Costa Rica?

Tom: Not really, but I have always been open to trying things.

AT: How did you get into gringo deserts?

Kay: It was a strange thing. Tom found this old recipe for cheesecake and talked me into trying it. The result was surprisingly good, and people urged us to sell it. This desert led to others that people seemed to like. One of our early customers was the La Trilla Restaurant.

Tom: In order to sell to restaurants we were told we needed to get a business license, and to get a license we had to have a location. This store space was available, and here we are.

AT: You seem to be selling a lot more than just deserts.

Kay: Oh yes, we have evolved into a restaurant. We serve gringo style breakfasts and lunches from 7 am to 6 pm Monday through Friday, and 8 am to 4 pm on Saturday. On Sunday we are open 1 pm to 6 pm and Tom serves a full course dinner.

AT: That's a heavy schedule.

Kay: We have great local help. You met Mercedes, who has been with me since the beginning and speaks near perfect English with our gringo customers. Tom does the main dish cooking, and Mercedes, Irene, and I do the baking. It's our life, and we love it.

AT: Do you have children in the U.S.

Tom: I have 3 and Kay has 4. But they have to come here to see us. I haven't been back since we moved here four years ago, and I don't intend to go. We have two great grandchildren we haven't even seen yet.

AT: What is that you like so much about your life here?

Kay: Aside from all the things we all like about Costa Rica, we love our role in the community here. We have become a kind of community center for English speakers, and we have the opportunity to meet and help new people. Some customers came in last week who did not speak Spanish and who had to meet with local officials. We sent Mercedes to go with them to the meeting. It's very satisfying.

Tom: Don't forget the food. We see ourselves as filling a hole in providing gringos the type of food that is hard to get in Atenas.

AT: Are most of your customers gringos?

Tom: Surprisingly, we think about 60% of our customers are Ticos, and more could be. One Tico came in recently and asked if we sold only to gringos. He ended up enjoying a burger and fries.

AT: So your business venture has been a success?

Tom: By our definition, yes. It continues to grow and the income allows us to hire the help we need to let us work reasonable hours and do what we want.

AT: What are your future plans for your business?

Kay: We keep adding things as people request them. Full scale dinners every night would be hard, but Sunday brunch is a possibility. We are considering having movie and/or bingo nights.

Tom: I was a real estate broker in the U.S. for twenty years, and I am doing a little of that on the side. It is fun to show people properties in paradise.

AT: Where do you live?

Tom: We rent in downtown Atenas. At our age, we do not want to have to drive at night. For a while we rented in Barrio Mercedes, but there were too many babies in strollers on the road for me to be comfortable driving at night.

AT: Are you thinking of buying some property to get in on the real estate boom?

Tom: I believe that in the short term renting is much more economical than buying, and at our age we can't count on the long term. In the meantime, Pura Vida.

A Modest Hope

By Diane Holman

I have an old *jocote* tree in my backyard. Right now it is loaded with fruit, tight green berries that will mature in the sun. There are no leaves on the spreading limbs. They have all fallen in this dry season, fallen and been raked up by José and burned in day-long controlled fires at the back of my property.

Today feels like the best morning of my life. I am 67 years old and enjoy good health. I awake to sun-dappled shadows of green. I breathe in the air from the open bedroom window, stretch and throw back the sheet and blanket, rising to the openness of a day without work, yet another day without work, a day of inhabiting the planet in time that is my own.

My dog Hera greets me when I open the bedroom door. She walks with me as I make my way into the kitchen, to measure out coffee and water and turn on the machine. My other dog, Hecate, remains asleep in her chair in the guest bedroom. She does not understand the appeal of early morning.

I pour dog nuggets into two bowls, run fresh water into two others. I take Richard Rorty's Philosophy and Social Hope out onto the deck and settle in to read about Emerson and Whitman and Dewey, to recall in my soul what my birth country—the United States—was founded upon: inclusiveness, egalitarianism, the sweeping joy and hope of democracy: the exciting prospect of it all.

Our souls are equal to democracy, I'm sure. We thrill to diversity and equality. We glory in live and let live.

A great American poet said: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall". Yes! Something there is that longs to touch the other. Something that loves the being-ness of the other. Something that finds each impeccable, worthy of respect. Something that wishes well to each.

It is this which must flourish once again.

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