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# El Residente

Adventure by Chicken Bus

## THE PANAMA CANAL

**Also in this issue:**

The Unwritten Language of Horn Blowing  
Cooling Off      The Celebrity Frog

Vintage — Old is New  
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## CONTENTS



<b>Across the Board</b> ARCR Board of Directors	<b>4</b>
<b>Adventure by Chicken Bus</b> by Janet LoSole	<b>6</b>
<b>Out and About</b> Mitzi Stark	<b>10</b>
<b>On The Grid</b> Ivo Henfling	<b>13</b>
<b>A Day in the Life</b> Allen Dickinson	<b>16</b>
<b>Off the High Seas</b> Christine Monteith	<b>18</b>
<b>From the Embassies</b> US Embassy	<b>21</b>
<b>An Adventure in Paradise</b> Lee Swidler	<b>23</b>
<b>Wild Side</b> Ryan Piercy	<b>25</b>
<b>Legal Update</b> Rómulo Pacheco	<b>28</b>
<b>Design Wise</b> Shelagh Duncan	<b>30</b>
<b>Paradise, We Have a Problem</b> Tony Johnson	<b>33</b>
<b>Club Corner</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Business Directory</b>	<b>40</b>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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.

If you wish to place an ad in El Residente, please contact the Advertising and Publicity desk in the ARCR Administration Office or at the email address listed in the masthead. Goods & services offered are paid advertisements. Neither ARCR Administration nor El Residente research the companies and take no responsibility for the quality of such goods and services. Some articles published in El Residente may have been written by non-professionals. El Residente attempts to check all facts included, but takes no responsibility for their accuracy.

**Check our blog on our Facebook site.**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

**How to survive the pandemic:**

**WEAR YOUR FACE MASK IN PUBLIC**

**WASH YOUR HANDS**

**AVOID CROWDS**

**GET YOUR VACCINATION AS SOON AS IT IS AVAILABLE**

And read El Residente because in this issue you can:

- Get information about the rules about vaccinations and entering or leaving Costa Rica for international travel, and more, in the From the Embassy column.
- Go fly fishing with Lee Swidler, who tells us where he went to enjoy the sport in Adventures in Paradise.
- Take a walk in the jungle with Christine Monteith as she describes her escape into the cool jungle environs near her home in Off the High Seas.
- Treat cabin fever; Mitzi Stark tells us where we can go for a little relief AND pick up some great bargains in Out and About.
- Take a trip to the Panama Canal with the LoSole family in Adventures by Chicken Bus.

All those and, of course, there is the regular informative pieces like Legal Update, Across the Board, Wild Side, On the Grid, and Club Corner. Just remember, in order to receive El Residente your ARCR membership has to be current. So if it is time to renew, do it now and insure you receive the future issues.

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Cover Photo: Panama Canal, Stock Photo.

# ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

**PLASTICBAGUPDATE** Less than three weeks after the last issue of El Residente where Linda Loverude's article about plastic bags and the environment appeared, some Walmart stores here began offering biodegradable bags to their shoppers. The bags are roughly the same size as the old plastic bags, but are obviously much more durable. The bags are made in Guatemala for ECOPLANET and Walmart is charging 100 colones for them.

**COVID-19FUNERALASSISTANCE** Information for US Citizens. FEMA has announced that they will be providing financial assistance for funeral expenses to families of those who have died from COVID-19 after January 20, 2020. The aid comes under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The program begins implementation in April 2021. To qualify, the death must have occurred in the United States, including the US territories and the District of Columbia, and the death certificate must indicate that the death was attributed to COVID-19. For more information, go to: <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance> (The site is available in English and Spanish.)

**US SOCIAL SECURITY ONLINE ACCOUNTS** The Social Security Administration is now using a new identification process called [id.me](https://www.id.me). Individuals may need to be logged in from a US IP address, a VPN (Virtual Private Network) can assist with this. You can visit the SSA for information on creating an online account: at <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/> If you can't create an online account, you can request

a recent statement from the SSA by mail using the form SSA-7004. The forms are generally dealt with quickly, though the mail service around the world has been impacted by the pandemic and will affect delivery time depending to where you live.

**POLICE RECORD FOR RESIDENCY** On Oct 14, 2019, a directive by Costa Rica Immigration established that all persons requesting residency must provide a police record issued by a national organization of the applicants home country. In the case of US citizens, the report should be obtained from the US Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Justice Information Services Division, and contain the name, identification number (SSN), and fingerprints of the person applying. It must also include the applicant's address for the prior three years, and that address must be the same as on all other documents. The documents must also be apostilled and translated by an official translator or a Costa Rican Notary Public. The police record will be valid for six months. For more information, consult your attorney.



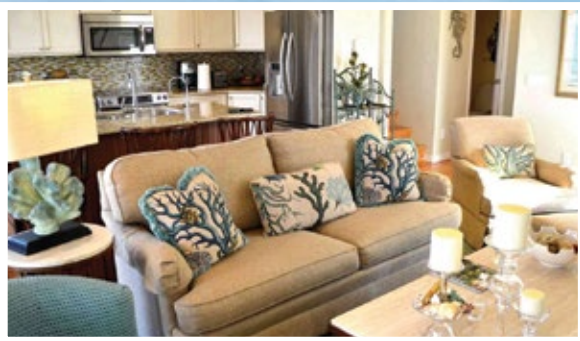
**ARCR Board of Directors:**  
From the left, back row, Earl Tomlinson, Allen Dickinson, Bob Brashears, Terry Renfer, Terry Wise.  
Front row, Mel Goldberg, Linda Leake, Martha Rollins.



# NEW Catastrophic Insurance Plan

Available through INS Costa Rica!  
If you want health insurance coverage in the event of a catastrophe, this might be exactly what you're looking for! (Requires minimum overnight hospital stay.)

**Sonia Gómez García**  
Licencia número 08-1271  
Bancrédito Seguros



Bancrédito Seguros is the new, official ARCR provider for INS insurance.

We offer all types of insurance for homes and condos (ask about the Hogar Comprensivo option for condos) and automobiles. Options for automobile insurance deductibles are also available.

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## 6 ADVENTURE BY CHICKEN BUS

by Janet LoSole

### Part 3: The Panama Canal

*"The following is excerpted from the book, Adventure by Chicken Bus: An Unschooling Odyssey Through Central America".*

After four weeks on the Isla de Parismina, where Jocelyn-eight, Natalie-five, my husband Lloyd, and I had spent the nights working with ASTOP (Asociación Salvemos las Tortugas de Parismina) protecting endangered sea turtles, we took a water transport back to Limón, then pressed on south via chicken bus to Puerto Viejo.

On the outskirts of Puerto Viejo lies the not-for-profit organization, El Puente (The Bridge). El Puente supports the local indigenous Bribri by raising funds to provide them with micro-loans with which they can start small businesses. I had emailed them and inquired about the possibility of visiting, and the founders, Barry and Nanci Stevens, invited us to attend one of their tri-weekly soup kitchens. There we met a Bribri family, headed by Ignacio and Abril, who invited us to spend a night with them and their five children in the KéKöldi Indigenous Reserve. Of the four of us, Lloyd was the most excited about spending time outdoors in the fresh air, "One night in the jungle, how awesome will that be!"



After hiking an hour up a mountain and into the jungle, we arrived at their sleeping quarters. It was a platform raised about three feet above the ground and topped with thatched roofing to keep out the rain. Strips of bamboo were laid out for floors, forming an undulating surface. A small kitchen with a raised fire pit for cooking, and a bathroom (a pit covered in planks with a convenient hole carved out for “deposits”) were close by. Ignacio also showed us where Abril grew herbs and a few vegetables, while free-roaming chickens and pigs scurried along dirt paths foraging for grubs.



At first, the couple's children, ranging in age from two to eleven, and ours, sat together shyly on a log. But before long they moved to the dorm and climbed on top of the bamboo rafters, laying flat on their stomachs and hanging their heads upside down over the edge so their hair fell over their faces.

That evening, Abril cooked us a simple meal of beans and rice and we ate by candlelight, sitting cross-legged on the sleeping platform. Afterward, the children sat in a group and colored quietly. After a little while their oldest boy, Jorge, came over to the adults and whispered to his father. Ignacio looked at Lloyd curiously, and in fractured English Jorge asked, “Lloyd, how many years?”

In English, Lloyd responded, “Thirty-six.”

Looking astonished, Ignacio made Lloyd stand beside him, then asked me to translate what Lloyd had said to Spanish, “Treinta y seis.”

Ignacio and Jorge stared at each other, disbelieving. Ignacio explained that Lloyd looked much older because he was so tall; Ignacio, at thirty-five, stood a full foot shorter.

When it was time for bed we followed the path to our sleeping quarters. We had brought our air mattresses, sleeping bags, bug suits, and insect repellent, on Nanci's advice. Despite the warm temperature, we all wore long pants, long-sleeved T-shirts, and bug suits, leaving only our hands unprotected.

The bamboo floor positioned us perfectly before an astounding scene of the lush green tangle of wilderness. We were reluctant to shut our eyes to the sight, but eventually we drifted off to sleep in the arms of Mother Nature. Throughout the night our slumber was interrupted

by animal sounds; not by birds or howler monkeys, but by the family's scavenging pigs and a damnable rooster cock-a-doodle-dooing all night long. So much for the sounds of nature.

In the morning, we gave the family a small fee, which would contribute to Abril's gardening project, then made our way down the mountain back to El Puente. To prevent me from tumbling, Ignacio had Jorge cut me a walking stick. The family makes this same trek every day to rendezvous at El Puente, with the children walking another thirty minutes farther to the closest school.

As much as we relished the long, sunny days, lounging, reading, swimming, and socializing in Puerto Viejo, we were nearing the end of our allowed time in Costa Rica. We, like most persons of most nationalities, were admitted to Costa Rica as tourists and were granted a visa for 90 days. By law, before that time is up, persons on tourist visas must leave the country. When they return, a new visa for 90 days can be issued.

This trip out and back into Costa Rica is commonly referred to as “making a border run.” Many people choose to make their border run to Panama, most often to the city of David, which is just a few miles over the border. But, I suggested we voyage all the way to Panama City to see the famous canal before returning to Costa Rica. “We'll never be there again,” I argued. “It might be the only opportunity to see the canal in our entire lives.”

Lloyd acquiesced. “I guess I got to stay overnight in the jungle, so why not?”





The short jaunt to the border town of Sixaola was pleasant. The town, not so much. Locals hounded us as soon as we got off the bus, offering to escort us to immigration. We ignored their presence, cleared immigration without incident, exited Costa Rica, and crossed the bridge that spans the Río Sixaola to enter Panama. There a driver offered to take us in his truck to the Changuinola docks where we would catch a lancha to Bocas del Toro. Once in Changuinola, a nondescript backwater, we had to wait a short while until a boat materialized to motor us to Bocas, which rests on Isla Colón, one of many islands in the archipelago. In Bocas we plotted our course for Panama City, a journey of ten hours that we planned to break up by stopping in David.

We wound our way through the Chiriquí highlands on a mini-bus, going via a mountainous pass that cut in and out of the greenery. We were amazed to see people turn up at the side of the road to flag down the bus, seemingly out of nowhere. The presence of the local indigenous population quickly became evident. The women adhered to clothing of traditional design, loose-fitting, full-length, brightly colored dresses of orange, yellow, purple, or royal blue, embroidered on the bodice and the sleeves. The men dressed in a more assimilated style of shirts and trousers.

At one point, as we rounded a bend in the hillside road, such a family flagged us down. They were five people in

total, three children, the father, and a late-term pregnant mother. They sat directly in front of us. These people were so slight that all five of them could squish into two cramped seats, in contrast to Lloyd, who had folded himself into one entire seat at the back.

We planned to rest for a few days in David, fearing the long bus travel would turn the girls off to ever backpacking again. David offers little to travelers other than respite from the long distances between destinations, but the cheap shopping is a huge attraction. I spotted a vendor selling the popular Condorito comics that feature a loveable condor living in a small Chilean town. I bought five copies for next to nothing to use as a teaching tool for written Spanish.

In David we took four full days to recharge our batteries. The girls frittered away the time watching *Animal Planet*, in Spanish.

Refreshed, we reserved our bus tickets to Panama City. Getting there from David is a straightforward, if not painfully monotonous, journey; seven hours of highway separate the two cities, so we gathered up toys and snacks, and geared up for a lengthy bus ride.

Stationed at a strategic international crossroad, Panama City is, hands down, one of the most geographically privileged metropolises in the world. The canal serves





roughly fourteen-thousand container ships annually, delivering goods to the other side of the world. By using the canal they are bypassing the Strait of Magellan, a sea passage separating mainland South America from the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego, thereby reducing transit by some 7,500 miles.

After checking into a hostel in Panama City, we spotted a tourist information booth across the street. The staff there suggested we visit Miraflores locks, one of three along the famous canal. The locks are set up to accommodate spectators, so from the bleachers we watched workers flood the lower lock with water to raise a ship and release her into the tributary leading to the Caribbean, a process lasting about fifteen minutes. What we saw was truly a spectacle. Closest to us was a cruise liner which was transiting south, a gleaming white against the dark background of the locks.

"Mommy, there's another boat!" Jocelyn said.

A puny American yacht had squeaked into the lock and was dwarfed by the cruise liner.

At the same time, inching its way into the northern lock was a massive container ship from China. The ship was a leviathan, dwarfing the other vessels by half. It was so large that two human eyeballs could barely take in the sight of her at one glance. I snapped off a plum shot of Natalie standing against the railing of the observation deck with the yacht and the enormous China Shipping Line ship in the background.

At dinner that evening I said to Lloyd, "I wonder if we could see the rest of Central America, since we're already here?"

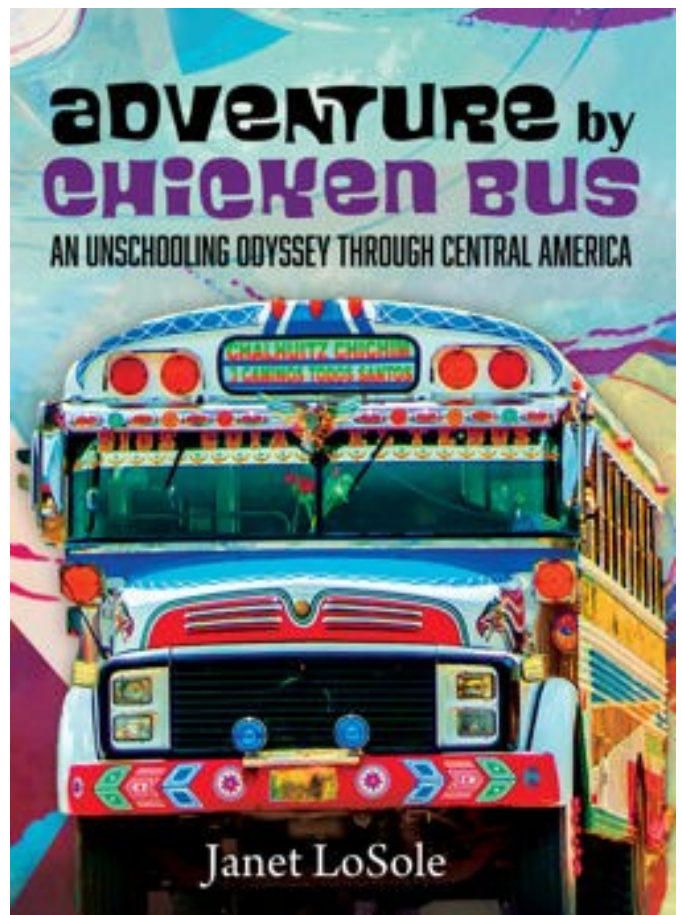
Scads of backpackers had been telling us about the sites in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala. In short, I was green with envy. And here we are in Panama City, I thought, a locale that had never once come up in our discussions back in Canada.

The idea was quashed when, unexpectedly, we received an email from a private school in Costa Rica that expressed an interest in interviewing Lloyd for a teaching position. So, we bundled up our backpacks to prepare for the arduous journey to Quebrada Ganado in Costa Rica.

To be continued.

*Janet LoSole is the author of Adventure by Chicken Bus: An Unschooling Odyssey Through Central America. She holds a Bachelor of Education degree (French) and is a certified TESOL instructor. You can learn more about the book or order the complete book about their travels at:*

<https://www.adventurebychickenbus.com> or contact her at:  
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<https://twitter.com/JanetLoSole>





## 10 OUT AND ABOUT

by Mitzi Stark

## Vintage – Old is New



Vintage is in! The old is new! Fairs and shops proclaiming vintage items are up and running, many on the internet, and others in shops. But what exactly is vintage?

According to one seller of vintage, it is anything from 20 to 30 years ago. That includes old telephones with dials, adding machines, tape recorders, record players, and gadgets, the kind many of us grew up with. A woman who runs an online vintage store says that her collection is from decades past (1980-1990) and comes from the closets of friends. However, the owner of a vintage store in Heredia said that vintage is just the newest style. While the style sort of resembles what we wore in the 1980s, her store's clothes are all new. Other sellers describe vintage as “moda déjà vu” or “upcycling.”

There are also vintage fairs, and they draw crowds, including me. Bombazar is probably the best one and it is held in a warehouse on the corner (almost) of Avenida 3 and Calle 2, diagonal from the old Aduana building, in San José. It takes place on a Saturday and Sunday toward the

end of the month. Even with safety measures, temperature checks, mascarillas, and lots of gel distributors, this was a fun show. It is like taking in a state fair; there is lots to look at and no obligation to buy, although you will be sorely tempted. Surprisingly, the tables sagging under the boxes of long-play records were drawing crowds. Advice: Don't ditch those oldies collecting cobwebs in the closet. They are coming back!

Dishes, lamps, vanity sets, and knick-knacks, not quite yet antiques, were on display. Several booksellers had set up their shops and there was lots of science fiction and Star Wars stuff. The clothes were mixed, both new and used, but the older items were well cared for and beautifully displayed. Many customers came already dressed in vintage apparel, giving the fair an extra attraction, people watching. By one o'clock the place started to fill up as the after church and lunch crowd streamed in, and I made my exit – through the entrance door – as the security guards let me know. However, they forgave me and I went home. The Bombazar Costa Rica Facebook page should list dates or contact information for





the next event. The good news is that Bombazar is already thinking of expanding to other cities.

Another vintage fair was held a week later at Filmoteca Cine Arte, a center and library of films on Calle 27, in the artsy-bohemian area of Barrio California. They called it a flea market cum cachi vachi, with clothes, dishes, and lots of “stuff” from the past. This once a year (or less) fair did limit the number of people allowed in, and I never did get inside the door due to the long line. I’ll be alert for the next one.

While waiting I learned that Filmoteca Cine Arte Costa Rica is a film library with more than 4,000 films, mostly European or Latin American, which you can borrow or see by membership (¢7,000 membership fee). There are also presentations on the history of film. Located on Calle 27, behind the parking lot for the Cine Malagay in San José, they are open from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Call 7236-9973 or check their Facebook page if you are interested in old films.

Another small business fair is held at El Llano in Alajuela on the second and fourth Saturdays and Sundays of each month. It takes place in the plaza of the old church, from

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., or longer if the weather is nice. The added attraction there is you can go into the old chapel which was built in 1881 and has quite a history, as does the area around it. El Llano (pronounced El Yano) was the home of Costa Rica's best known writer, Carlos Luis Fallas, also known as Calufa (1904 -1966) who centered some of his books in El Llano.

The fair was small, with about 20 tables that included old tools, old clothes, plants, soaps, perfumes and cosmetics. I hadn't planned to buy anything, being just an observer, but then I saw the tamales and the bakery. Aha! Who wants to cook on a Sunday! (I don't really want to cook Monday to Saturday either.) A *peña* of tamales, that is two together, and a *pan casero*, or home-style bread, made a nice Sunday dinner, and my purchase will help pay for the reconstruction and upkeep of the chapel. The chapel and plaza are located on Calle 15, Avenida 5, in Alajuela. But, since nobody uses the street signs, it is two blocks east and two blocks north of the big Agonia church on Calle Ancha, the major street. Or just ask someone for the Ermita de El Llano.



Too late I saw in the paper that there was a cajeta fair in Desamparados with 50 different types of cajetas. Those are the sugar candy slices that sometimes include nuts or fruit pieces or jam. I find them way too sweet for my taste, but the fair also included some local small businesses.

I am glad to find that there are now more activities for weekends. All events must meet the standards set by the Ministry of Health, so bring your mask, your gel, and get your temperature taken as you enter.

If you read this column regularly you know I enjoy going to fairs; I like to see new products and meet new people, and I even make friends with those sharing the same interests. There are hundreds of events online now, everything from a cheese fair in Wisconsin, a road race in England, to a course in making paella, so one can be busy every day. All day. Without leaving your house. But after months of staying home I WANT TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE.

*You can find local fairs and events online, or by writing in "eventos Costa Rica" in the search slot on Facebook, or with Google. Be sure to list the country. I tried to find events in Atenas without including Costa Rica one time, and everything came up in Greek. [mitzstar@gmail.com](mailto:mitzstar@gmail.com)*

## Christopher Howard's Relocation & Retirement Tours to Costa Rica

Recommended by the Association  
of Residents of Costa Rica (ARCR)

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## 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.
- Help with obtaining a Costa Rica drivers license.
- Guidance in opening a Costa Rica bank account.
- Discounted enrollment in Costa Rica national health insurance.
- Expert information on moving and shipping household goods.
- Reduced prices for insurance for home, health, and vehicles.
- References to proven businesses who can assist arrivals obtain desired products and services.
- Discounted general medical services (by appointment).
- Comprehensive two-day seminars on living in Costa Rica.
- Legal assistance in all matters.
- Discounts for retailers and service providers.
- Free maps of the country.
- Book exchange library.
- Personal email answers to your questions about moving to Costa Rica.
- 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.



For information about how to join thousands of other expats living the **Pura Vida lifestyle**, visit our website at: [www.arcr.cr](http://www.arcr.cr), call us at (506) 2220-0055 or come by our offices at Av. 14, Calle 42, in San José, **today!**



by Ivo Henfling

## How do I Know my Real Estate Agent is a Professional?

**W**ould you hire an unqualified person as your real estate agent in your home country? Probably not, so why do it in Costa Rica?

In Costa Rica, because licensing is not mandatory, “everyone” sells real estate. We have surfers, former Realtors from the USA, hookers, taxi drivers, and neighbors. Some are not even legal immigrants! And all are competing with the real experts.

On Facebook and other social media, there are a flood of videos by self-declared “experts.” That’s because it’s easy to post something on social media. Many of them have lived here for a only a short time and don’t speak good (if any) Spanish. But they all say they will assist you in doing whatever it is they are touting “the right way.” Keep in mind, just because someone speaks English doesn’t mean they are qualified, or have a clue about local laws and customs.

Christopher Howard has written a great article about choosing a relocation specialist, real estate agent, relocation tour, Immigration Assistance Service, or others who say they are experts in their profession. You can read it at: <https://www.liveincostarica.com/blog/2021/03/beware-of-gringo-neophyte-experts.html> Be aware, dealing with a non-professional can come with a lot of problems, legal and financial.

So, how can you tell if the information the “expert” is giving is correct? How can you feel confident that the person who is offering their services on Facebook really is a professional and not a pole-dancer or the nephew of the property owner trying to make a buck? Well, now there is a way you can be more assured that you are not contacting the wrong person.

### SUGEF

SUGEF is an acronym for General Superintendency of Financial Entities. In January 2019, Costa Rica passed Law 7786, which obliges real estate agents and agencies to be registered with SUGEF. The law was enacted because the ways of doing business have changed worldwide. It is designed to stop money laundering and the financing of terrorism, as well as to curb the sales of illegal drugs.

Law 7786 requires everyone who calls him/herself a real estate agent to be registered with SUGEF as a 15bis – a real estate agent/agency. It further requires them to complete a Know Your Customer (KYC) form. That form includes the origin of the funds being used and a copy of the buyer’s passport or residency card. Then, before the sale is concluded and the deed is finalized, the agent/agency must check out the buyer with international organizations for criminal behavior. In other words, the new law obligates a real estate agent/agency to police its property buyers. The procedures may be a little difficult and time-consuming, but it will get rid of “informal” agents and the fly-by-night shysters. (The rules are not only in Costa Rica, but throughout the world. For more information, go to: <https://www.unodc.org/rpanc/en/Sub-programme-2/Thematic-areas/aml.html>)

### BANKS

The law has some other far-reaching implications for property buyers and agents; it also applies to banks. It requires banks to monitor real estate agencies’ accounts. Therefore, banks have begun to pay closer attention to those customers. For example, with our bank, as soon as a sales commission hits our account they want to see an invoice for the same amount. Some banks are closing accounts owned by agents who are not registered with SUGEF.

### TAXES

Law 7786 also requires the real estate agent/agency to function as a tax collector for the government; they must now collect the VAT (Value Added Tax or IVA) on all sales. They must also pay income tax. Previously, many informal agents did not pay taxes on their sales.

### LICENSING

NOTE: Do not confuse the requirement to register with SUGEF with professional licensing or qualification.

As stated before, licensing real estate agents or agencies is not required in Costa Rica. But knowledge about the laws and professional conduct doesn’t come easily; it takes time and training to acquire them. A “license” doesn’t guarantee expertise – experience does!



## REAL ESTATE BOARDS AND TRAINING

There are two real estate boards in Costa Rica. The oldest is the CCCBR. By joining them and paying \$500 for their short course, in Spanish, they'll miraculously turn someone into an "expert real estate agent."

The other is the CRGAR, the Costa Rica Global Association of REALTORS®. CRGAR encourages their members to join the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) in the United States and to incorporate their Standards of Professional Practice. In this way CRGAR tries to create a better professional.

NOTE: Members of these Boards sometimes refer to their membership as "a license." That is not correct in the true sense of the word.

## BOTTOM LINE

So, how does one decide who is qualified and who is not? To answer the question, the first step is to ask questions about their experience and qualifications: Are they registered with SUGEF? How long have they been working in real estate? Can they provide recommendations from previous customers? These are just a few.

## MY OPINION

I have always been in favor of professionalizing the real estate trade. The requirements of Law 7786 might signal the start of a new era. Next is a true professional licensing requirement. I believe a real estate board should be a separate entity, but in the past the self-interest of the members of the existing boards has made that impossible.

One more thing to keep in mind when selecting an agent or agency; many work only with Tico buyers, who expect things to be different than do foreign buyers. For instance, Ticos don't use escrow or do home inspections or walk-throughs. And, there are other things that they think of as a weird way of doing business.

*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:*

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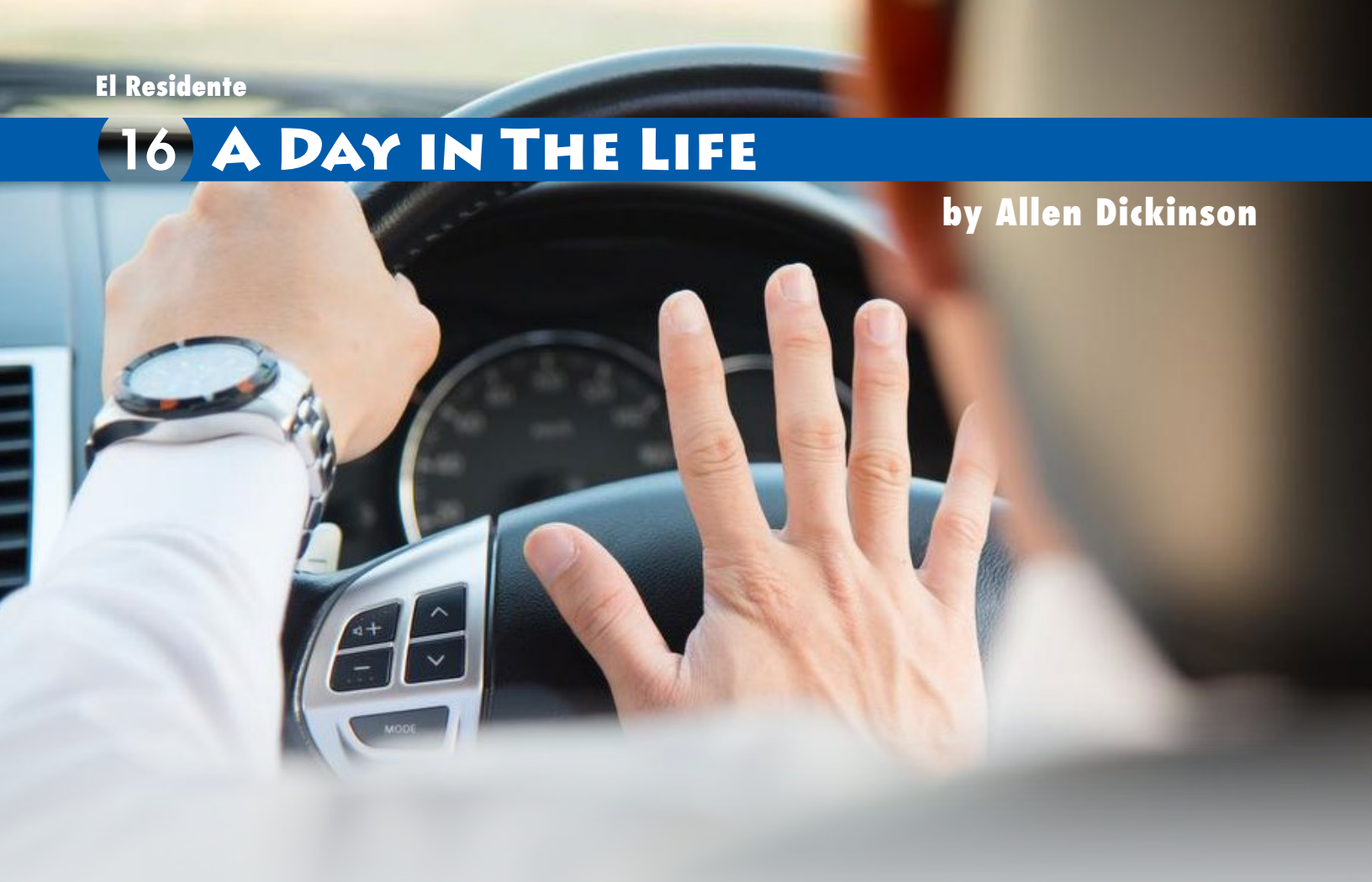
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## The Unwritten Language of Horn Blowing

**Y**eah, this is a rerun. But every couple of years (when I can't think of anything new and interesting to write about) I like to give those who haven't been here long, and may be struggling to learn Spanish and understand the culture, a glimpse into some of the unwritten communications that Tico's use. Every nationality has different gestures and signals they use to "speak" with each other, and Costa Rica is no different; there's a whole language our hosts use to communicate with each other when driving. Hopefully this will take some of the mystery out of what you have heard, but have not been able to interpret. But then again – well – read on.

I have previously written in this column about how to interpret the meaning behind the headlight flashing and turn-signals Tico car and bus drivers use, and in this column I want to say something about the etiquette of horn blowing according to Costa Rican vehicle operators' standards.

Basically, there are three types of horn blowing that will be encountered. But first a side note for those new to driving in Costa Rica; the occurrence of horn blowing has

drastically reduced over the past decade. So, for those who find the current rate of honking excessive, be grateful you weren't here ten years ago!

The reduction has made the horn signals Ticos use much easier to decipher. Here's a summary of the three basic types:

- 1) A single, brief (half-second) honk.
- 2) A double honk comprised of two single beeps, also usually of short duration.
- 3) A prolonged blast of two (or more) seconds in duration.

What do they mean? Here's a key:

**Type 1** - The single, short beep, is often heard from behind while at a stop light. It's generally a polite signal to the car(s) ahead that the light changed nano-seconds ago and that some less attentive driver(s) between the person honking and the light should, "Wake up and get moving. Now!"

OR, it could be a polite, "Thank you." for something. More about that later in Type 2.

**Type 2** - The short double beep can be confusing because it's often used to communicate different messages in



different situations. For instance, it could be a simple “hello” being passed to a friend or acquaintance walking or driving by.

Or, it could be someone asking for permission to enter or cross a stopped or slow moving traffic stream (often answered by an equally short double toot granting the request).

Or, it could be a, “Thank you!” from a driver who was allowed to make the requested entry into the traffic stream (a friendly wave of the hand is an acceptable substitute for the “thank you” honks).

Or, in the case of faster moving traffic, it can be a warning, “I am coming through and look out because I’m not slowing down for you!”

Or, in other situations, it can mean that the driver making the signal is saying, “I have a newer/more expensive vehicle than you, and therefore I have priority over your older/cheaper/low-class vehicle, so you should get out of my way!”

**Type 2-A** - In cases where the double klaxon sound is coming from a taxi, it could be that the driver is signaling a pedestrian saying, “Estoy libre! (I’m free!) Do you need a ride?”

Or, if it is a pretty female pedestrian, it could be the driver (taxi or otherwise) is communicating that they find the woman attractive and are offering her a possible ride, a relationship, and to father her children.

Or, it may mean, “Hey, I know you. Do you need a ride? If so, I’ll stop right here in traffic so you can get in.” This can result in a Type 3 honk (discussed later) from other drivers.

**Type 2-B** - Motorcycle riders also use their horns to communicate with other drivers. Most often it is to simply say, “I am riding in your blind spot and at some unannounced time I am going to come around you (to the right or left side) so don’t run over me.”

See, that’s not so confusing, is it? OK – a little – but you’ll adapt.

Note, the duration of both kinds of signals described as Types 1, 2, 2-A, and 2-B can vary in length. One should be aware that if one of these honks is repeated and is a bit longer, it is showing aggravation. This sometimes happens in a stalled traffic situation where, by honking, someone is declaring that they think that all the vehicles preceding them should get out of their way, and thus disappear the traffic blockage so they can go about their business. This usually does not work.

**Type 3** - The meaning of Type 3 is much easier to determine. The message being conveyed by the long

(two-second or longer) blast is: “YOU-ARE-AN-IDIOT!-for-trying-that-stupid/dangerous/selfish/inconsiderate-maneuver-you-just-made-and-next-time-I’m-not-going-to-stop-and-we’ll-just-have-a-collision-and-I-will-ruin-your-life-and-the-lives-of-your-family-including-your-yet-to-be-born-children-and-you-will-pay-me-for-the-damage! Have a nice day!”

Obvious, no?

One might wonder, as I have, how Ticos can generate virtually instantaneous horn blowing actions (see “nanoseconds” in Type 1, above). The secret is that many drive with both hands on the wheel and with a finger or thumb perpetually poised over the horn button, ready to signal to others around them at a moment’s notice. The attitude is that you never know when someone else needs notification of their stupidity/my importance.

From this you can understand why one of the requirements for a vehicle to pass the annual Riteve inspection is to have a working horn; not having one is cause for failing the inspection. It doesn’t matter if the original horn button on the steering wheel is no longer functional, a substitute button placed somewhere approximately within the driver’s reach is fine – it just has to activate the horn.

As I said earlier, the frequency of horn blowing in traffic has reduced significantly over the past few years. No longer, well, less frequently, do you have to decipher if the honker is saying something like, “I-was-not-ready-for-the-turn-across-lanes-you-just-made-and-it-caused-me-to-mis-select-the-radio-station-I-was-trying-to-tune-in-so-don’t-do-that-again” OR, “It’s only a red light – go ahead, I would.”

Finally, the key to reducing the stress from excessive (by expat standards) Type 1 and Type 2 horn blowing is to recognize that many of those bleats and blats are probably not directed at you, and/or that it is simply someone expressing their displeasure without expecting anything to change. In most cases, the prudent expat driver may ignore the signals and go on driving as they were before.

So, wasn’t that easy? Now you can drive with the confidence of knowing you know the code. (Oh, and by-the-way, these definitions are only generalizations and may or may not apply – ever.)



by Christine Monteith

## Cooling Off

Since I am still under doctor's orders to remain in "dry dock," I search for a connection to "wild water" wherever I can. During the dog days of March, when refreshing rain is only a distant memory and the parched red soil surrounding our home has crumbled to the consistency of tiny ball bearings, I escape the oppressive heat with my dogs, Pinta and Soozi. We seek refuge under the jungle canopy that rises along the boundary of our property. Our few acres are roughly triangular-shaped, with sides bordered by narrow creeks. Our Tico neighbors call a creek "quebrada," which translates as broken or crooked, and it is an accurate description for these narrow paths of water that wind along the bottom of the steep ravines.

The dogs dart into the thick undergrowth of leafy plants that I cannot name. Some grow to heights of seven feet, with broad green leaves as wide as two feet and as long as four feet, reminding me of the blades of a large ceiling fan. During the dry season their bright orange flowers, spiky like a Bird of Paradise, bloom from the stalks. I always carry a machete on these walks because occasionally the plants grow so tall that they lean into the narrow trail and I have to use it to clear my path. The stalks are strong and I have to correctly angle the blade for a clean cut or it will just bounce off the stem. I have to be careful not to trip over the Passion Flower vines that stretch across the trail because there is just enough space for my foot to catch and they have the tensile strength of steel. The tips of the vines are searching for a patch of sun where their brilliant red star-burst flowers open to the rays. Sometimes I hear the burring of a hummingbird as it whizzes past on its flight to collect nectar from the flowers' white center.

The trail edges down the side of the ravine, in some places at a 30-degree angle. In these steep sections, as I half-step half-slide down the slope, I anchor myself by grabbing the narrow trunk of one of the many young trees that line the trail. As I pick my way along, the dogs, a mix of beagle, terrier, and coonhound,

race down the path, ecstatic with the multitude of scents. As one catches their attention, Pinta bays at 300 decibels and Soozi yips in excitement, and they dash away.

With slow progress I reach the creek and look around for any slithering jungle dwellers, another reason for bringing the machete. I step into the cool water and it flows through the holes of my knock-off Crocs, slides under the soles of my feet, and pours around my ankles. I take a deep breath and pause to enjoy the coolness of the water and air wrapping around me. I push my sun hat back onto my shoulders and look up. Many of the trees are 50 or more feet tall. The tallest are ficus with their thick upright roots draping like folds of material from the bottom of their wide trunks, as if they are making a slow turn in a ruffled skirt. The highest branches reach over the smaller ones to expose their canopy to the sun.

I see the harsh light of the mid-day sun as it penetrates the leafy canopy and becomes filtered, green light which is gently deflected down around me. The air is many degrees cooler here and I feel my heartbeat and respiration slow as I slog along the middle of the creek. A few hundred steps to the north, the creek flows over the edge of a 40-foot sheer cliff. I stay away from the edge as I watch the water burble over and disappear. To the south, the creek makes 90-degree bends about every 50 steps. The creek-bed is filled with sand eroded from the soft, tan-colored rock that constitutes the foundation of the ravine, and there are places where the rocks form terraces and the water cascades over them. These terraces are slippery and as I clamber up I occasionally tumble into the cool water. I stand up a dripping mess, but who cares.

I've considered creating a rock dam at the bottom of one of the cascades as a soaking pool, but I'm a little wary. I prefer to stand above the edge of the creek because that position is better for keeping a sharp eye for snakes. My Tico neighbors caution me to never walk in the "quebrada" after 4:00 p.m. as that is when the snakes emerge to hunt. They also



advise me to shuffle my feet and make lots of noise as the vibrations will scare the snakes away. The dogs snuffling about and barking is an added dimension of noise and activity. Ben rarely joins us on my jungle walks, but he always reminds me to carry the machete, "just in case." I guess all the advice works as I've never encountered a snake on these watery walks.

After an hour of meandering, the dogs and I find the other trail at the southern boundary of the property. I start the steep climb back up to the brilliant sunshine and open spaces, refreshed and renewed, but always a little reluctant to leave that lush green world behind.

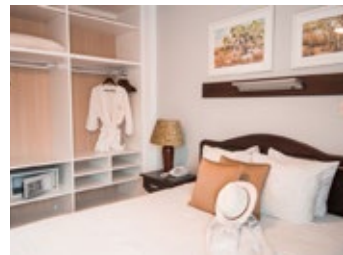
*Christine has had the great fortune to live, work, and travel around the world, and now is happily ensconced in tropical tranquility near the Golfo Dulce with one husband, two dogs, and four hens*



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## ASK ACS

### **Q: I've received a COVID-19 Vaccination. When am I considered fully vaccinated?**

**A:** People are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine. If you don't meet these requirements, you are NOT fully vaccinated.

### **Q: I'm fully vaccinated. Do I still need a COVID-19 test to enter the United States?**

**A:** Yes! Effective January 26, all airline passengers to the United States ages two years and older must provide a negative COVID-19 viral test taken within three calendar days of flight departure from Costa Rica. Alternatively, travelers to the US may provide documentation from a licensed health care provider of having recovered from COVID-19 in the 90 days preceding travel. Even fully vaccinated travelers must get tested within three calendar days of departure.

### **Q: What advice do you have for mitigating COVID-19 risks during international travel?**

**A:** You could be exposed to COVID-19 on your travels. You may feel well and not have any symptoms, but you can still be infected and spread the virus to others. You and your travel companions (including children) pose a risk to your family, friends, and community for 14 days after you travel.

**After-travel information for people fully vaccinated with an FDA-authorized vaccine:**

- Get tested with a viral test three-five days after travel. If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
- Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.
- Follow all state and local recommendations or requirements after travel.

#### **After-travel information for unvaccinated people:**

- Get tested with a viral test three-five days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full seven days after travel. Even if you test negative, stay home and self-quarantine for the full seven days. If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
- If you don't get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for ten days after travel.
- Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness for 14 days, whether you get tested or not.
- Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms.
- Follow all state and local recommendations or requirements.

#### **Information for people who recently recovered from COVID-19:**

- If you recovered from a documented COVID-19 infection within the last three months, follow all requirements and recommendations for fully vaccinated travelers, except you do NOT need to get a test three-five days after travel unless you are symptomatic. People can continue to test positive for up to three months after diagnosis and not be infectious to others.

#### **What to Do if You Get Sick After Travel or Test Positive:**

Regardless of your vaccination status, if you get sick with fever, cough, or other symptoms of COVID-19, or test positive:

- Isolate if you are sick. Stay home and take other precautions. Avoid contact with others until it's safe for you to end home isolation.
- Don't travel when you are sick.



- You might have COVID-19. If you do, know that most people are able to recover at home without medical care.
- Stay in touch with your doctor. Call before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room and let them know you might have COVID-19.
- If you have an emergency warning sign (including trouble breathing), get emergency medical care immediately.
- If you live in close quarters with others, take additional precautions to protect them.

For more information on COVID-19 related travel advice, please visit the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

You can also visit the US Embassy website at: <https://cr.usembassy.gov/> for more information on COVID-19 related travel restrictions.



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## Gone Fish'n II

*Editor's Note: If you think there is no good fly fishing in Costa Rica, Lee Swidler would disagree. Check his article in the March/April issue, and read this, to discover where to go to enjoy the sport.*

**M**y friend Don and I decided to do some trout fishing for my birthday, and since my wife was out of town, I didn't have to get the, "Go ahead!"

We left Jacó early and made it to San José by 7:00 a.m. By 8:00, we were full from breakfast and coffee and pushed east around San José, and then south, eventually climbing up Costa Rica Route 39, aka the Inter American highway. Locally, and on maps of Costa Rica, it is called Cerro de la Muerte or "hill of the dead." For good reason; as we climb up to around 2,500 meters in altitude, we are surrounded by thick cloud cover. We can't see the front of the car. We push on and eventually arrive at milepost 80, where we look for the turn off to San Gerardo de Dota. We are at 3,000 meters altitude (over 9,000 ft) when we start dropping into a deep canyon. Five kilometers into the canyon and we see the Rio Savegre, a classic trout stream. We continue along the valley bottom paralleling the river, passing through fruit orchards and then a few small lodges, all of them within walking distance of the water's edge.

Don and I check in to our lodge and are on the stream by 3:00 p.m., with time for a good two hours or more of water lashing. We are both using #2 weight (very light) rods because we knew the fish were small, although 12-14 inchers (and even larger) are not unheard of. A local biologist, who we had the good fortune to run into, said that the fish population was almost wiped out by the effects of hurricane Mitch in '98, but were now coming back strong. Another reason for their reappearance may be that there are two or three trout farms along the river and occasionally there are "jail breaks." I imagine that's where those 18-inchers come from.

We split up, and before I get a line in, Don has a fish on! An 8-incher, if that, but a fish. I guess he's buying first round tonight! I make my way upstream and find a trail that I think doesn't look as well trodden as the others. I have to do some climbing, but manage to get down to the water where I can see a pool full of fish. And they cannot see me! I take my time because there is no hurry, they are quite content in there and aren't going anywhere.



I tie on a nice new 7X tippet (SO delicate) and add to it a #22 (iddy biddy) Royal Wolfe (that's the name of the fly). I smear it up with "floatant" (fly fisher speak for a coating that keeps the fly from sinking below the water's surface) and toss out my first cast; immediately there is a splash and a fish shows its head, but no hookup!

There is a lot of under and over-brush and I get hung up on the next cast. But I don't get razzed, I gently roll off another cast. I get another hit, but again, I don't set the hook. I am afraid I will spook the fish, so I call a time out. As I watch some more, I see a flash of red on a fish; a beautiful rainbow trout that looks a little bigger than the others. I sit back down on a rock to let things settle down, and decide to change flies. I pick a classic Adams pattern and tie it on. Well, I say "I tie it on," but in reality, working with a 7X tippet and a #22 Adams is no easy task when you are one day shy of 64! (again, for the uninitiated, a 7X tippet is thinner than most sewing thread and transparent, while the hole in the #22 Adams is only slightly larger). I manage to get it done.

Again I grease the fly up before getting set to cast. I am thinking that when I catch the fish with the red stripe, I better have my camera ready, otherwise no one will believe the story. So I get my camera out, turn it on, put it into my shirt pocket, and button it up. Now I am ready! I lean over the rock to see the fish (thinking they probably all just swam away) but they are all still holding in the same feeding line, unaware that I have a plan for them.

I throw the Adams out perfectly – and ol' red BITES! In a few minutes I bring that baby over to my waiting



camera. It wasn't easy, not the classic photo (I can only do so much at once), but he is captured forever on film! And like I said at the beginning, it was a smaller fish, but it was FUN!

After that I went back to our room and replayed the whole thing through my brain.

Postscript: Don woke up in the middle of the night with his body covered in red blotches and itching like there was no tomorrow. In the morning we had to return to San José and go to the hospital emergency room, where we spent all morning; Don had had a very bad allergic reaction to something. The docs shot him full of drugs and we retreated back home.

In total, I fished for maybe 30 minutes, thinking I'd have a full day on the river the next day (my birthday!) That wasn't to be. But on the positive side, I've got the photo! And, I was able to use this sad birthday tale to get in another few days fishing before my "better half" returned from her trip.

*Lee Swidler offers guided fly fishing adventures. He can be reached at: [mrlee@email.com](mailto:mrlee@email.com)*



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**by Ryan Piercy**

## The Celebrity Frog

**T**he title of this article may make some think of Kermit, but no, I'm actually looking closer to home; to our very own "Javi," the red-eyed tree frog. Most visitors know of Javi from a visit to the Costa Rica website where he has his own blog, but thanks to advertising and various travelers, his image has made his way to most all parts of Costa Rica. The red-eyed tree frog is the well-known symbol of Kölbi (the cell phone service) and the unofficial mascot of the country.

Known scientifically as *Agalychnis callidryas*, which is derived from the Greek *kalos* (beautiful) and *dryas* (wood nymph) this little fellow is commonly known as the red-eyed tree frog, and can be found in many lowland areas from southern Mexico to northern South America.

This species of frog grows to between 1.5 and 2.75 inches, with the males being significantly smaller than the females. Their iconic red eyes bulge from their green heads, but they are experts at camouflage, tucking their legs under themselves and closing their eyelids to look like no more than a bump on a leaf. When moving though, their big eyes and colorful under-parts stand out significantly. Adults will continue to eat insects, though now and again they will feast on larger prey that wanders close in the night.

Being nocturnal, their camouflage helps them to hide from predators in the day, but if noticed, the sudden flash of color when they open their eyes may momentarily startle their foe, giving them the chance to jump away with their powerful legs. They have incredibly sticky fingers, which secrete a mucus that



aids them to hold on tight to their landing spot. They are also very adept climbers.

In the dry season the red-eyed tree frog is hard to spot, as they will head high up into the trees, far above the floor of the rainforests. In the wet season, however, they may be found closer to the ground. Mating occurs during heavier rainfalls; the males will shake their leaf and call out, both marking their territory and signaling their location to females. Their small eggs are laid on leaves over ponds, where the hatched tadpoles drop down to live and feed on tiny insects until maturity. During their stay in the water they metamorphosize into little frogs and, at that point, they relocate to their new home in the trees of the forests.

This species of frog is not poisonous, but it does secrete a toxin that you may not want to get into your mouth or in your eyes. They can be found in rainforest and wetland areas on both Costa Rican coasts, near ponds and small bodies of water, and obviously, are more easily seen during the rainy season. If you do encounter them, please be respectful of these small delicate creatures, as well as the fragile eggs that begin their life cycle anew.

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## What Happens if I Die in Costa Rica?

**D**uring the years I have had many inquiries in regard to the situation of people who die in Costa Rica without a Costa Rican Last Will and Testament. There are two possible scenarios which might apply, and herein I will give some information on the process required to resolve that situation in favor of the legal heirs. OK, here we go.

**Scenario One:** The person has a Last Will and Testament in his/her country of origin. In that case the situation is complicated. To be applicable in Costa Rica, the Will from the deceased's country of origin must contain a list of the Costa Rican assets, or all assets in general, and designate their distribution. It is required to have been notarized in the country of origin and must also be apostilled (certified). If the document is originating from a non-Haig-agreement country, it must be notarized, certified by the Costa Rican Consulate, and apostilled. Following that, the heir(s) are required to travel to Costa Rica, at least once, to name a representative (usually an attorney) and give them the power of attorney to look after the process for them.

Once all the heir(s) are represented, a petition can be filed with the Costa Rican Supreme Court to allow the foreign Will to take effect in Costa Rica, and asking the court for an Executor. Included with the petition must be an official, Spanish translation of the Will, along with the original apostilled document. This procedure allows the heir(s) to have the Will validated for the probate process in Costa Rica. It can take from six months to one year before the Will becomes available for probate. Once this procedure is completed, the heir(s) can hire a local attorney, if they have not already done so, to be the Executor, who will complete the probate procedure for them.

To accomplish the probate procedure, there are two possibilities:

- 1) If there is no heir(s) under the age of eighteen, then the probate can be accomplished by a notary, and will take about four to six months to be completed. (That is, if there are no disputes among the heirs.)
- 2) If there are no disputes, the probate will be processed by a civil court. This can take one to two years to complete. (This is a best-case time estimate.)

**Scenario Two:** What happens if a person dies here and there is no Will at all? In that case the Civil Code of Costa Rica lists the requirements that have to be completed in order to make this lengthy process move along until it is finally done, two to three years in the future.

According to the Civil Code, the first thing that needs to happen is to determine who the heirs to the deceased are. To determine the heirs, Article 571 contains a list that needs to be followed, to the dot!

Costa Rica law asserts that there are two classes of heirs to a Will; First Degree and Second Degree. First Degree heirs will be children, father, mother, and wife/husband or life partner (under Costa Rican law, life partners are only heterosexual couples with no limitations to being married, and that have lived together for at least three consecutive years). In the case where the survivor is a wife, husband, or life partner, the amount of the inheritance they will receive will be one-half of the assets accumulated during the period of the marriage. The other half of the inheritance will be distributed to the children and the parents.

Children must demonstrate that they are, in fact, heirs, by presenting the court with a certificate of their birth. Parents are required to present certifications of their birth, and of the birth of the deceased, to prove they are the parents.

In the event the parents of the deceased are also dead, brothers and nephews of the deceased can become Second Degree heirs and claim the part of the inheritance that was originally allocated for the parents. To accomplish that, they must submit documents attesting to the parent's death. If that document is not from the Costa Rica Civil Registry, a properly apostilled certification of the deaths must be obtained and submitted.

If the estate of the deceased contains assets obtained and held prior to the marriage, they are distributed differently. A qualified attorney should be consulted in this situation.

In any case, before the court can render a determination, a certificate of the death of the deceased must be provided. If the death happened outside of Costa Rica, there must be a certification of death from the other country, fully translated and apostilled.



Costa Rican inheritance laws are complex and all of these steps have to occur to be able to comply with the minimum requirements to install a board of heirs that can approve an inventory of the estate and to accept and nominate an Executor for the estate.

My goal here is not to itemize each and every detail. My intention with this article is to give you an idea of the type of the extensive and complicated procedures that exist here, and to emphatically urge you to please make a Last Will and Testament in Costa Rica, for your Costa Rica assets, at least. The probate of a Costa Rica Will can take from three to five months to process, whereas it can take two to three years, and many, many dollars, to complete the if there is no Will. Because the process is complicated, it should be placed in the hands of a good attorney; it will save the heir(s) a lot of time, effort, and money

For more information, please contact me:

*Rómulo Pacheco*

*Attorney at Law, Notary Public*

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by Shelagh Duncan



## Designing for Tomorrow

According to the US census projections, within seven years all of the nation's 74-million baby boomers will be 65 or older. The most senior among them will be on the cusp of 85. Many will be leaving the US to retire elsewhere.

You may already be aware of a recent ranking issued by International Living that places Costa Rica at the top of their global list of Best Places to Retire in 2021. That is some achievement for a small isthmus with a population of about 5-million!

If you live here you will totally get this. Agreed, nowhere is perfect – but parts of Costa Rica can feel pretty close sometimes. Many people are choosing to relocate to Costa Rica from younger age brackets too, of course. Working remotely has opened the world in one way, just as COVID has closed it in another.

In this article I want us to look at something, retirees especially, should be considering when they move and build a home here. You will probably have done some planning for the future financially, and now it's time to be planning for your comfort and convenience as you age.

None of us are getting any younger, and even so, living in Costa Rica will greatly benefit our health and wellbeing. Aging in place is what we would all like to be able to do; to grow old gracefully and with dignity in the comfort of our own home. Therefore, designing your new home with that in mind will not only increase the enjoyment and the quality of your life for the time you live there, but the convenience too.

You may have found the perfect lot in the perfect area and want to build your “forever” home there, to sit and watch





sunsets over the ocean every evening. This all sounds ideal, until some years later you start to have mobility or other health issues and find something like that grand staircase you loved so much when you built it has becoming more challenging to deal with every day.

Designing a new home is the ideal time to consider the principles of design that relate to living in place – and it's not just for retirees. It is Universal Design! This design concept is also relevant to those who have aging parents or younger children – or even for rental properties. Making a beautiful, safe, and thoughtfully designed home is really just as much about practical applications as it is about resale value.

Nowadays we are all familiar with the term Ergonomic Design, or ergonomics. This is the applied science concerned with designing and arranging things and spaces people use so that the people and things interact at their most efficient and safe levels. This was originally proposed for our working spaces, but now applies to many things we use every day.

Universal Design, however, is more focused; it is “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.” It was born out of



the 20th century social movements calling for barrier-free, accessible design. In the '70s these ideas were beginning to be incorporated into the general design of products as well as into public areas and living spaces.

At that time Ronald Mace was a working architect in the US and was closely involved in North Carolina's ground breaking Accessible-Building Code. Ron became a nationally and internationally recognized architect, product designer, and educator whose design philosophy challenged current convention and provided a design

foundation for a more usable world. He coined the term Universal Design to capture his philosophy of “design for all ages and abilities.”

Mace had contracted polio as a boy and needed a wheelchair to get around, so he understood firsthand the significant difficulties with accessibility at that time. During his life he formulated many laws and changed the way we now think about accessible design.

The result is that when architects now think about and plan around peoples’ diverse needs and abilities (like kids, parents, seniors, people with injuries or illnesses, and people with disabilities) they can create environments that actually meet all those needs.

Some of the developments that came out of this concept, and that we take for granted today, include flat-panel light switches, automatic doors, curb ramps for strollers, bikes, and wheelchairs, wider access doorways, lever door handles, and task lighting. Everywhere we go these features are now the norm – they add convenience to our lives and blend into the overall design.

Of course a home can always be retrofitted to make it more in line with Universal Design when needed – but if you are at the stage when you actually need more accessibility, it is a big upheaval to start renovating!

The designers at the South Pacific Design Center (SPDC) / Royal Palm Interiors are able to help you consider some of the features that can be incorporated into your home seamlessly and beautifully. Universal Design is just that – universal – and it’s simply good design.

For example, most homeowners would naturally prefer that their principal suites evoke resort spas, rather than rehab hospital rooms. Numerous design trends not only make that possible but make it stylish as well. These include barrier-free showers, hand-held showerheads with adjustable heights, shower seats and benches, lever-handle and hands-free faucets, and sleek cabinet pulls, (rather than knobs).

Our designers know these principles and can design interiors that work for you now, and for tomorrow.

Until next time.

*Shelagh Duncan*

*Royal Palm Interiors & South Pacific Design Center – Uvita*

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# PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

33

by Tony Johnson

## What Hurts?

When we stub our toe we know exactly what hurts, and why. There is some injury to the tissue and the pain is signaling that it needs care, indicating a threat to our wellbeing. It reminds us to be more careful walking around in the dark.

But what hurts when someone criticizes, ridicules, degrades us? That's a harder one to explain. What "tissue" is injured? What nerve is telling us there is a threat to our wellbeing when we're put down? We might say that the "who" of who we are, our self-concept, has been debased, and that would be accurate. But how do spoken ideas, like being called "fat and stupid," a negative and derogatory judgment of our body and mind, hurt our ideas about our self?

During our everyday existence, as we travel the routine paths of life, we tend to forget the crucial role our ideas about our identity play in our emotional wellbeing. We recognize when our physical wellbeing has been put at risk when a toe injury which can become infected, but we often fail to recognize that words like "fat and stupid" can undercut our sense of worth and belonging in our own sense of self, as well the eyes of others.

We evolved, you recall, from small bands of hunters and gatherers. Our very survival depended on a secure connection with our tribe, and we'd be very unlikely to survive on our own after being separated from that group. Without their help, protection, and care, it would certainly be a frightening and painful state of affairs.

But, again, what hurts? Surprisingly, the same area of our brain that responds to physical pain also responds to emotional pain, and with the same function; to motivate us to protect ourselves from harm.

Good relations and the positive opinion of our band give us some security in a very insecure world. And, a positive opinion of our self internalizes the external positive view of others and reassures our wellbeing. Simply put, being treated well by others makes us feel good; it is reassuring of our own value and of our secure place in our group. And when we're apart from them we carry that reassurance as a positive view of our self,

giving us the wellbeing of a feeling of belonging, our security.

The positive opinion and treatment of our partner serves the same function in our tiny, two-person band. It hurts deeply to lack that. Recall the last prolonged argument with your partner. They may have been many miles away and the argument was temporarily suspended, yet you likely spent time thinking about your defense, your justification, reassuring yourself that you are right and, therefore, belong in the relationship. Just as the pain of that stubbed toe signals a threat to our physical wellbeing, so too does a negative idea about who we are and our value to our partner cause hurt, sending signals of a threat to our emotional and relationship health.

That's why problems in our relationship, the criticism or the disregard of our partner, hurt. They tell us that we are not as valued, as loved by our partner as we need to be to ensure our emotional wellbeing. And that hurt motivates us to take action to restore our security.

In the modern world, even alone, we are better able to care for our physical and safety needs than the prehistoric person was without their band. But, it seems we have evolved a different, more complex, set of emotional needs as our economic and social world became more complicated.

To gain a deeper understanding, let's explore an instance of emotional abuse.

## A HUSBAND AND HIS WIFE

The following description is of a YouTube video showing examples of a husband's abuse of his wife. I'll do my best to depict the abuse, but see the video for yourself. It is available on YouTube at *Husband Verbally Abuses Wife* first broadcast on 8/26/16.

The husband is a strong-looking, angry man who, in the first segment, loudly shouts such cruel things as, "Why did I marry you?"

“Why?”

“Where’s my excuse for a wife?”

“You’re an idiot.”

Furiously he orders her to, “Hurry up!”

In the next segment he shouts, “Yes! I cheated on you. She’s better than you.”

“Do as I say.”

“Let’s go!”

Finally, he shouts, “You wonder why I cheated on you?”

The wife, obviously and understandably intimidated, frightened, and obedient does nothing to protect herself, probably afraid that any self-defense will only make things worse. She is often near tears and has a dejected, downcast, defeated posture. Although he does not hit her, it is painfully apparent that she’s humiliated, shamed, and crushed by her husband’s verbal abuse.

What makes all this suffering even more shocking and outrageous is that it takes place in public. The husband, David, screams those degrading put-downs at his wife, Lorraine, as they walk through a department store. (We can take some relief by knowing that all the incidents portrayed were staged for a TV show called *What Would You Do?* and aren’t an actual instance of abuse.) But the depiction is convincing enough to help us empathize with her and better understand the ego-destroying consequences of such abuse.

## WHAT A GUY!

In the vignette, the character David, is cruel, heartless, controlling, sadistic, and is seemingly enjoying Lorraine’s public disgrace, using the presence of others to increase the woman’s anguish. He orders her around as if she’s an intolerable burden for him and HE is her victim. He rationalizes his abuse by angrily putting all the blame on her, thereby indirectly defending himself and justifying his abuse.

Now, we certainly do not know what Lorraine’s contributions to these marital problems might be, but he seems to feel that she is disrespecting him and so he is appealing to the public to side with him. Until someone comes to her aid (the gimmick of the *What Would You Do?* show) she surely feels her misery has become entertainment for other customers. But as it is portrayed,

David’s attacks deliberately destroy any hope Lorraine might have of feeling good about herself.

Let’s look at the emotional damage he’s done, combined with a review of our self needs, which will help us understand how David is emotionally injuring Lorraine.

## THE SELF

We all have a “sense of self,” an identity, ideas and feelings about who and what we are, and it’s crucial for us to see and feel positively, realistically, about who we are. There are extremes of self-worth; at one extreme are those who hate themselves, and on the other end of the spectrum are those types, like some public figures, who have grandiose notions about themselves. Some individuals never feel good enough, always inferior, contemptible, disgusting, while others almost always feel wonderful, superior to all. The rest of us have more or less realistic views of where we fit into our family and society.

It is excruciatingly painful to feel that no one likes us. Our self-image has numerous needs. For example, we must feel that we have **WORTH**; that is, we have some value to ourselves and others. Think of those unfortunate souls sleeping under a bridge feeling that no one cares whether they live or die, that they have no value to others and therefore none to themselves. Their lives are miserable since they lack the positive regard of others, which is one of the most satisfying aspects of life. Conversely, how great does it feel when you meet your friends and they greet you with excitement and affection? Being valued makes us feel secure, significant, and our worth is affirmed. We don’t need the whole world to confirm us this way, but we do need to be worthwhile to some of our acquaintances and family. David grants Lorraine no worth.

Beyond worth we need to feel someone finds us **LOVABLE**, irreplaceable, indispensable, essential to their lives and wellbeing; to be **THE ONE**, not just another face in the crowd. That we’re special in some way to those who love us. And who doesn’t need that? Who doesn’t delight and thrive in that circumstance? And who doesn’t feel downhearted if we lack this special place, even when we have worth to others.

David demolishes Lorraine’s sense of worth by treating her without dignity or value, seeing her as barely tolerable, a huge mistake in his life. That alone could send Lorraine into despair. But he goes even further, he erases any possibility of Lorraine’s feeling lovable,

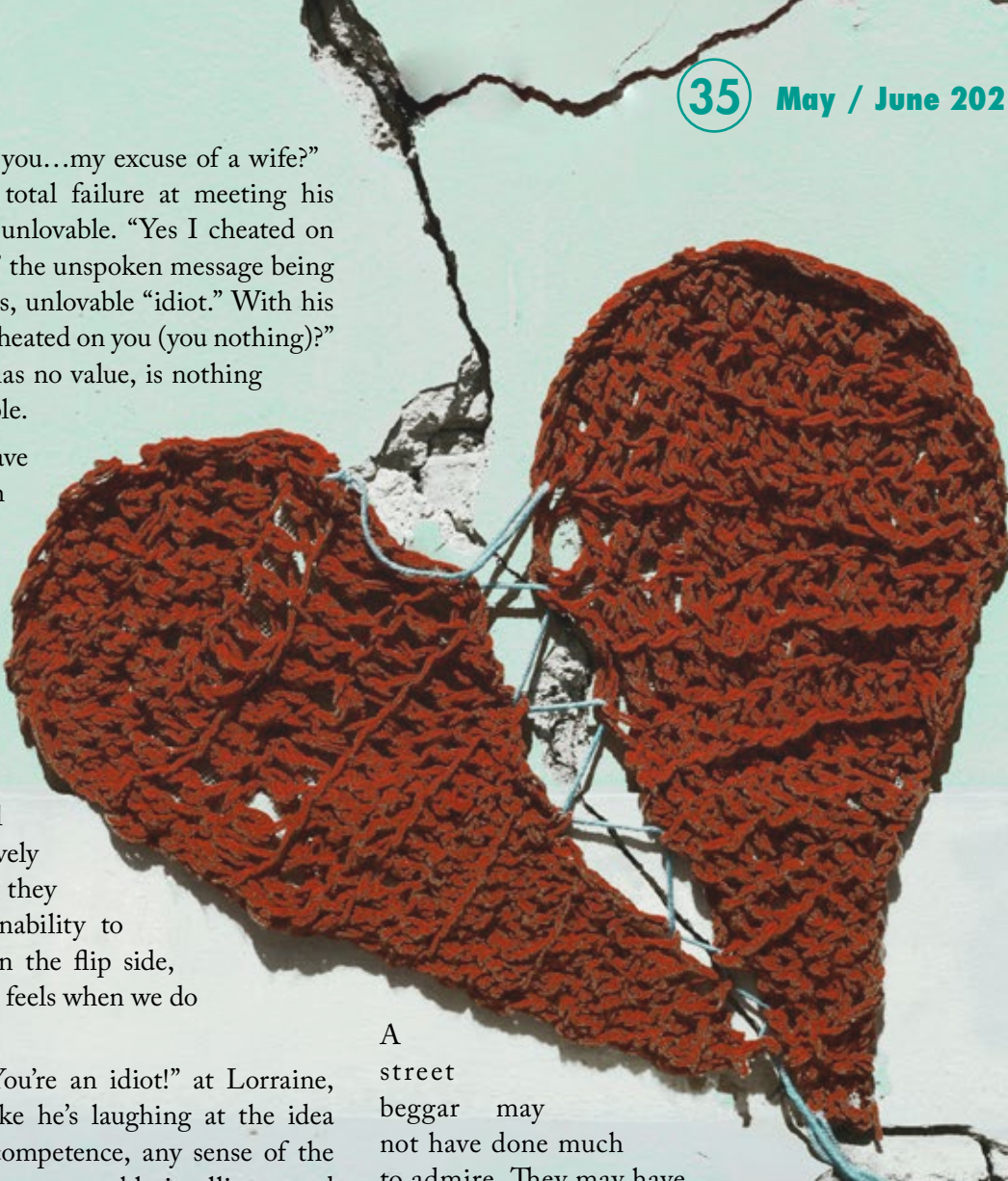


saying, "Why did I marry you...my excuse of a wife?" David is declaring her a total failure at meeting his wifely expectations and is unlovable. "Yes I cheated on you. She's better than you," the unspoken message being that Lorraine is a worthless, unlovable "idiot." With his assertion, "Wonder why I cheated on you (you nothing)?" he conveys that Lorraine has no value, is nothing special, completely unlovable.

We all need to feel we have **COMPETENCE** which means we can take care of our self and bring something useful to our relationships. Have you ever met anyone who has very little competence? What was it like being with them? Does their neediness feel suffocating? We instinctively avoid such people, and they despise their own deep inability to function on their own. On the flip side, remember how satisfying it feels when we do something extremely well.

When, David screams, "You're an idiot!" at Lorraine, in front of others, it is like he's laughing at the idea that she might have any competence, any sense of the value that comes with being reasonably intelligent and capable. Competence is vital to our worth to others and to ourselves; it is fundamental to a positive view of ourselves.

Clearly David does not believe Lorraine is **INTELLIGENT**. He calls her and treats her like an "idiot," someone with very low intelligence. Who would happily call themselves an idiot? We all admit that at times we "act like an idiot," and do some really dumb things, but intelligence is a central, basic feature of everyone's identity. We don't need to be as smart as Bill Gates to feel good enough, but we never want to be inferior to others in terms of our cognitive capability. We need to measure up in at least some areas of our cognitive functioning. We don't need to be smart about all things, but want to at least shine in some areas. Otherwise, lacking intelligence, we are likely to be regarded as worthless. So intelligence is important not only to our competence but also to our worth.



A street beggar may not have done much to admire. They may have less worth than someone who has greatly contributed to society, but they still deserve some **RESPECT**; to be treated with courtesy and consideration. David is definitely disappointed with Lorraine as a wife, as a sexual partner, as an intellect, but he does not even extend the respect to her that a sensitive caring individual would give to a street person. David's message is clear. She is so inadequate, so lacking, that she does not deserve the basic decency of respect. More cruelty on his part. More pain for her.

We all need to feel we are good people, **ETHICAL**, and can be trusted, will not break our promises, are reliable, honest, and dependable. David doesn't seem to explicitly or implicitly comment on Lorraine's ethics, but by cheating on her, he does expose his own ethical shortcomings.

Notice that in the *WWYD* tele-drama, David puts all the blame on Lorraine. He doesn't take any responsibility for their marital problems. People who see themselves



as a complete victim are defending themselves from any blame and justifying anything they do to their victim, regardless of how cruel it may be.

David doesn't call Lorraine a "broken, freak," but certainly his cruelty has broken her spirit with his rejection of her in so many categories. And it's very possible she believes there's something seriously wrong with her; that she IS broken, incompetent, worthless. It's difficult to imagine that after such abuse she could feel OK.

Every single one of us is quirky in some way. There's something about each of us that is hard for others to understand. Maybe even hard to live with. But we all need to feel that, in spite of such an eccentricity, we are still fundamentally OK, and that we are not so broken, damaged, dysfunctional that we do not deserve love and belonging. Imagine feeling so flawed that we are not worth anyone's time, respect, courtesy, care or love.

It's difficult to imagine that anyone who watched the show, witnessed the events as they played out, or reads

articles such as this, abuses their partner like the actor David did. The good part is that people who seek such information seek to improve their treatment of their partner. If you felt any discomfort while reading about such extreme abuse, I hope it just emphasized how vulnerable we all are.

There are numerous keys to a good relationship, such as effective communication, conflict resolution skills, shared life goals, etc. All can help, but I would suggest that how we treat each other matters most. Treating each other with sensitivity, concern, kindness, is absolutely crucial for a good relationship.

Am I being repetitious in these articles? YES! Deliberately so. For ideas to transform a relationship they must become daily habits. Not something you read last week, but something you live every day. If your relationship has any rough spots, try some daily tenderness and see things improve between you.

*Tony Johnson is a retired university therapist. He has learned that being good to others is beneficial for them and him. You can reach him at: [johnson.tony4536@gmail.com](mailto:johnson.tony4536@gmail.com)*

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Groups meet daily throughout the country; times and places change frequently. Schedules for meetings and their locations can be found at: [www.costaricaaa.com](http://www.costaricaaa.com).

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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.costaricaaa.com](http://www.costaricaaa.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](mailto:commander@alcr10.org) or visit our website at: [www.alcr10.org](http://www.alcr10.org). If you need directions, call Terry Wise at: 8893-4021.

### ► **American Legion Post 12-Golfito**

Information can be obtained from Pat O'Connell, 8303-0950

### ► **American Legion Auxiliary**

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### ► **Canadian Club**

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 Facebook: Canadian Club of Costa Rica, or email Pat at: [canadianclubcr@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 at various restaurants with guest speakers talking on interesting topics. For more information please email: [cbwn00@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:bbrashears0@gmail.com) or visit our Facebook page, Costa Rica Writers Group.

### ► **Democrats Abroad Costa Rica**

Provides information about voting in the US and voting issues of interest to US citizens living in Costa Rica. For more information or to join, email: [democratsabroadcostarica@gmail.com](mailto:democratsabroadcostarica@gmail.com) or visit our website at: [www.democratsabroad.org/cr](http://www.democratsabroad.org/cr). Register to vote absentee at: [votefromabroad.org](http://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](http://www.dawgcostarica.org) or email to: [dawgcostarica@gmail.com](mailto: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

An English Speaking theater group located in Escazu. Website: [littletheatregroup.org](http://littletheatregroup.org) Email: [info@littletheatregroup.org](mailto:info@littletheatregroup.org) Whatsapp: 8708-2607

### ► 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:pzwomansclub@gmail.com) or visit our web site at: [www.pziwc.org](http://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](mailto:pwn.costarica@gmail.com). PWN website is: [www.pwnocr.com](http://www.pwnocr.com).

### ► Quepos-Manuel Antonio Writers Group

The QMAWG is a group of aspiring and accomplished

writers living in the Central and South Pacific Coast area who meet to expand their skills, share resources, and support and socialize with others with an interest in writing. Meetings take place on the second Sunday of each month at 12:00 p.m. at El Avion restaurant in Manuel Antonio, and includes a presentation and Q&A session, followed by a luncheon and social exchange. For more information, email Bob Normand at: [bob@bobnormand.com](mailto:bob@bobnormand.com)

### ► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information email Walter Bibb at: [wwbbsurf40@yahoo.com](mailto: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](http://www.sanvitobirdclub.org) or email: [eltangaral@gmail.com](mailto:eltangaral@gmail.com) for more information.

### ► Wine Club of Costa Rica

Social group. Monthly Meeting, Mainly Escazú Email: [costaricawineclub2017@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:mitzstar@gmail.com).

**Meeting times and dates are subject to change or suspension due to the coronavirus and Health Ministry mandates. Contact the club for further details.**

**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](mailto:service@arcr.cr) subject line; Club Corner, and post them on the the ARCR Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/ARCR123](https://www.facebook.com/ARCR123).

## (40) BUSINESS DIRECTORY

### Important dates in Costa Rica:

1 May, Saturday  
Labor Day National Holiday  
(The official Day Off will be taken the following Monday)

20 June, Sunday  
Father's Day (Observance)

All ARCR Seminars for Expats have been temporarily suspended due to COVID -19. Dates for future Seminars will be announced at a later time.

### Funniest One Liners

To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.

A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. My desk is a work station.

How is it one careless match can start a forest fire, but it takes a whole box to start a campfire?

Acupuncture is a jab well done.  
That's the point of it.

Light travels faster than sound.  
This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.

I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.



DR. ESTEBAN PIERCY VARGAS

Cod. 13230

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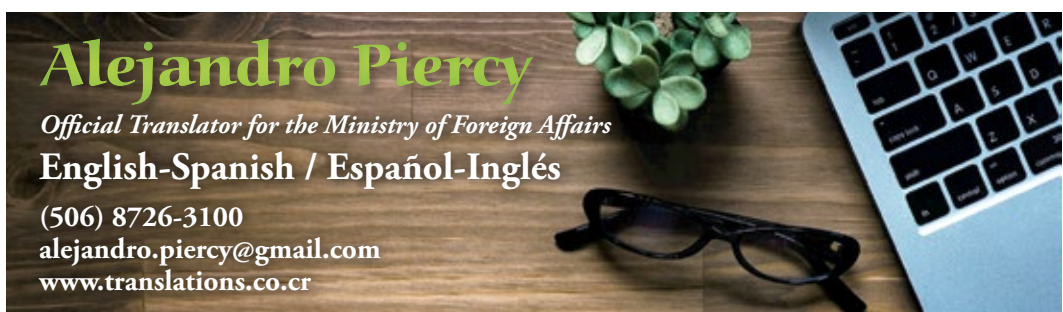


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# Even in paradise...

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NO DESCUIDE SUS COSAS

LAGARTOS POR EL ESTERO

NO HAY SODAS CERCA \*

# ...things can be very confusing!



## Reduce the confusion, join ARCR today!

### Complete residency application services include:

- Translation of necessary documents into Spanish.
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For more information, or to enroll online go to our website at: [www.arcr.cr](http://www.arcr.cr), email us at: [info@arcr.cr](mailto:info@arcr.cr), call ARCR Administration at: (506) 2220-0055, or drop by our offices on Calle 42, Avenida 14, San José, Costa Rica (the ARCR office is on the right.)

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