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ARCR's English Language Magazine

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El Residente



**FIFTY YEARS AGO
IN COSTA RICA**

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Check our blog on our Facebook site.

This magazine has been published every two months since 1995 as the official communications media of ARCR Administration. Our organization provides service to thousands of foreigners who have chosen Costa Rica to reside for short periods or for permanent residence.

Since 1984 we have been offering reliable **services, information and advocacy** to Costa Rica's foreign residents. We have the experience and ability to help you with your residency application, immigration, business and financial management, real estate purchases and rentals, property management, insurance, pet importation and much more.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

C OVID-19 has certainly drastically affected our world, personally and in general. El Residente is no exception, as will be evidenced by this issue. Our sincere thanks go out to those who were able to contribute to the magazine.

Unfortunately, this issue will not be printed or available in hard copy – it will only be distributed electronically. We regret that, but at the present time there are no printing services available.

We believe that social distancing is important to protect not only the staff of ARCR, but also our valued members. So, until such time as the government removes the social distancing recommendations, El Residente will continue to serve ARCR members as best we can; we remain available via email. If you have any questions or suggestions, please send them to service@arcr.cr

The staff of El Residente are all healthy and staying safe. We sincerely hope that all our members are also enjoying good health and their free time during the current “house arrest” conditions.



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ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

The big news, and what is in the forefront of everyone's mind, is COVID-19. The virus has caused major disruptions in business and personal activities all over the world; everything, from the national governments on down have gone into a sort of hibernation and many businesses have come virtually to a standstill until the crisis passes. How much longer that will take is unknown.

ARCR is no exception. As everyone should know by now, as a precaution to protect not only our members, but to also the office staff and administration, we have closed our office to walk-in traffic.

That does not mean that ARCR services are not available. They are, but at a reduced level. Members can still contact the office via telephone, Facebook, email, and WhatsApp (see the masthead of this magazine for the appropriate contact information). Business hours are from 8:30 to 4:30 weekdays, and we ask that inquiries be limited to important matters. And please, be patient as many of the staff are working from home.

The good news is that, at the time of this writing, none of the office staff, Board of Directors, or Administration have become victims of the Coronavirus. To our knowledge, neither have any ARCR members.

Also in the good news category is that Costa Rica has the lowest number of fatalities from the disease worldwide, and has received kudos from the United Nations and the World Health Organization for its efforts. Obviously, Costa Rica is the right place to be now, and will be in the future. We salute our members here for their wise decision.

For those persons whose applications for residency were in process when COVID-19 struck, Costa Rica Immigration is presently "closed" with a skeleton staff handling only important border and entry matters – NO work is being done on residency

applications at this time. Processing is scheduled to resume when the full staff returns, which presently is anticipated to be May 17.

ARCR and the Board of Directors will notify members of any changes as they occur, and as soon as we are able to we will return to full operation. Please be patient during this trying time, and remain diligent in following all the recommended directions for social distancing, hygiene, quarantine, and driving restrictions. We will all come through this.

STIMULUS CHECKS Some members have reported that when they inquired to the IRS about their payments they were told, "According to information that we have on file, we can not determine your eligibility for a payment at this time." When the US Embassy was asked for assistance via email, the following message was received, "The embassy can not help in this matter, contact the IRS." If you have questions about your US stimulus check payment, go to this site: <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment-frequently-asked-questions>.



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From the left, back row, Earl Tomlinson, Allen Dickinson,
Bob Brashears, Terry Renfer, Terry Wise.
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6 FIFTY YEARS AGO IN COSTA RICA

by Steve Johnson

Yes, We Have No Bananas

In late November of 1968 I arrived in the village of La Cuesta, my Peace Corps assignment for the next two years. Before my arrival, I knew nothing about the area except what I could find in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which wasn't much. In the atlas, as I remember, Costa Rica was yellow, Panama pink, and Nicaragua green. I could see that La Cuesta was located in the Pacific lowlands of Costa Rica, less than a mile from the border with Panama to the east, and situated about equal distance between the Pan American Highway to the north and a place called Laurel to the south. About 15 miles to the west, on the coast, was a town called

Golfito. Laurel and Golfito were connected by a thin, hatched, red line, indicating it was a railroad line of some sort. The dot on the map for Golfito was a little bigger and bolder than the dots for the other towns and villages, (plus, the letters for Golfito were a little bigger), so I guessed it must be a pretty important place.

I went to the "C" volume of Britannica where I found the entry about Costa Rica and learned that Golfito was a banana port for the United Fruit Company, as well as the economic and commercial hub of the area. It went on to say that this part of Costa Rica was low and flat, hot and humid, and it rained about 160 inches



a year. The geography and climate were perfect for growing bananas; not so perfect for human beings. That's why the Costa Ricans lived up in the Central Valley, where it was cool. I loved bananas, and after reading the article, thought, Oh boy, this is going to be great – I can eat bananas to my heart's content for the next two years.

My first meal in La Cuesta was at Conchita's fonda, or boarding house (it was a small village and there were no restaurants). For this first meal I had rice and beans, beefsteak, a salad, white corn tortillas, and fried plantains. It was my first experience eating plantains, which are related to bananas, and I fell in love with them. The next morning, I wandered around the village and noticed lots of banana trees, but when I asked, was told they were plantain trees, not banana trees. Actually, there is no such thing as a banana tree, as the banana plant is a giant herb, the largest herb on the planet, but they are so enormous, they might as well be trees, so that's what I have always called them. I kept looking for bananas, but couldn't find any. When I asked my neighbors about them, they wrinkled their noses and said they didn't like them.

Many of the people in La Cuesta had friends and relatives who worked in the banana packing facility in nearby Laurel (by the way, Costa Ricans pronounce Laurel, *laurél*, with the accent at the end). In recent years United Fruit had begun branding their product "Chiquita" banana and the workers at the packing plant stuck Chiquita stickers on the bananas before they were shipped to Golfito by train. As you can imagine, the Chiquita stickers had a way of disappearing from the packing facility and many ended up in La Cuesta. Chiquita stickers were everywhere – stuck on the walls of houses, on students' notebooks, hitching posts, bicycles, and even on children's cheeks. One of the schoolteachers put Chiquita stickers on students' homework assignments. Five stickers was an A, four a B, three a C, two a D, and one an F. I thought that was cool, but began wondering when I might finally see my first real banana.

The Peace Corps volunteer who had been in La Cuesta before me left me a note saying that he had a bicycle I could use, but he had lent it to the police chief in Laurel and I would have to go down there and get it. The police chief was expecting me and, if I really wanted the bike, it would be good if I went soon and got it before anything happened to it.

About a week after my arrival I caught the noon bus to Laurel. It traveled over a dirt road and we went slowly. The first two miles were lined with corn and rice fields,

a few stretches of jungle here and there, and cow pastures where beautiful, white Brahma cattle were grazing. There were a few houses and shacks scattered along the road. Then we came to the rain forest with tall, majestic trees. This lasted another mile. Finally, we came to the banana plantations. There were banana trees as far as the eye could see, and millions of bananas. But there seemed to be no activity going on and I could see banana bunches hanging down, fully ripe, and many were rotten. There were only three or four people on the bus, so I asked the driver if he could stop the bus so I could get down and grab some bananas.



The driver just laughed and said, “Why would you want to eat bananas? No one eats bananas.”

I looked longingly out the windows at those bananas. Bananas, bananas everywhere, and not a one to eat

After another mile of seemingly endless banana trees, we reached Laurel. Laurel was a United Fruit company town and there was a broad green, grassy plaza with white soccer goals at either end. On one side were two-story wooden bungalows with screened porches. These were the managers’ houses. On two other sides were single-story bungalows where the laborers lived. On the remaining side was a commissary, a bar/dance hall for the workers, an infirmary, and a chapel. The bus pulled up in front of the commissary and stopped; we had reached the end of the line. The plantations continued about another mile south and then there were five miles of impenetrable jungles, swamps, and bayous before one reached the Pacific Ocean.

It was a little after noon and the sun was blazing hot, and nothing seemed to be stirring. United Fruit had learned from the natives that only mad dogs and Englishmen went out in the noonday sun, so the workers began at 5 am and quit for the day at noon. Even the American managers in their fancy houses in Golfito followed this rule.

I got off the bus and went into the commissary to ask about the police chief. There were no customers at this

time of day, the man behind the counter was wearing a visor and slowly fanning himself as sweat trickled down from his forehead and cheeks. His shirt had dark perspiration stains around the armpits. He made no acknowledgment of my presence and when I asked him about the “jefe de policía,” he turned his head lethargically and pointed with a finger at a corner of the plaza. I looked and saw two large trees with a small, wooden house in the shade underneath.

I thanked him and headed for the house as fast as I could go, before the sun baked my brains. As I reached the shade of the trees I saw an older man sitting in a rocking chair on the screened porch. He was reading the Bible and was barefoot, wearing thin khaki pants and a sleeveless undershirt. Then I noticed he had a six-shooter strapped to his right leg. Aha! I said to myself, This must be the police chief. He was, and seemed pleasant and easy-going. I asked him how big the police force was in Laurel, and he said he was it – chief cook and bottle-washer. When I introduced myself as Steve Johnson, he asked me if I was related to a Mr. Harvey Johnson, who had been the United Fruit manager for the Laurel banana farms about ten years ago. After I assured him that we were not related, he told me Mr. Johnson had been very hardworking and intelligent, and had been promoted into a top management position at the company headquarters in Boston.



When I asked about the bicycle, he said he had it in the back, but it was too hot to ride it to La Cuesta at this time of day. He said the heat broke at about three and that would be a good time to leave. If I waited too long, and it got dark, he said, a jaguar was liable to come out of the jungle and eat me.

The police chief motioned to the rocking chair next to his and asked me to sit awhile. After getting comfortable, I asked him what was with all the rotten bananas I'd seen.

"Oh, those are Gros Michel," he said.

"Gros Michel?" I asked, "What's that?"

"Best eating banana in the world," he said, "but prone to Panama disease. The Company discontinued their production in Laurel about six months ago. They haven't decided if they should go with Cavendish,

which is a more resistant variety, or plant African palm. In the meantime, this place is turning into a ghost town. The Cavendish, which we call Cocos, here in Costa Rica, is a little more productive and has better packing and shipping qualities than the Gros, but oh, when it comes to taste, it can't hold a candle to Gros Michel."

"Better shipping qualities?" I said, "Kind of like the new tomatoes they're selling back in the U.S. They're square, hard, and pink, and they pack and ship well, but you wouldn't want to actually eat one," I said.

"That's the world we live in today," he said, "it's all about money and the bottom line. They use advertising to brainwash us into thinking the new varieties taste better. Bull shit!"

"So, what's happening with the plantations?"

"Most everybody's been laid off, even the crop dusters. Now, that's a blessing."

"Crop dusters?"

"Yeah, they sprayed copper sulfate over everything every few months, to keep the funguses down. Sprayed the plantations, the rivers and streams, even the workers' housing. It was awful, and we didn't even know it. A year or two ago some toxicologists came through, doing a study. It was poison, they said."

"But copper isn't toxic; we have copper water pipes in our house back in the States. How could it be toxic?"

"Oh, copper isn't toxic, but copper sulfate, that's another story. For a while they had teams of men spraying copper sulfate – they called it Bordeaux mixture – from cans they carried on their backs. They were very sloppy and used no protective clothing, to the point they were covered in blue Bordeaux mixture. They became known as the "blue men." They got paid double what everyone else got. With that double pay, they strutted around like peacocks. But they didn't live long – came down with all these diseases – kidney problems, liver problems, tumors everywhere. Really stupid, they were. Poor guys."

After a while we both dozed off, and when we woke, it was already half-past-three. I struck out for La Cuesta on the bicycle and on my way I stopped to eat some Gros Michel, and I agreed with the police chief, they were delicious. I ate until I almost popped. Having fattened myself up, I made sure I reached La Cuesta before the jaguars were out and about.



Conchita continued fixing fried plantains for me, but finally one day I blurted out, “Conchita, I appreciate you making me plantains, but gosh darn it, I really want to eat some bananas.”

Conchita looked at me in disgust. “Bananas, nobody in La Cuesta likes bananas. Why would you want to eat a banana?”

“Just because,” I said, “there are 50 million bananas down the road a piece, and for God’s sake, I want to eat one.”

Conchita thought for a moment. “You know, don Estik,” she said, “don Palacios who lives part way down the road to Laurel, he has pigs, and every week or so he goes down and gets all the Gros Michels he can fit in the back of his pickup truck, and brings them back for his pigs.”

“Pig slop?” I said. “He uses bananas for pig slop?! That’s terrible!” I exclaimed.

The next day don Palacios showed up with some bananas for me. From then on, he brought me a bunch every week. I ate bananas for two years and was the only person in La Cuesta who ate them. I was as happy as a monkey.

Besides writing, Steve enjoys digging holes, washing dishes, and splitting firewood. You can contact him at: johnsos05@yahoo.com



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12 SENIOR LIVING IN COSTA RICA

by Katya De Luisa

Corona and Family Distance

Costa Rica is a forerunner as a retirement destination, and there are many expats living here. However, after this crisis is over, we may see an exodus of senior residents who now want to be closer to their families. Even though they may have been living in Costa Rica for years, away from family and only visiting a couple times a year, they may now be reconsidering how far away from their loved ones they are.

I don't know about the rest of you, but I worry about my kids, no matter how old they are, and feel I should be closer to them; I'd feel better if my home were closer to theirs. But realistically, even if I were close by, I'd be quarantined and if they contracted that terrible virus, were hospitalized, or worse, died, there's not much I could do. But reducing the physical distance between us would be an emotional pacifier for me.

During the 1991 Limón 7.4 earthquake I was doing business in San José and my three children were in Puerto Limón. All communication and travel into or out of the area was down and I had no way of knowing if my kids were okay. I had horrible visions of losing my entire family to this disaster, so I got on the road, determined to walk to Limón. With much help I eventually made it and they were okay.

I can't start walking to the USA from here, so I have to rely on technology to keep us in touch. Like many expats, I spend a lot of time on my computer, with my children, and it does help ease the distance. I speak with them every other day and I try not to worry.

As long as we are aging and remaining independent and healthy, we don't usually think too much about the importance of having family close by. But when one of us has a medical emergency, we begin to want to be together. I am a bit different in this area, as I have weathered several emergency situations and asked my children not to come; like many, I don't want to be a burden on them.

But this crisis has been an eye-opener for me; I've realized how important it is that I have certain information, such as medical, financial, legal, and password information, recorded and in place for them; to help make whatever happens to me easier for them to handle. (If you would like a downloadable form you can use to record your information, send an email to the Editor at: service@arcr.cr and ask for one.)

But, what I think may be even more important is for me to write down how much they mean to me in a handwritten letter. I have now done that, and the letters are sitting on a shelf, waiting to be sent, and when the airlines resume flying, which will allow our postal service to once again send international mail, I'm sending them.

When was the last time you received a heartfelt, handwritten letter from someone who loves you? Or sent one? Technology has really helped us in this crisis, but sometimes the most effective way to say, "I love you," is the old-fashioned way.

Even if you have challenges with family members, maybe it's time to consider putting grievances aside. A simple, "I love you, no matter what, and hope you are okay," goes a long way to bringing peace into the lives of all, and maybe even reuniting you with ones you thought you'd lost. In times of crisis we have to put our differences aside and let our love be all that matters, no matter how much physical distance there may be between us.

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by Christine Monteith

To Surf or Not to Surf...

Responsibility versus indulgence! Being a “grownup” is sometimes a drag.

Generally, I’m not a “jump out of bed at 3:30 a.m. to go surfing” kinda girl, however it was the first Super Moon of the year and the tide was optimal. I needed a jolt of energy from coffee and fruit salad before hitting the water, so it was just before first light when we started our walk down to the beach. As the orange orb of the moon slowly sank toward the watery horizon, a ladder of golden light extended across the undulating ocean surface. The indigo night sky lightened to slate blue and I could see the white foaming crest of the waves breaking near shore as we slid into the warm waters of the Golfo Dulce. We weren’t the first to paddle out; just outside the break I could make out the rise and fall of three dark figures: our good, hard-core, surfing friends who regularly arrive before sunrise.

It was the morning of March 9, and in between catching waves there was chat in the line-up of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Costa Rica. Through the invaluable service of the internet, we were all cognizant of the international spread of the virus. Even with pre-emptive airport screening, we knew that with the thousands of tourists entering Costa Rica, infection here was inevitable.

The swells were strong that morning and our line-up joked about social distancing in the water. We normally float at least six feet apart because when “your” wave comes you don’t want anyone in your takeoff path. We even do that on big swell days when the “Surfistas” (surfing tourists) show up and there may be 40 people in the water; we keep a good distance while still being friendly. There was some concern in the community that one of the Surfistas could

import the virus. Many of our friends and neighbors, Tico and gringo, depend on the small influx of tourists to our area for their livelihood, so we tolerate them. None of us were particularly concerned.

When the borders were closed on March 18 we all rejoiced. Excited at the prospect of no Surfistas for a while, we were gleeful with the prediction of another big swell heading to our deserted playground. One of our group spread the news that all the beaches in Spain, Portugal, and France were closed, and surfing banned, but we scoffed at his Cassandra-like predictions. Then, on March 20, it was official: all the beaches in Costa Rica were closed.

Our small community is well-integrated. The gringos who choose this remote area to live wish to embrace the Pura Vida ethos, and if it weren’t for the warmth and generosity of our Tico friends and neighbors, our little finca would be a poorer place. With the official beach closure, the “Vecinos de Pavones” WhatsApp chat was fired up about surfers ignoring the beach closure. Strong words, in English and Spanish, were expressed about the need to follow the Stay Home restrictions to protect the community as a whole, versus some surfers’ defiant attitude to ignore the rules. Then, yesterday, we read the announcement regarding Residency holders; that if we leave the country our Residency status would be revoked.

It was just a year ago that we received our cédulas for Temporary Residency. The staff of ARCR was immeasurably helpful in ushering us through the year-long experience. We were grateful and relieved that the process

was successful, and plan to use them to apply for Permanent Residency when the time arrives.

I don't want to do anything to jeopardize our future. There is very little police presence here, as our community is at the end of a long, rough, gravel road, but there are police patrols in other nearby areas, and the last thing that we want is to have a "multa" on our record.

Dedicated surfers, like our local group, are non-conventional thinkers. Floating on the water for long pauses leads to contemplation and the wonder of an amazing integration with the natural world. With the perfect combination of physical effort, experience and intuition, you feel the thrill of speed as you glide down the face of the awesome natural force of a wave. No engines, no electronics, it's just you, your board and the earth's energy. It's an adrenaline kick, too.

And when a good swell is predicted, surfers start "jonesing" for a hit – and a really big swell was predicted for today. Consequently, my husband and I had several discussions about going to the beach. He has surfed all over the world for almost 60 years and his passion to catch waves never waivers. This morning we really wanted to go to the beach,

thinking that there is no harm in our actions. On second thought, we considered that we have been welcomed into this community where our friends and neighbors, some who struggle financially even in good times, are making sacrifices by staying home.

We both have great respect for their strength, dignity, and good humor in this uncertain situation, and if we go surfing we will look like those arrogant gringos who believe that the rules don't apply to them. I don't want to be that sort of person. On realizing my perspective, he agreed.

As I said in the beginning, we make a choice to be responsible and respectful to our adopted country and neighbors. And as frustrated as we are when we hear the distant roar of crashing breakers, it is the right thing to do. It's what you gotta do – we're all in this together. And there will always be more great waves.

Christine has had the great fortune to live, work and travel around the world and now is happily ensconced in tropical tranquility near the Golfo Dulce with one husband, two dogs, and four hens.

WHAT CAN ARCR MEMBERSHIP DO FOR YOU?

The Association of Residents of Costa Rica is dedicated to serving expats from all over the world who are interested in this beautiful country. We can answer all your questions about life in this tropical paradise, AND help make YOUR transition of moving here **simpler, easier, and smoother**. ARCR provides our members:



- Assistance in applying for Costa Rica residency.
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- An entertaining and informative bi-monthly magazine for members with the latest information about Costa Rica laws, plus interesting features and tips that can make life simpler.

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Patience – A Necessary Ingredient for Living in Costa Rica

Patience is a virtue that many expats don't seem to have a lot of; we are used to more efficiency than what is standard in Latin countries. I'm one of those, and the older I get, the quicker I lose my patience.

In Costa Rica the best way to test your patience is to go to immigration to apply for residency. When I came here I was a less than patient 25-year-old entrepreneur trying to make a living. It's been 40 years since I did that the first time and, even after all that time, I still remember all those frustrated people (including me) wasting a whole morning standing in line at the immigration offices not knowing where to start. I'm still trying, and still learning, but I still don't approach the Latin standard of endurance.

Back then I didn't speak a word of Spanish and almost nobody spoke English and, of course, the immigration officials didn't have a simple list of all that was needed. There was no "ventanilla única" then, and they'd send you all over town to get your documents together; it was like a treasure hunt, but in a language I couldn't understand. Additionally, in the 80s there were no attorneys who specialized in immigration so you had to

do it all yourself and then find an attorney to certify the required documents.

That first time I applied for residency was when I began to comprehend why, when living in a country full of Spanish speaking people, learning Spanish was so critical! And also, why having patience was maybe more important.

The second year, to renew my temporary residency, I went at what was, in my opinion, very early in the morning; an hour before the immigration offices opened. I had never, ever, stood in line, or a queue, as the British call it, and when I got there I found that the line was already five blocks long; there were hundreds of Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, and Cuban Marielitos requesting asylum, but there was no separate window for immigrants. Back then you needed a LOT of patience if you wanted to live legally in Costa Rica. That's when I learned a second lesson about patience; ALWAYS bring a good book!

One year later I had married and was the happy father of a baby daughter, plus I now I spoke relatively decent Spanish. Consequently, I had a change of status, which made things a lot easier, and getting the paperwork together was a lot quicker. AND, by that time I had figured out

two additional ways of making the immigration process quicker (apart from taking a book):

- 1) Be nice to the woman at the main reception desk; she can give you a list of all the requirements. With that list you have a complete picture of all that's needed, and that will save you time and effort.
- 2) Always look and see if you know someone who is already standing in line. If you do, start a conversation, and then join them. You'll arrive at the window much quicker. I know, most expats were not educated like that, but all Latinos do it. And, if you don't play the game by their rules, the line only gets longer for you.

Once my business started to grow I figured out another great way of not having to stand in line anymore; I hired a runner. A runner is a professional at standing in line. Runners knew each other and helped each other. Thinking back about this now, it was really incredible how much money all this cost society.

Costa Rica is much more efficient today because technology has obliged the Ticos to move on. Now those runners work for Uber Eats, Glovo, and Rappi. At least they still have a job.

If you are looking for ways to increase your patience (or just enjoy standing in line) don't worry; not all aspects of the culture have advanced as quickly as Immigration and there still are plenty of opportunities to work on your patience quotient. In no particular order:

- 1) Every bank – no matter how great your tolerance for slow lines (or how good your book) is, try online banking first.
- 2) Cable companies – when you want to return the cable TV box because of bad service.
- 3) Immigration – I guess they haven't changed that much in 40 years.
- 4) The power company – if you forgot to pay your bill and they cut you off.
- 5) The phone company – when you want to upgrade and get faster internet.
- 6) The water company – if you forgot to pay your bill and had your meter taken away.
- 7) Municipalities – because you can't pay your property tax online.

- 8) Customs at the airport – when several flights arrive at the same time.
- 9) Grocery stores – when they have only one out of ten cashiers functioning.
- 10) The bus stop – once the bus comes, everyone tries to get in at once.
- 11) For communion in church (for the Catholics) – I'm glad divorces are not allowed.
- 12) Public hospitals or local EBASIS – don't get sick or you have to get up really early.
- 13) COSEVI, for your driver's license – renewal is every six years, thanks goodness.
- 14) ATM machines on payday – get money on any day BUT payday.
- 15) Soccer games – get a season card or watch the game from home.
- 16) The Post office – how long does it take to buy a stamp?

Those are certainly not all, but they are possibly the top 16 “patience testers” expats encounter.

And there are two more items. I can't skip them, even though they're not exactly “standing” in line.

The first could conceivably be number one on the list; Driving in or out of San José during “rush hour” – that's any time between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. may be the ultimate need for patience.

The second is that some establishments try to be nice and have supplied a line of sequentially numbered chairs to sit in as you wait – you don't have to stand in line, you SIT in line. And, just when you get comfortable and find the right place in your book, it is the turn of the person in the number one chair to go to the counter, so everybody has to move to the next chair. Put your finger in your book and hope you don't lose your place.

Nowadays, while people are in line, almost everyone is on their cell phones and it seems that people have more patience than ever before. But I still carry a book.


Something else that also has worked well for me is to ask my wife to do everything where there's a good chance of having to stand in line; she's immune to the long waits and visits with those others in line with her. Then I can work, something I really enjoy much more than just standing in line.

In June this year, my suffering will be reduced, some. I won't need as much patience for standing in line anymore because in June I'll have my 65th birthday and I'll become an "adulto mayor." Costa Rica has a law that requires businesses to give priority to those over 65, are infirm, or pregnant, and lets them go to the head of the line. Some business even have a separate line for those who qualify. So, I'll get to be first in line now, whenever I go anywhere – but I will still carry my book!

A tip: In your quest to develop more patience it may help to understand the Latin concept of time. Expats often say things like, "Time is money!" But in the land of the Ticos, "Time is free!" (and one of the few things that is!) You didn't come here to be frustrated, so relax and be patient. Maybe they have it right.


Planning on buying or renting a home in Costa Rica? Have patience. And pay attention to your realtor.

Ivo Henfling is a Dutch expat who has lived in Costa Rica since 1980. He founded the American-European Real Estate Group, the first functioning MLS with affiliate agents from coast to coast, in 1999. He is the broker/owner of GoDutch Realty and can be reached at (506) 2289-5125 (506) 8834-4515 or at: ivo@american-european.net



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For more information on seminar dates and to reserve your seat, visit the ARCR web site at www.arcr.net, or send an email to service@arcr.cr, or contact the office by telephone at **2220-0055** or **4052-4052**.

by Mitzi Stark

Ferias, Fiestas, y Festivales – Part 4

Ferias (fairs) are often thought of as only those weekly affairs for things like selling produce, but there are many other kinds of ferias; there are environmental fairs, health fairs, job fairs, cultural fairs, and fairs to promote something, or celebrate a special occasion. Those fairs are a little more difficult to identify, but check the web sites at the end of this article for announcements and schedules. Ferias are the ideal places to explore and discover the real Costa Rica.

I don't like driving at night or traveling too far, and I don't like straining the budget, but I do like going out and discovering new things and places, so fairs are one of my preferred destinations; there's always one close by. Plus, they take place during the day and most are free or low cost. Each one I go to is a new experience. An adventure.

One feria was at the delightful museum in Santa Lucia de Heredia. It is the actual home and coffee farm of former president Alfredo González Flores (1914-1917) and now belongs to the history department of the National





University in Heredia. They not only give students a hands-on history project, but have cultural events and open houses where they may offer tortillas baked in a real mud oven and coffee made with a chorreador (a bag filter) just like in the old days. Family days are normally held every Sunday, but they are now on hold until the current emergency passes. Check the Facebook page, Museo de Cultura Popular-UNA, or call 2260-1619 for a schedule. There's an entry charge of \$500, and you can buy food and other products there.

Here are some of the other things I've discovered going to ferias:

At the Hecho Aquí, or "Made Here" fair there were genuine hand-made baskets constructed in the indigenous region of Talamanca. Sturdy and durable, these baskets won't crumble away to dust on your shelves. They are not just useful, these are works of art. I also found earrings and jewelry made from coffee wood. When the coffee trees are pruned the wood was once sold as leña (firewood) but now much goes to waste. Artesans are finding it a new source of raw material. There were also colorful birds made from discarded bottles by a group of women in Pococí. Their beautiful creations can be used as key rings, mobiles, or Christmas ornaments. The Hecho Aquí feria is sponsored by the Ministry of Culture to promote products made in Costa Rica and is held in San José in November or December. Folk dancers and mascaradas, with those big scary heads, and other cultural acts are part of the fair. Look for announcements in November.

Mayonnaise with mustard is made by Tía Sandra in Palmares and sold only at local stores and ferias. I tried it, and when I wanted to buy more, I called the number on the label. Aunt Sandra herself told me they sell it at a liquor store in San Ramón. This led to another adventure, a trip to San Ramón where, because I was not familiar with the city, I stopped in a store to ask directions. I think left the store personnel wondering about the gringa looking for a liquor store!

At a neighborhood fair in Barrio La Trinidad in Alajuela, I found cloth bags to keep those baguettes of bread safe from ants, cucarachas, and in my case, cats. They are made by a woman in Alajuela and help the environment by eliminating plastic. She sells them at ferias around the area.

LEGOs, those little plastic bricks you stack any which way, are a big hit in Costa Rica, with fan clubs and international internet connections. At a fair in the Italian Cultural Center in Barrio California, San José, organized by collectors and aficionados, I discovered that LEGOs are not just for kids! There were displays which showed the many things that can be created with LEGOs; castles with knights, ships, birds, Star Wars, even an entire city. Plus, there is the fun of digging through plastic wading pools to find the exact right LEGO for your own creation. For more information see [Ticolug](#) on facebook.

Ferias are fun! Discover something new. Meet new people. Learn about new products. How to find a fair? On the internet, go to: [siempreeventoscr.com](#), [sanjosevolando.com](#), [gamcultural.com](#), or the Ministry of Culture's site: [mcj.go.cr](#).

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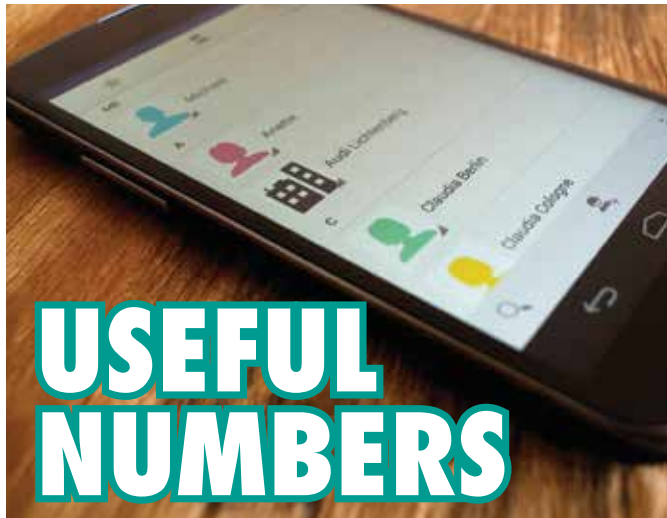
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American Citizens Services: (506) 2519-2590

Fraud prevention Department: (506) 2519-2117

Duty Officer (after business hours): (506) 2519-2000
(Dial zero and ask for the Duty officer)

United Kingdom Embassy

Phone: (506) 2258 2025

Address: Edificio Centro Colón, Paseo Colón, Provincia de San José, San José

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., 12:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Website: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica

Email: costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Canadian Embassy

Phone: (506) 2242 4400

Address: Sabana Sur, Edificio Oficentro Ejecutivo, atrás de la Contraloría, San José, 1007, Provincia de San José, San José

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Web site: <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance>

Email: sos@international.gc.ca

Emergency phone: +1 613 996 8885 (call collect where available)

French Embassy

Phone: (506) 2234 4167

Address: A022, San José, Curridabat

Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Email: a.m.bafrcr@gmail.com

Spanish Embassy

Phone: (506) 2222 1933

Address: Calle 32, San José

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Email: emb.sanjose@maec.es

Emergency assistance: (506) 6050 9853

Venezuelan Embassy

Phone: (506) 2220 3704, 2220 3708

Address: San Pedro, Los Yoses, 50 metros antes de finalizar la avenida 10.

Email: embv.crsjo@mppre.gob.ve and embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com

Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., 1:30 – 3:30 p.m..

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Need to know how to convert common measurements used in Costa Rica to Customary US Standard measurements? Use the handy conversion chart below!

(These are APPROXIMATE factors, NOT EXACT.)

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Kilograms × 2.205 = Pounds

Millimeters × .039 = Inches

Meters × 3.28 = Feet

Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet

Square meters × 10,000 = Hectares

Hectares × 2.47 = Acres

Kilometers × .62 = Miles

Centigrade × 1.8 + 32 = Fahrenheit

Liters × .264 = Gallons

Want a pocket version of some of the above conversion formulas?

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22 FROM THE EMBASSIES



ASK ACS

Current Status of Passport Applications

Because of public health measures, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 the US Department of State began limiting its passport operations as of March 20, 2020. If you have previously applied for a passport or citizenship service, you should expect significant delays receiving your passport or your citizenship evidence documents. Contact your nearest embassy or consulate to check on the status of your passport

or citizenship document, such as a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA). Please consider waiting to apply until we resume normal operations.

In an emergency, our embassies/consulates can assist with an emergency passport for an adult or a minor. If you have not received your Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA), an emergency passport may be issued by your nearest embassy/consulate.

We encourage you to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive the latest updates, as well as the days and hours of American Citizen Services, and possible evacuation plans.



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What a year it has been so far! We hope this edition of UK Matters finds you and yours healthy and safe. The last few months have had some of us wishing we could push the reset button on 2020. Yet in the midst of all the coronavirus-related drama, we've been able to witness the incredible kindness, dedication, good humor and resilience of which we're capable as human beings.

This virus has created a world of uncertainty, but at the same time, it has also reassured us, through daily acts of kindness witnessed at home and abroad, that we will get through this and come out stronger. It has been uplifting to hear stories of National Health Service (NHS) workers across the UK showing up courageously to work on containing this epidemic, and equally heartening to learn of the people showing them support – a bride and groom in East Yorkshire, for example – donated their wedding feast to workers at two local hospitals; and at the time of this writing, a 99-year-old retired army captain in

Bedfordshire had raised over US\$17 million for the NHS by completing a walking challenge in his garden!

Our Embassy staff has spent the past weeks reaching out to British tourists and visitors in Costa Rica and Nicaragua via social media, email, and phone calls to understand their individual situations, and then provide the help needed to return to the UK as soon as possible, either via regular commercial flights or on special repatriation flights coordinated by EU partners.

The frenetic pace of the last few weeks has dropped off a bit, and the messages we currently receive are a mix of requests for assistance to return to the UK and expressions of gratitude from people whose ailing parents had reached home safely, or whose entire family managed to snag the last seats on a return flight together. In one unforgettable case, from a pair of NHS nurses who'd made it back home to join their colleagues on the front lines of this health emergency.

We're happy to have played a part in helping Brits get back home. If you, or someone you know, is still trying to get back to the UK, please do reach out to us at: Consular.CostaRica@fco.gov.uk



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by Allen Dickinson



Semana Santa came Early This Year

Semana Santa, for those not familiar with the Spanish, means Holy Week. In the English-speaking world it is the time that is referred to as Easter. It is primarily a Christian holiday that celebrates the struggles, pain, and resurrection of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion. The actual dates of those historical events are not known, but some scholars say the early church aligned the Christian holiday to pagan rituals which took place to celebrate spring – the rebirth of nature and the promise of future growth and bounty.

In Costa Rica it has become one of the two major holidays of the year, alongside La Navidaad (Christmas), celebrated by many as vacation time. It has become a week when San José (and many other communities) become “ghost towns” as the population flees to the beaches for some days of fun, frolic, and self-renewal.

The first signs of the 2020 Semana Santa began in mid-March, well before the actual week (April 4-12), when the streets of the city and the highways of the country became almost deserted. But it wasn't because of Holy Week; it was COVID-19 aka Coronavirus that emptied the streets and caused businesses to close their doors. And, at this writing, it is still going on as the population self-quarantines in their homes, rarely going out for much more than food and necessary supplies.

I sincerely doubt that Mother Nature has any religious leanings, but the timing of COVID-19 seems to be a little coincidental, doesn't it? Could it be she is trying to give us a message? One that says, “Spring is the time to look forward to life, not to wars, greed, killing each other, and destroying our planet.” If that is her message it's not just a message to Christians; she has broadcast it across the world, affecting all nations, all cultures, all religions, all races, creeds, and colors, equally. Could she be trying to tell us that we, the human race, all of us, need to stop what we are doing and take some time out to reevaluate ourselves and make some changes?

Many have already died, many more will, and even more will suffer before the COVID-19 crisis has passed. As we sit “sheltering in place”, staring at the four walls (one of which may contain a 72-inch plasma TV) maybe it's time to look into ourselves to find ways to change the lifestyle we have adopted; to look for a better way to live. I think that may be what Mother Nature is trying to tell us. It's the real meaning of Semana Santa.

Even in paradise...

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NO DESCUIDE SUS COSAS

LAGARTOS POR EL ESTERO

NO HAY SODAS CERCA *

...things can be very confusing!



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* (One hour parking, all others will be towed / Keep an eye on your belongings / Alligators by the estuary / No restaurants nearby)



Physical activity at home ...is good at all

For persons aged 65 or more

In the current pandemic emergency situation, staying at home for prolonged periods, often carrying out sedentary activities, can generate particularly harmful effects on the mental and physical health of people aged over 65, to a greater extent than at other ages. Over 65s tend to be more exposed to the risk of solitude and social isolation, have a higher incidence of chronic pathologies, or have limited autonomy. It is therefore even more important to be able to dedicate time to exercise in order to maintain good general health, to organize the day with regular activities and to improve psychological well-being, which is essential for the management of stress, anxiety and tension that the current situation can provoke.

How much physical activity is necessary per week?

AGE 65 YEARS AND OVER

Total minutes per WEEK



MODERATE
aerobic activity

in sessions of at least 10 consecutive minutes

or



INTENSE
aerobic activity*

+

strengthening of the major muscle groups 2 or more times a week

+

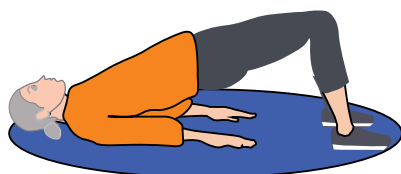
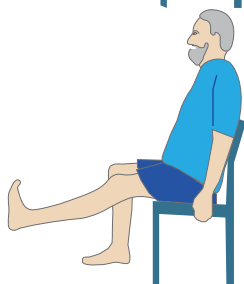
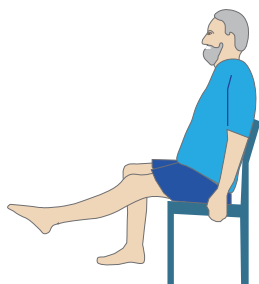
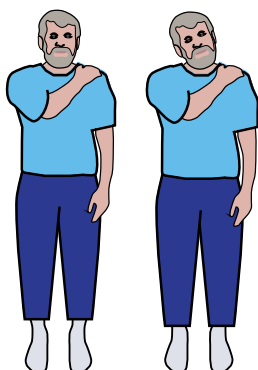
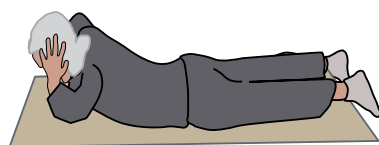
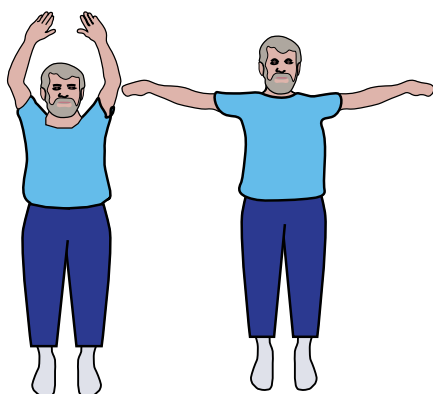
activities to improve balance and prevent falls for people
with reduced mobility, 3 or more times a week

* Vigorous/intense physical activity: when breathing and heart beating are accelerated and can cause sweating (for example: running, jumping multiple times, dancing quickly)

Some activities for this age group:

- Domestic work and gardening
- Dancing, in pairs if possible
- Listening to music
- Reading books or periodicals
- Doing puzzles or, if you live with other people, play board games
- If you use internet, you can listen to audio books, attend online courses on topics of interest, watch plays, visit virtual museums, participate in reading groups or games, etc
- Every 30 minutes take a break of about 2-3 minutes, doing simple stretching exercises or walking
- Seated meditation: sit comfortably on a chair. Make sure your back is straight. Close your eyes, relax your body and progressively deepen your breathing. Concentrate on your breathing, trying not to focus on any thoughts or concerns. Remain in this position for 5–10 minutes or more, and try to relax and clear your mind





Some examples of physical exercises

Exercises to strengthen muscles

- **Arms.** Sit or stand upright, arms by your sides. With palms forward, raise both arms out and to the side and up as far as is comfortable. Then return. Keep shoulders down and arms straight throughout. Breathe out as you raise your arms and breathe in as you lower them.
- **Hips and thighs.** Sit upright and away from the back of the chair. Lift your left leg, with your knee bent, as far as is comfortable. Place foot down gently. Repeat with the right leg.
- **Back extensions.** Lie on your front on the ground. Touch your ears with your fingertips and lift your upper body, keeping the legs on the ground. Lower the upper body again.
- **Abdominals.** Lying on your back, with your knees flexed and hands crossed behind your head to support it, lift your head and torso by contracting your abdominal muscles.

Exercises to stretch

- **Chest.** Sit up straight and away from the back of the chair. Pull your shoulders back and down. Extend your arms out to the side. Gently push your chest forward and up until you feel a stretch across your chest.
- **Upper body twist.** Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor. Cross your arms and reach for your shoulders. Without moving your hips, turn your upper body to the left as far as is comfortable. Repeat turning to the right.
- **Neck rotation.** Sit upright with your shoulders down. Look straight ahead. Slowly turn your head towards your left shoulder as far as is comfortable. Hold for five seconds and return to the starting position. Repeat, turning to the right.
- **Ankle stretch.** Sit upright, hold on to the side of the chair and straighten your left leg, lifting your foot off the floor. With your leg straight and raised, point your toes away from you. Point your toes back towards you.

Exercise for balance and stability

- **Pulling your belly in** : you can do this exercise anywhere, in any position. Pull in your belly and imagine pulling your belly button back toward your spine. Remember to keep your spine straight while you do this don't let your back bend forward. Hold this for about 6 seconds. Remember to keep breathing normally.
- **Floor bridge** : Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Find your neutral spine position, and hold it during the exercise. Pull in your belly, as in the exercise above. Push down with your feet and raise your buttocks up about 5 to 10 centimetres from the floor. Hold for about 6 seconds. Remember to breathe normally. Lower yourself slowly to the floor.

by Ryan Piercy



It's a Small World

If you stop for just a moment and appreciate all Costa Rica has to offer, most people cannot help but be stunned by all that surrounds us. The country has a diverse culture, amazing vistas, beautiful waters, a great climate, and an incredibly diverse ecosystem. It is a small country and is developing quickly, yet the land still holds many secrets, even in this modern day.

I love the startling variety of wildlife to be appreciated here, but even more so, the fact that new species are still being uncovered almost every day. The most recent discovery I am aware of is a salamander, *Nototriton costaricense*, the Southern Moss Salamander, which was found in Parque La Amistad near the Panamanian border in 2018. This brings the recorded number of amphibians in the country to 211. Unlike the other known local species of salamanders, which are mainly brownish, this new variety has quite a lovely coloration of burnt orange with a bit of yellow, and black spots.

The *Nototriton costaricense* is a member of the genus of lungless salamanders (they breathe through their skin) and to date, nine of the twenty known species of moss salamanders are found in Costa Rica. These species are all quite small and may even be mistaken for the young of other species, being just 50 to 90mm in length, depending on the variety. And about half of that length is their tail. Males are smaller

than the females, and they tend to be found in moss and dirt banks, stumps, moss mats, and among littered leaves.

The other known local species include: *Nototriton abscondens*, *Nototriton gamezi*, *Nototriton guanacaste*, *Nototriton matama*, *Nototriton picadoi*, *Nototriton richardi*, *Nototriton tapanti*, and finally the largest of the group, *Nototriton major*. This last one finds itself on the critically endangered species list and is known to reside in only one locality, near Moravia de Chirripó.

Due to their tiny size and secretive nature, the *Nototriton* family is among the lesser known of the local amphibians and reptiles; their small size makes them extremely difficult to study without the aid of a microscope. Although various specimens are located from Northern Guanacaste down to the southern border, each of the local varieties is found in a very specific and limited range of altitude; between 1,000 and 2,000 meters.

The specifics of this genus make it nearly impossible for the average wildlife enthusiast to encounter them in the wild. Fortunately, the continued research efforts of professionals in the field brings us the opportunity to be informed of the spectacular and wondrous variety of salamanders and the other fauna that surrounds us, even when hidden from view.

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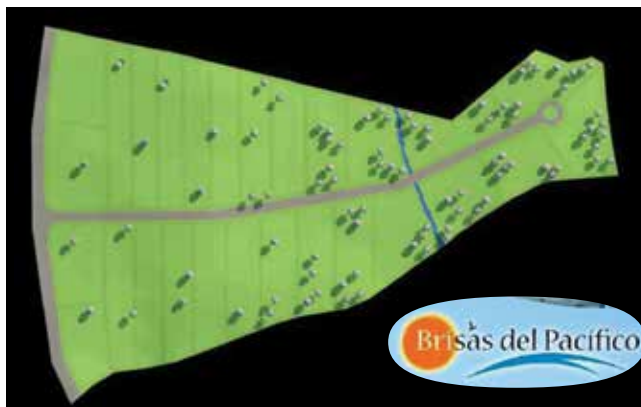
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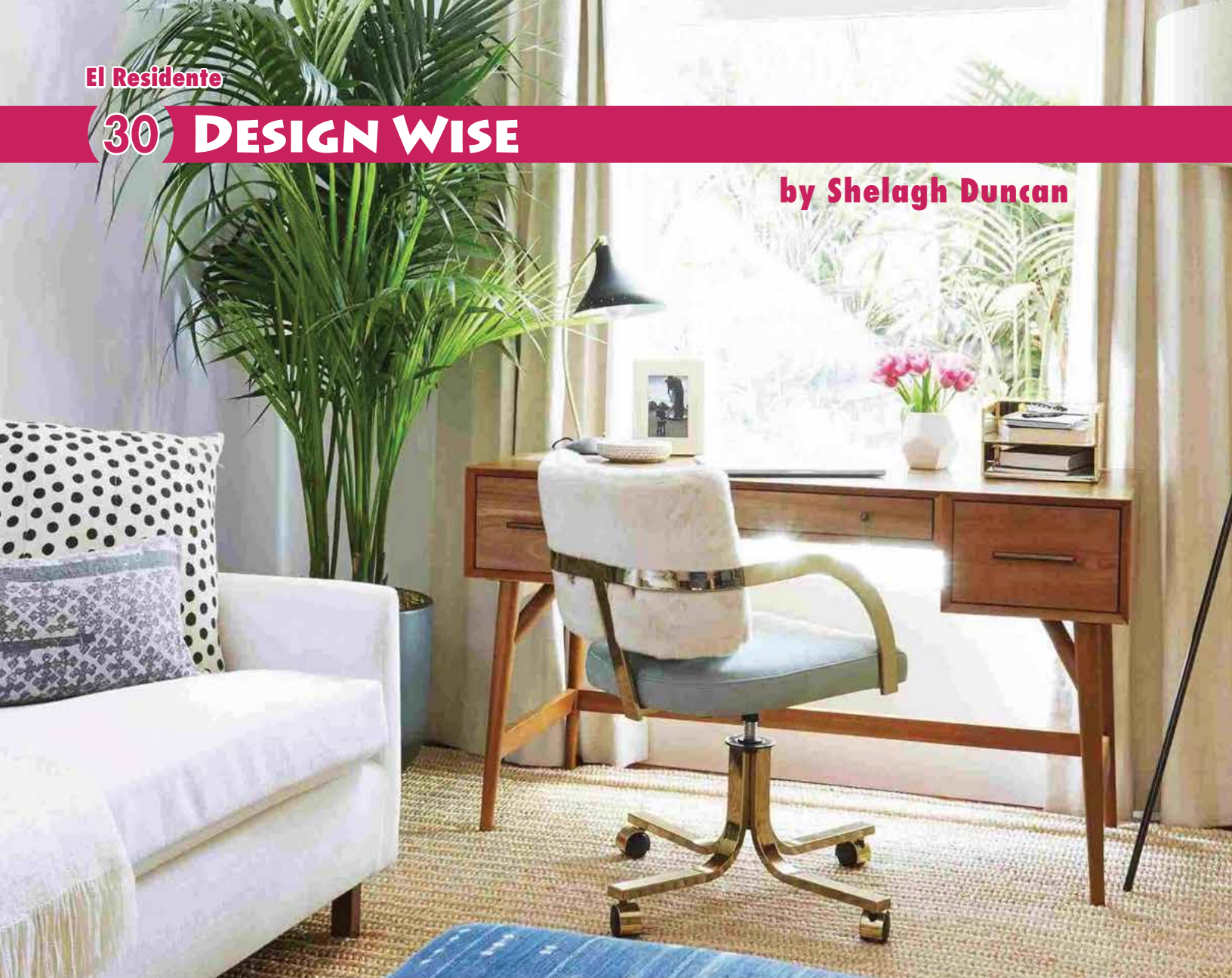
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Brisas del Pacífico is an ideal location for anyone who desires a private way of life while realizing their dream home in beautiful Costa Rica.

by Shelagh Duncan



Setting Up Your Work-From-Home Office

I wrote the original article by the same name 14 months ago. Today we have a new situation; one that is still evolving and bringing its own challenges. Working from home used to be a luxury, but no more, so I have adapted the original article to more closely fit our new reality.

Costa Rica has, for years, had many persons who satisfactorily worked remotely; seamlessly completing their professional duties from the comfort of their tropical homes. The concept never became mainstream, but now, with the Coronavirus forcing people to stay away from their workplaces, many businesses have established temporary work-from-home procedures to use during the crisis. Many have found this is working so well they have decided to continue, with

companies scaling back on expensive office space. In fact, some people are actually more productive working from home, citing fewer interruptions from colleagues, minimal office politics and reduced stress from commuting. With the indeterminate amount of time that it will take for society to recover from the COVID-19 virus, this may become part of the new normal.

Early work-from-home adopters realized that they could cope, more or less, working from the dining table or breakfast bar, but quickly discovered that solution was only good for the short term, and began to look for better options. They have now been joined by a large group of new workers who need a good, efficient, home workspace. If you are one of those, or just have a

need for a good home office, we can look to what those veterans of home-work can teach us.

SPACE

A home office does not need to be large and can be easily incorporated into a guest bedroom or nook in the main living area. All you need is room for a desk, some storage, power outlets, a good internet signal, and you are all set! If you need to focus your total attention on work, choose a location that is away from the bustle of daily life; distractions are many, and if you can avoid them you will be more productive.

LOCATION

If you are fortunate enough to have a closet you could free up and convert to a home office, everything can be stored behind closed doors when not in use. If not, then choose an area where you can place a desk, some file storage, shelving, and good task lighting. Remember, it has to function the way you need it to. If you are not comfortable working in that space you will soon be right back at the breakfast bar! So plan ahead and set it up to be as efficient as it can be.

Wherever you choose, make sure that there is good air circulation and you do not feel boxed in, or you may be less inclined to use it. Set it up so that it functions smoothly and promotes efficiency – think about what you will actually be doing there and the items you will be using.

STORAGE

The frequency of use of items will determine how close they should be to you. Limit the things in your office area to items that you need. Don't let it become a catch-all space for homeless things. Clean out any existing clutter and start fresh. It is easier to work in an area that is visually neat and tidy, so have lots of organizing aids to help you keep it that way. Keep a small cache of supplies within reach, and less-used or surplus items tucked out of the way, but still in your area.

EQUIPMENT

Of course, a desk is of prime importance, and there are many options. Whatever type you choose, it needs to be the correct height. If it's not, you will quickly start avoiding





working there. If more than minimal storage is important, choose a desk that has some storage area incorporated.

One of the most important pieces of equipment is a good office chair. It should have wheels and arms, if possible, and be ergonomic. That is very important; your back will thank you!

Also, make sure you incorporate a good quality power surge protector to safeguard your computer and equipment.

OTHER

Don't forget to take breaks, not to go do the laundry, but to relax and get away from the computer. Get a coffee and dive into a book or other distraction for 15-20 minutes. Be mindful of "tech-neck," and stretch-out your body from time to time. If you experience the problem of disconnecting from work at the end of the day, establish an end-of-day routine; create a regular yoga session for yourself, walk the dog, or anything that will remove you physically and mentally from your desk.

Last, add a personal touch to your work-at-home space, with artwork or photos that you love, and make the space your own. Enjoy it – work may never be the same again. And if you need some help or suggestions just let me know; I am working from home now too!

Until next time...

Shelagh Duncan

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by Tony Johnson

The Corona Virus Test

Life tests us daily. And how we respond will determine the quality of our existence. The current COVID-19 pandemic is severely testing individuals, relationships, families, and societies' resilience and resourcefulness. It's one of those singular events that impact the world and, in the process, can reveal the essential meaning of our most intimate and important connections. Some bonds will shatter, lacking the strength to go the distance, others may stumble, but the connection will recover – and endure – and some will actually come out better. Regardless, we will all come away from this test somehow changed.

The Coronavirus is one of those existential crises that can remind us of the deepest basis of our relationship. The more fervently connected we are, the more we care for each other, the better the team we will make facing adversity and less damage will be done. Put differently, the greater the stake we have in each others' wellbeing and survival, the better we will care for each other. And the more we will appreciate and love each other when it's all over.

Conversely, the less we matter to each other, the less mutual care we will show and the more injuries we will inflict on each other. That translates to there being a smaller chance of growing closer during this crisis. The "engineering" explaining this strength is simple: the stronger and deeper the foundation, the more resilient our response to the "storms" that test us. But a relationship's underpinning is, of course, not concrete and steel but shared meaning, purpose, and positive experiences which can have the strength of a rock or the weakness of sand.

THE COUPLES PROMISE

All couples' life partnerships are essentially an idealized promise to each other. We know things will not be perfect, but we'll definitely be respecting, caring, and loving of each other no matter what. We vow that, regardless of what happens, we will face it together, giving each other loving, attentive care,

always telling the truth, and never deceiving, never neglecting each other.

The foundation is strongest when we join together, not just for our individual wellbeing, but also for some purpose beyond ourselves. For example: To focus on the future for our children; to give them a better life than we had, not just a better life for ourselves. Or to achieve goals beyond us, like saving sea turtles in Costa Rica.

The more committed we are to each other and to those external goals, the more meaning our relationship has, and the stronger it will be. When we join, not just to share the bills and ward off loneliness, but also for some higher aspiration, the deeper the reason there is to "stick it out together."

THE BEGINNING

Recall that, at first there was no one we wanted to be with, converse with, spend time with – more than our beloved. TOGETHER was the focus of our lives. We were still fascinating to each other and there was so much to learn; so much to delightfully and thoroughly explore. We saw so much good in each other. So, we spent as much time as possible narrating our detailed life stories and future dreams. Part of the excitement came from the shared purpose we found and created. Not only did we plan for the kind of jobs, house, and garden we'd have, but how we'd be family-centered; what great love and preparation for life we'd give our kids. We didn't have to search for connections, they were everywhere, right in front of us, proof we were making the right choice; that we were clearly meant to be together and that our relationship WOULD work.

THE MIDDLE

As the years passed and we came closer to our goals, some couples grew apart from each other. The demands of life took them in different directions. Little, it seemed, was still unknown about each other; things became stale and the thrill was gone. Those endearing quirks, charming traits at the beginning, became annoying character

flaws. Kids were a heck of a lot more work than had been imagined. Jobs and advancement became more complicated, and disappointments grew as we felt that the promises made weren't being kept. Resentments arose and deepened, and we may have come to believe that we were not being treated as we deserved. Ugly things were said as life pressures increased, and forgiveness, restoring care and trust, seemed nearly impossible. During those times we overlooked opportunities for kindness, and instead became vigilant for harm, each person learning to keep a safer distance.

PRESENT DAY

In our early days, being quarantined together would have been a gift from the gods; now it seems like a wicked joke. The New York Times reports that "Domestic Abuse Has Arisen Worldwide Since Coronavirus." Tragically, for some, the COVID-19 pressure brings out the worst in us, rather than seeing a chance to make necessary repairs and get things back on track. Years earlier, if we had been warned of such a crisis, we'd have been sure that we'd handle it with the utmost of love and caring. What went wrong? We may have lost sight of our foundational promises.

Couples typically begin their lives together at their physical peak but at a career and financial low. By the time most people move to Costa Rica those conditions have flipped. Many have physically declined but the finances have perked up. Shouldn't that make life better? Certainly, we thought, Costa Rica would make our life together better.

But we are no longer the same people who professed a life of undying love. Years of experiences, both positive and negative, adversity and loss, good fortune and bad, have left their mark. And, rather than knowing all there is to know about each other, many couples have failed to keep up, and have grown apart.

So what's left to do? Wait patiently for the end to come, or review and repair?

Remember what your original joint-life purpose was? Were they just words? Or, has it only been forgotten?

If you're with THE ONE you'd always pick to "shelter-in-place" with, you've not only passed the COVID-19 test – you've won the lottery. (Feel free to share the wealth of your wisdom with us.) You've lived up to your promises and maintained your shared purpose.

If you can't stand this point of history because it feels like house arrest with an enemy, this article is beyond what you need. Things can be improved, but it'll take a lot of apologizing, accepting personal responsibility, and REALLY changing.

But if, like most, you see your partner as a mixed blessing (wonderful qualities and drive you up the wall irritants), there's still hope for better.

A CHANCE TO RE-DO, RENEW

Queen Elizabeth II has said regarding this moment, "I hope in the years to come everyone will take pride in how they responded to this



challenge.” We have a choice here: Do we stretch to the heights of our best self, or do we allow ourselves to sink to our lowest depths? A frequent movie theme allows us to identify with the non-hero who steps up to an enormous challenge and prevails. The COVID-19 calamity may be offering us the chance to revive our purpose and restore our connection.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

Regardless of how much crushing pressure we are under, it never justifies the brief satisfaction of blaming our partner for our own unhappiness. Resist the temptation to scapegoat. Look for the positive intent behind what drives you crazy. Rather than assigning blame, try, “What can we do to solve this together?” Be nice, and see how much better YOU feel. And, when you’re the bullseye for criticism and personal attacks, remember that you do not have to reply in kind. Try instead, “Something’s bothering you. Can we talk about it?”

Some other strategies might include:

- Don’t go to war over whose career or responsibilities are the most important. Try, “Can we find a way to help each other do what we need to do?”

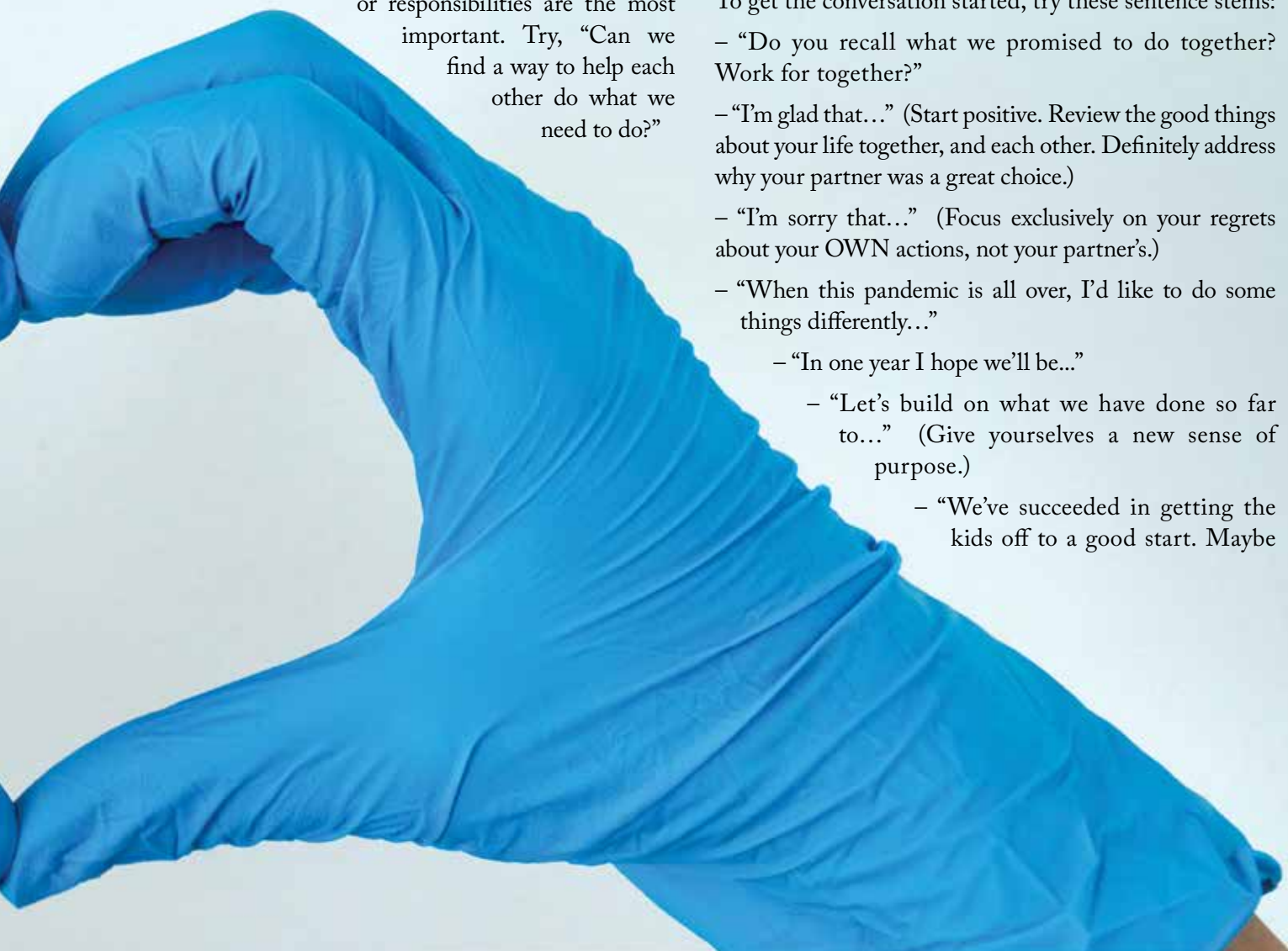
– Realize that what seems like empty jabbering MAY actually be an attempt to connect in some small way. “Boy! Look at those parrots,” may be a way to say, “Can we talk about something, anything?” Try instead, “Yeah, I never get tired of seeing them. How are you?”

– Look for things to compliment and appreciate rather than things to criticize. “Thanks for doing the dishes,” may seem like one of those unnecessary comments, especially when it’s their job. But it can positively shift the emotional climate of the relationship for the better and thereby set the stage for the really important discussion to review your original couple’s vision.

– Ask yourself, “Can we use this time to make things better between us?” Try, “I’ve been thinking, this quarantine has reminded me of our early days when we spent as much time as possible together. We had so many dreams and plans. What do you think about using this time to review; to see how we did with those plans and consider where we go next? We started out with a vision for our life together, and maybe it’s time to recall those plans and create some new ones for our next phase?”

To get the conversation started, try these sentence stems:

- “Do you recall what we promised to do together? Work for together?”
- “I’m glad that...” (Start positive. Review the good things about your life together, and each other. Definitely address why your partner was a great choice.)
- “I’m sorry that...” (Focus exclusively on your regrets about your OWN actions, not your partner’s.)
- “When this pandemic is all over, I’d like to do some things differently...”
 - “In one year I hope we’ll be...”
 - “Let’s build on what we have done so far to...” (Give yourselves a new sense of purpose.)
 - “We’ve succeeded in getting the kids off to a good start. Maybe



it's time to shift our efforts to helping the grandkids do the same?"

In summary, life will continue to test us, and the COVID-19 crisis is a huge trial. BUT, at the same time it may have given us a great opportunity. If we use the seclusion time well, we can come out better than before, recommitted to another "go the distance" purpose.

Oh! Did you say you're concerned about your health right now? Did you know one of the best things you can do for your physical health is to improve your relationship? Just sayin'...

Tony Johnson is a retired university mental health counselor who lives in Ojochal. He actually does try to make his relationship better by making personal changes (so many of which have been necessary) and focusing on the connection's meaning. Contact him at: johnson.tony4536@gmail.com



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► Alcoholics Anonymous

Groups meet daily throughout the country; times and places change frequently. Schedules for meetings and their locations can be found at: www.costaricaaaa.com.

► Al-Anon

English language meetings open to anyone whose life has been/is affected by someone else's problem with alcohol. Meeting information can be found at: www.costaricaaaa.com. Family Resources.

► American Legion Post 10-Escazú

Meets on the second Wednesday of the month at 12 noon at the Tap House, Escazú Village, Escazú. If you wish to attend please call: 4034-0788, or email: commander@alcr10.org or visit our website at: www.alcr10.org. If you need directions, call Terry Wise at: 8893-4021.

► American Legion Post 12-Golfito

Meetings are held at 4 p.m. the first Tuesday every month at Banana Bay Marina. The GOVETS have been helping Southern Costa Rica for over 20 years. Contact Pat O'Connell by email at: walkergold@yahoo.com or call 8919-8947, or Mel Goldberg at 8870-6756.

► American Legion Auxiliary

The Legion Auxiliary meets the second Saturday of each month, at 1p.m. in Moravia. Contact Doris Murillo at: 2240-2947.

► Amigos of Costa Rica

A US-based non-profit organization established in 1999. As an advocate for philanthropy in Costa Rica; it contributes to the well-being of Costa Rica by connecting donors resources with vetted non-profit solutions. US Government tax-payers donations are deductible. For more information go to: www.amigosofcostarica.org or email to: emily@amigosofcostarica.org.

► Atenas Bridge Club

Informal, friendly duplicate games. Classes at 11 a.m., games at 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays. New members welcome. For more information, visit the website at: www.atenasbridgeclub.com or email to: atenasbridgeclub@gmail.com.

► Birding Club Costa Rica

A private group that travels around Costa Rica to observe and identify the 900+ species of birds found here, learn about different parts of the country, and enjoy the company of like-minded and interested people. For more information, visit the website: www.birdingclubcr.org or email to: info@birdingclubcr.org.

► Canadian Club

Welcomes everyone to join us for our monthly luncheons, and at our special annual events. No passport required. There is no fee or dues to pay, just sign up with your email address and we will keep you informed of Canadian events. For information go to: www.canadianclubcr.com or email Pat at: canadianclubcr@yahoo.com to sign up.

► Central Valley Golf Association

Meets every Tuesday morning between 6-7 a.m. at the Valle Del Sol golf course in Santa Ana. Both individual and two person events with different formats every week. We invite all men and woman with all handicaps to join us and enjoy golf on a picturesque course. No membership required. For more information, contact: Larry Goldman 8933-3333, email to: nylarryg@yahoo.com.

► Costa Ballena Women's Network

Begun in Ojochal with a handful of expat ladies, our focus is networking, community, business, and social activities as well as offering an opportunity to meet new people. Monthly lunch meetings held the third Saturday of each month through a variety of social activities h at various restaurants with guest speakers talking on interesting topics. For more information please email: cbwn00@gmail.com.

► Costa Rica Writers Group

Published authors and writers; newbies, and wanna-bes make up this group. Dedicated to helping and improving all authors' work with resources for publishing, printing, editing, cover design; every aspect of the writing process. Third Thursday, January through November, Henry's Beach Café, Escazú, 11 a.m. Contact: bbrashears0@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page, Costa Rica Writers Group.

► Democrats Abroad

Meets on the last Saturday of the month at Casa LTG (Little Theater Group). Contact Nelleke Bruyn: 8614-2622, e-mail: cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com. Join Democrats Abroad at: www.democratsabroad.org. Register to vote absentee at: VoteFromAbroad.org.

► Domestic Animal Welfare Group Costa Ballena

DAWG is a volunteer run, non-profit organization focused on animal advocacy in the Costa Ballena region of Costa Rica with a goal of eliminating the abuse and abandonment of domestic animals in Costa Ballena. We stress education, spay and neuter. Donations are our lifeline. For information visit the website at: www.dawgcostarica.org or email to: dawgcostarica@gmail.com.

► First Friday Lunch

Each month on the first Friday of the month ARCR sponsors a First Friday Lunch at 12 p.m. All are invited to join ARCR officers and others for an informal lunch and BS session. No RSVP or agenda, just good food and meeting new and old friends. Attendees are responsible for their own food and drink expenses. Meetings are at the Chinese restaurant, Marisqueria Mariscos Vivo, located behind the Mas x Menos grocery store located across from the Nissan Dealer near Parque Sabana. Call ARCR (2220-0055) for directions.

► Little Theater Group

The oldest continuously running English-language theater in Central or South America and currently puts on a minimum of four productions a year. The group's monthly social meetings are held in the theater on the first Monday of the month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Membership: Student C2,500, Adult C5,000, Family C8,000. For more information call the LTG Box Office: 8858-1446 or go to: www.littletheatregroup.org.

► Marine Corps League

Meets the second Saturday of the month at 11 a.m. at the Tap House in City Place Mall in Santa Ana. We are looking for new members. Former Marines and Navy Corpsmen can be regular members. All other service members are welcome to join as associate members. For information call Andy Pucek at: 8721-6636 or email: andy@marinecorpsleaguecr.com.

► Newcomers Club of Costa Rica

(For Women) The Club, in existence since 1980, promotes friendship and support among members, mostly expats in Costa Rica, through conducting a variety of social and recreational activities. Meetings are held from September to May, interest groups meet year-round. General Meeting at 10:00 a.m. every first Tuesday of the month. For more information go to our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/newcomers.org/> or email to: newcomersclub.costarica@gmail.com.

► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

Formed in November 2009 to promote friendship between English speaking women in Pérez Zeledón and, through friendship, to make positive contributions to our local community. The PZIWC meets for lunch on the second Tuesday of each month, hosts Ramblers Day on the third Tuesday of each month, and has a Games Day on the fourth Tuesday of each month. For more information, please send an email to: pzwomansclub@gmail.com or visit our web site at: www.pziwc.org.

► Professional Women's Network

PWN provides its members with opportunities to network with other professional women with the goal of aiding personal

and professional development of entrepreneurs, students, and professionals. PWN sponsors service and outreach programs to "give back" to the community. Meeting schedules vary. For info on the speaker for the month and to register, call Helen at: 2280-4362. Location: Tin Jo Restaurant in San José, Calle 11, Av. 6-8. Or email us at: pwn.costarica@gmail.com. PWN website is: www.pwn-cr.com.

► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information email Walter Bibb at: wwbbsurf40@yahoo.com.

► San Vito Bird Club

A community based birding/nature group centered in the diverse southern zone of Costa Rica. We also facilitate nature education to local elementary schools through Cornell University's Bird Sleuth program. Twice monthly bird walks through the Wilson Botanical Garden and other sites are open to all; binoculars available as needed. Please visit our website: www.sanvitobirdclub.org or email: eltangaral@gmail.com for more information.

► Wine Club of Costa Rica

Meets at 1 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Join us to tantalize your taste buds and expand your education. For more information on upcoming events please contact us at costaricawineclub2017@gmail.com.

► Women's Club of Costa Rica

The oldest, continuously operating, philanthropic organization for English-speaking women in Costa Rica. The club is focused on serving community needs, particularly on children's needs. Along with its philanthropic fundraising activities, WCCR also hosts regular lunches, teas, and many special interest groups. Guests are welcome. Information and a calendar of events can be found at: www.wccr.org.

► Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Open to men too. Meetings in English in Heredia, Spanish in San José, and English/Spanish in San Ramon. We work on peace and human rights issues. Call Mitzi: 2433-7078 or write us at: mitzstar@gmail.com.

NOTICE: Club officers should review the contact information for their clubs and make sure it is up to date.

Send any changes or corrections to: service@arcr.cr subject line; Club Corner, and post them on the the ARCR Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/ARCR123.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY (39)

Important dates in Costa Rica:

Note: all dates pending

May 1st:

Labor's Day

Office will be closed

June 17th:

Father's day (Office Open)

The June and July ARCR Seminars for Expats and First Friday Lunches have been temporally cancelled until further notice.

Funniest One Liners

Today a man knocked on my door and asked for a small donation towards the local swimming pool, so I gave him a glass of water.

When wearing a bikini, women reveal 90% of their body... men are so polite they only look at the covered parts.

A recent study has found that women who carry a little extra weight live longer than the men who mention it.

You know that tingly little feeling you get when you like someone? That's your common sense leaving your body.

I wasn't originally going to get a brain transplant, but then I changed my mind.



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