

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.

Some Small Measurable Distance

by Diane Holman

I love a reticence before the other,
an allowing to the other space
from apprehension.

I may never know another completely,
but that, to me, seems preferable to trespass

Learning to Live in the NOW

by Marietta Arce

I hear a baby crying outside and remember last weekend when I was with a newborn baby girl. It was quite a privilege to hold her. As she grasped my finger and turned towards me, I became fully present in the moment. Unaware of the world around her, she had immediate and 'real' needs that called for action **now!**

This new little girl transported me back in time to my own newborns. The world did not exist for us as we became enmeshed in the complexity of our budding relationships. I gazed at my babies for long periods, in awe that such perfection should have come from my husband and me, mere mortals in a hectic world. Time stood still, clutter piled up around us and I was happier than I had ever been. I savored each moment and discovered the world anew each time they discovered something new for themselves.

The years passed. Our many obligations required that we live a life replete with schedules, tangible goals and accomplishments. We were lucky, though. Every few months brought us to Costa Rica for a respite from the frenetic pace. I remember the ease with which we slipped into our surroundings. We had no 'real' life here so we just took each day as it came, often doing absolutely nothing for hours on end. I fantasized about living this lovely life forever and worked hard to make it a reality.

Nine years later, we are living here but 'this lovely life' has become 'real' life and not so different from the one we left behind in New York! We are usually planning something, doing something, going somewhere; scheduling our days months in advance and finding that we hardly have time for anything. The clutter is still around us but that is an essay for another time!

I have always been attracted to people and literature that speak about living in the present and, while outwardly open to this idea, I always found excuses to make it an impossibility in my own life. After leaving the baby, I pondered the reasons my life is so busy. My answer came quickly: I am a product of my upbringing and I must constantly produce in order to feel I've done something with my days. That was expected in New York or in Costa Rica! I am determined to make a change.

Since January, I have actually given myself permission to indulge in a massage on a regular basis. This affords me the 'excuse' to do absolutely nothing but release the stress under the masseuse's expert hands. I am grateful for each of those minutes because I am away from my home, in almost total isolation. It is an exhilarating feeling which I surrender to completely. I try not to think about anything. I turn off my cell phone and just stay in the moment, delighting in my existence, no longer aware of the trucks or noise outside. I always emerge happier, more relaxed and looking forward to reconnecting with my loved ones.

I am learning the value of living in the NOW. It requires a different kind of discipline from me, one that I realize is worth the effort each and every time I catch a glimpse of something extraordinary, like that newborn baby's tiny dimple.

My best day of fishing I was working

by Martin Lively

Dan Beswick sold paper to printers, and on summer weekends he took them salmon fishing on the Lollie B., his double ended Monterey which was docked at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. It was good customer relations for Dan, and an opportunity for me at 15 to make a little money while pursuing my favorite hobby.



FIGURE 3. Monterey style crab boats at San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf, 1934. Photo by J. B. Phillips.

In 1955 most of my high school buddies were lucky to have \$1.00 an hour jobs as box boys or mowing lawns, and \$40 a week was good money. I "worked" one day a week, Saturday, and the three or four guests normally on the Lollie B. tipped big since they paid nothing for some fine salmon fishing. Earning \$30 to \$80 a Saturday helped support my other interests.

My job was to get to the Wharf at about 5:am, buy frozen blocks of anchovies for bait, swab down the boat, make sure it was fueled and oiled, and then rig the baits. Rigging a special hook involved running it from vent to mouth and then pinning the mouth shut and wiring it so that when trolled the bait would look real. I would do half the five pound block and put the rigged baits on ice, saving the rest for later.

Men would start to arrive about 5:30am, and I would direct them to the coffee shack, which was in the center of the docks and away from the tourist spots. Dan would roll in around 6:am, check the boat and round up the fishers of the day. He always brought something great for lunch, sometimes Italian cold cuts on French bread, sometimes cold cracked Dungeness Crab, and sometimes hamburgers that we grilled on board.. He loved to serve a special lunch.

The galley produced coffee , so all sat around holding hot cups to sip from and to take the chill from their hands. Dan took the helm and we slowly chugged into the Bay, through the Gate and out to where the squawk box said fish were being caught. We were the slowest boat of all. The Lollie B. had a two cylinder diesel that fired so slowly you could hear the individual ignitions. But nobody minded, brandy and coffee go a long way.

The furthest West we went was to the Faralon Islands, which are about forty miles off the California coast. Famous now for being one of the favorite haunts of the great white shark there were more sharks there then than when Jaws slandered them. To us they were the “damn sharks!” It was devastating to be fighting a good size salmon and then feel the line go slack only to then reel in a two pound head with a moon shaped chomp where the rest should have been.. We seldom saw these predators, but now and then one would cruise along right next to us, and appear to be almost as long as the boat!

We trolled four rods, each bait and leader taken down about thirty feet by a three pound iron weight attached by a pin and spring mechanism, which when pulled from the bait end would drop the weight so that the fish could be fought without all that weight interfering. Guys drew numbers for rotating strikes, and when the rod snapped up if it was your number it was your strike, and hopefully your fish. “FISH ON” was the cry to draw attention to the rod in action. Salmon fight as good as they taste, and the smaller silver salmon were the most fun because they jump, not only a sight to behold but very exciting because that’s when they often throw the hook.

Keepers had to be 21 inches, and the limit at that time was 3 fish per person. Dan and I could take limits too, so some days we came in with 18 fish ranging from five to thirty five pounds, most in the high teens and low twenties. Fish under 21 inches were called shakers because they were un hooked by grabbing the hook with a small gaff, and while turning the hook upside down and shaking the gaff the fish would be dropped into the sea to feed, grow and get ready for us next year. When things were really slow I would fire up a hibachi on davits above the engine cover and place a butterflied shaker on the grill. Tented with foil the fish was ready in less than ten minutes and then I would slide the crisp skinned fish onto a platter and remove the bones. Fingers got burned as men grabbed chunks too hot to hold. No butter, no capers, no salt, no pepper, nada – but the best salmon anyone ever tasted.

One day it was very, very slow during the morning and the guys got bored and drank way too much. By noon all were asleep in the cabin. “FISH ON” I yelled but no one responded, so I fought and landed the fish, a nice one of about twelve pounds. We were into a school of them and as much as I yelled no one came out of the cabin. So I caught twelve 12 pound salmon, one right after another until the school departed. By the time the guests came on deck only a few smaller fish were available, but everybody got at least one. At the end of the day they each got 36 pounds of salmon, which resulted in them being quite pleased with Dan and the kid. My tips were huge, and I deserved it. After all, I was working.

BE PREPARED

by Fred Macdonald

Ok, so I was a Boy Scout. Back then the motto “be prepared” was drummed into us. Usually it meant making sure you had matches and your trusty knife on a camping trip. I always went a little overboard and thought about things like toilet paper and aspirin. When I got to college I could never admit I used to be a Boy Scout, but there was a similar “be prepared” motto among my compatriots to the effect that you should always carry a little something in your wallet in case you met a friendly girl.

This week as I watched John McCain’s embarrassment about not knowing how many houses he owned I thought again about that motto. Why is it that smart people who know they are going to be tested don’t prepare better? If I were a candidate for office I would hire a news reporter to spend two weeks thinking up every tough question he could. Then I would work with my advisers to make sure I was prepared with an answer.

I know what you’re thinking. There is no way to anticipate every possible question. But you could categorize them and be ready to deal with them according to subject. For example, McCain’s staff probably could not have foreseen the question about how many houses he has. But they certainly could have foreseen detailed questions related to the McCain’s wealth. A reporter might have asked him how many cars he owned, or suits, or computers—all things that the average person would know, but McCain might not. However, McCain could have been prepared to deal with any obtuse question in this category by saying something like this:

“What kind of question is that? I admit I am fortunate enough to have a lot of money and things, but that’s got nothing to do with my credentials as a presidential candidate. There have been good rich presidents and good poor presidents. If you want details about my financial situation read the tax returns and other documents I have already released. In the meantime let’s talk about what matters.”

If the reporter persisted, he could have shown his toughness:

“Look, I already told you. I am not going to respond off the cuff to questions about my money or possessions beyond what information you already have. If something comes up in the future that I think is relevant, the facts will be made available. Next question...”

Barak Obama showed a similar lack of preparedness when he was asked why he thought he was having a hard time getting support from blue color white men. Clearly this was a question that should have been anticipated and prepared for. But apparently it was not, because Obama’s answer, while it was probably truthful, certainly did him a lot more harm than good. He said it was because men like that tended to rely on guns, religion,

and other white men when times were tough. Not the answer that his advisers would have recommended.

Then there is the awful example of our troops standing by in Baghdad when stores and museums were looted. The military, of all organizations, is supposed to be prepared. Yet in the case of Iraq that preparation was limited to winning the battle, not to what might happen afterward. When law and order broke down and citizens started looting and our military commanders did not know what to do. One would think an organization the size of the U.S. military would have people working full time on “what if” questions and answers. Even suicide attacks using hijacked airliners might have been anticipated and prepared for. After all, it happened in a Tom Clancy novel.

Why is it that we don't work harder at being prepared? I believe it is a combination of arrogance and laziness. We are arrogant in thinking we will know what to do in most circumstances, and we are too lazy to make the effort to prepare responses to unlikely events. The result is that when one of these rare events happens we tend to freeze until we can think through the alternatives. I think that it takes advance mental preparation to be able to move quickly when presented with the unexpected.

I remember with shame how I failed to respond a few years ago when a small child fell off of pier and was drowning. Several of us were sitting on a hotel porch facing the water, with a long pier off to one side. Out of the corner of my eye I saw some children playing on the pier, and I thought I saw a splash on the far side. Then I thought I might have heard a child's shout. I looked but couldn't really see anything. No one else in our group had noticed. However, I was a little concerned so I said to the group, “I think one of those little kids might have fallen off the pier into the water.”

Another man on our porch immediately jumped up and stared at the children on the pier. Then without hesitating he climbed up on the porch rail and jumped into the knee deep water. Fully clothed he ran toward the pier. He was not sure that one of the kids had fallen, but he thought it was likely and did not wait to find out. I stood on the porch and watched as this man waded into the deeper water and rescued the child.

That man was prepared to act on incomplete information to help a child who might be in trouble. He did not stop to think about possibly looking silly, or about ruining his shoes and pants, or about waiting to see if someone else was in a better position to do something. I had seen the situation first but hesitated so long that it might have been too late. Now I like to think I am prepared and would act immediately in a similar situation.

There other examples on the news almost every day. People see a man hit by a car and keep on driving. They have not decided ahead of time whether they would stop in a situation like this, and by the time the event registers and they think about what to do they are half a mile down the road.

As an exercise, prepare yourself to act quickly by deciding what you would do if:

1. You are the first person to arrive at an accident scene.
2. You are next to a person who collapses unconscious on the sidewalk.
3. You see a large dog attacking another person.
4. You come across a broken down car on a lonely road with a man and woman standing beside it.
5. You see person shop lifting in a store.

I am sure you can come up with many other scenarios where you have to make an instant decision about what to do, or not do. You may wish you had prepared.

Mathematical Proof that Women are Evil

by Win Hilsman

$$\text{women} = \text{time} \times \text{money}$$

$$\text{time} = \text{money}$$

$$\text{women} = \text{money} \times \text{money}$$

$$\text{money} = \text{root of all evil}$$

$$\text{money} \times \text{money} = \text{evil}$$

$$\text{women} = \text{evil}$$