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**ARCR's English Language Magazine**

**November / December 2017**

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# El Residente

Following a Dream:

**Peter  
Gilman**

**Also in this issue:**

So, You Have a Corporation!

Corporate Taxes: Just paying them it isn't enough!

The Costa Rica House of Chocolate

**FREE MAPS**  
**inside**



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# BUSINESS DIRECTORY (39)

## Holidays and Observances of Costa Rica

The ARCR office will be closed from noon, Wednesday December 20, 2017 until 8:00 AM Thursday, January 4, 2018.

## Funniest One Liners

"The problem with the designated driver program, it's not a desirable job. But if you ever get sucked into doing it, have fun with it. At the end of the night, just drop them off at the wrong house." - Jeff Foxworthy

"If a woman has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will choose to save the infant's life without even considering if there is a man on base." - Dave Barry

"Relationships are hard. It's like a full time job, and we should treat it like one. If your boyfriend or girlfriend wants to leave you, they should give you two weeks' notice. There should be severance pay, and before they leave you, they should have to find you a temp." - Bob Ettinger



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This magazine has been published every two months since 1995 as the official communications media of the ARCR. Our organization provides service to thousands of foreigners who have chosen Costa Rica to reside for short periods or for permanent residence. Since 1984 the ARCR has been offering reliable **services, information** and **advocacy** to Costa Rica's foreign residents. We have the experience and ability to help you with your residency application, immigration, business and financial management, real estate purchases and rentals, property management, insurance, pet importation and much more.

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November / December 2017

## EDITOR'S NOTE

**T**his issue closes out another year and, once again, it's time to move on. Before we go, there is some important information in this issue for you to carry into the coming year, so be sure to look the magazine over thoroughly.

Over the past year, we have added writers and features, and have made some improvements, all with the objective of making the magazine even more informative, entertaining, and useful for our members. This publication is for you, and so, as always, we are open to your suggestions, comments or criticisms. If you have anything to share with us that can make this publication better, please send us your comments or ideas: [info@arcr.net](mailto:info@arcr.net)

We've got even bigger changes planned for 2018. There may be more new features, writers, and columns, so stay tuned.

Opposite this column, you will see the solicitation for donations for the Tree of Hope. This ARCR charity has always had a great response in the past and has made Christmas for many less fortunate children a time of joy. Please dig deep and donate generously!

Until next time, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

El Residente.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Published by:** ARCR Administration  
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**Managing Director:** Rómulo Pacheco  
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**Associate Editor:** Bob Brashears  
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**Main office, San José:** Av 14, Calle 42, San José, Costa Rica (506) 2220-0055, (506) 4052-4052  
**Mailing address:** P.O. Box 1191-1007 Centro Colón, San José, Costa Rica  
**Advertising and Publicity:** [info@arcr.net](mailto:info@arcr.net)  
**Insurance Office:** [insurancearcr@gmail.com](mailto:insurancearcr@gmail.com)  
**General information:** [info@arcr.net](mailto:info@arcr.net)  
**Caja account info:** [info@arcr.net](mailto:info@arcr.net)  
**Residency info:** [legal@arcr.net](mailto:legal@arcr.net)  
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# ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

**T**he TREE OF HOPE: ARCR's annual Christmas charity effort is underway. Each year generous members help make it a merry Christmas for less fortunate children throughout Costa Rica by allowing us to purchase and distribute hundreds of gifts. If you are planning to spend any of your holidays outside the country, NOW is the time to make your donation, before you become too involved in your holiday plans. Donations of any size can be made at the office.

**IMPORT TAX CHANGE:** In September 2017, the Ministerio de Hacienda (the agency that determines Costa Rican tax laws) has reinterpreted the law regarding taxes on Internet purchases; people may now purchase items with a value of \$500 USD or less via the Internet and have them shipped here, duty-free, one time each six-months. This is a reinstatement of the law allowing tax exemption on import purchases of under \$500. Forwarding services JetBox and Aeropost are notifying their customers of the change. For more information see the article in La Republica: <http://larepublica.net/noticia/vuelve-exoneracion-a-compras-por-internet>

The tax exemption for items purchased at the Deposito Libre in Golfito has also changed and the exempted amount has increased; each person may purchase up to \$1,500 of goods twice a year, or \$3,000 annually. To qualify the buyer must stay overnight in Golfito. The most popular items are large household appliances (clothes washers, refrigerators, large TVs, etc.), though much more is available. There are, however, limitations to the number of some items purchased; for instance, the purchase of only five tires per six month period is allowed.

**CAJA CHANGE:** There is a new process for the Caja; all medical referrals must now go through the clinics. This means referrals from private physicians directly to Caja specialists are no longer allowed. Private physicians CAN issue consultations regarding medical problems, which the patient can take to a local EBAIS where the Medical Director can then issue a Referencia to a Caja specialist department. With that Referencia in hand, the client can get an appointment at the concerned department of the Caja. This step is intended to stop preferential treatment for those people who first go to private physicians.

**CAR SHARING:** Car sharing has come to Costa Rica. Zipcar Network, one of the largest car sharing companies, with a presence in over 500 cities and towns around the globe, has begun operations in Costa Rica. It is the first car sharing

service available in Latin America and offers an alternative to renting a car and public transportation. The car sharing service allows people to rent a car by the hour or day (up to 4 days) and plans start at fifty dollars a year. Vehicle use starts at \$8.60 an hour. Vehicles can be obtained by going online to [www.zipcar.com](http://www.zipcar.com), or through a cell phone app. The local operation is starting with only twenty vehicles, which are available at various sites throughout the country, including one in downtown San José. For more information go to the Zipcar web site shown above.

**REMINDER:** Remember, ARCR has changed its primary phone contact number. You can now reach the office by dialing 2220-0055.

**CORPORATE TAX LAW CHANGE:** The Board of Directors urges all members who have a Costa Rica corporation (SA) to read Ivo Henfling's column about a new, additional requirement to the corporation tax law, elsewhere in this issue.

**EQUIFAX CREDIT HACK:** If, like many, you are not concerned with the recent hack of credit records because you "don't have any credit in the USA and banks and merchants in Costa Rica don't care what your credit back there is," consider this: The personal data obtained from the hack can lead to identity theft, which can lead to things like having a hospital refusing admittance based solely on a report of damaged credit. Or, someone stealing your Income Tax refund. These, and multiple other possibilities, could be disastrous—what if you have to return to the USA for medical reasons and find you have lost your identity, have NO credit, and bill collectors are looking for you? Banks and other credit providers have established procedures to help avoid such tragedies. The Board of Directors encourages all members to take the steps offered by credit providers to secure and safeguard their credit, even if they don't plan to use it.



**ARCR Board members:**

*From the left, back row, Terry Wise, Ray Hagist, Allen Dickinson, Terry Renfer. Front row, Linda Leake, Martha Rollins, Mel Goldberg. Not present: Earl Tomlinson.*



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## 6 A DAY IN THE LIFE

by Allen Dickinson

## Orchids, peddlers, liquor sales, and garbage trucks...!

**H**undreds of varieties of Orchids are indigenous to Costa Rica and grow wild, and some people domesticate them in profusion. If, however, you don't want to spend the time doing that and just want to enjoy a few, I have seen live, potted, blooming orchids, in various colors, sold in many stores for about \$6.00 each. People back home pay big bucks for what grows wild here!

\*\*\*

As often happens, recently a peddler came to our door. He was trying to sell six-packs of homemade cleaning fluids in old, plastic drink bottles. He told my wife that he hadn't had anything to eat and was trying to raise some money for food. Out of the goodness of her heart she gave him a small carton of fruit juice and some bread to eat. He was so grateful he gave her one of the packages of cleaning stuff. Surprisingly, all the cleaning fluids worked quite well.

\*\*\*

This past week we made a trip up the mountain to Puriscal to deliver a birthday present. It's about twenty miles but takes at least an hour to drive because of the steep, winding mountain road and heavy traffic. There are always lots of vehicles on the road and some of them, the trucks and buses mostly, can be very, very slow. (If you have to make that or a similar trip, just hope you don't get stuck following a slow moving truck belching diesel smoke!) Going to Puriscal isn't as bad as it might sound; along the road are peddlers of various things—colorful, handmade hammocks, food, hand-woven baskets, and more. It's all very scenic, with great views out across the valley (if you can look away from the traffic long enough).

\*\*\*

There is a nice thing that people do here when they have old clothes. Clothes that may have been outgrown by kids, or don't fit an adult anymore, but are still in good condition, are often put in bags that are set at the side of the road for anyone who wants them to pick up. That's better than Goodwill!

\*\*\*

They sometimes do other things differently here, too. During Easter week (Holy Week), by law, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday are holidays and the state-owned banks and all government offices close (some private businesses close for the whole week). But the really weird thing is that in some provinces, by law, all liquor sales are prohibited from Wednesday midnight to Friday midnight. I can understand why maybe Friday (Good Friday) and/or Sunday (Easter). But no! Saturday and Sunday are legal liquor sales days for those who don't close.

\*\*\*

Speaking of beverages...there are coffee fields everywhere, and driving about I have noticed that sometimes the coffee bushes are trimmed back to six to twelve inches above the ground; nothing but a two or three inch thick "trunk" is left sticking up. But, within a few weeks these bushes are putting off shoots and after a few months they have grown two to three feet tall and are blooming. I assume this can only be done so many times before they lose their recuperative capacity and die, because I see stumps of the plants, roots and all, being used to cook chickens in restaurants on rotisseries.

\*\*\*

Twice a week the garbage truck stops in front of my house, at the end of my parking spot which is the pickup point for three houses. When it arrives the truck blows its (very loud) horn to let people know he's there, if they have any last minute "deposits."

Every time this happens I am reminded of a scene from the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. It's a street scene, somewhere in medieval London during the Black Plague (or the Green Plague or the Red or Blue one—you never know with Monty Python). There is a lot of activity going on in the street with people walking and sellers with push carts, etc. Among them there is a man pulling a cart down the street piled with bodies, and



as he goes along he's calling out, "Bring out your dead. Bring out your dead."

The other day I was driving in a suburban part of San José, following a guy on a motorcycle. Not a big deal, there are lots and lots of them here. But what made him different was that he had a three-foot long Iguana on his back! I thought it was a picture on his T-shirt...until it moved.

\*\*\*

There are some surprising things that come with living in Costa Rica. My cat, who is very domestic but also an accomplished hunter, often brings me "gifts"—geckos, birds, mice, and other small critters. But in the past three weeks she has outdone herself; one "gift" was a baby alligator (about eight inches long.) Alive! She brings these "gifts" in the house and most often drops them at my feet, meowing for attention and approval. Of course, if they are alive, as soon as they are released, a mad scramble ensues between the cat, me, and the somewhat panicked wife and kids, all trying to recapture the stricken animal. Pandemonium reigns. That is what happened with the alligator, and, so far nobody knows what happened to it, but I'm wearing shoes at all times around the house now! (Where in Santa Ana did she find an alligator!?)

Living in Costa Rica is full of new adventures, sights, and experiences; some more pleasant than others...and some that seem downright strange. If you don't like "new and/or weird," you are not going to like living here.

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# 8 THE VIEW FROM DOWNTOWN

by Michael Miller

## The Costa Rica House of Chocolate

One of the pleasant surprises that I discovered in downtown San José is La Casa del Cacao de Costa Rica (The Costa Rica House of Chocolate). This storefront on Calle 11 is a wonderful combination of a coffee shop and restaurant, plus a chocolate factory *and* a chocolate school. That's right; *a chocolate school!*

The House of Chocolate was created one year ago by Cedric Begein, a recent immigrant from Belgium. "During my childhood, I always loved eating chocolate," Cedric told me recently. His love of chocolate drew him to Costa Rica, and he soon opened this innovative business.

Why Costa Rica? Most people know that Costa Rica grows some of the best coffee in the world, but it comes as a surprise to many that the country has also become one of the world's leading sources for excellent quality gourmet chocolate. In fact, some very fussy up-scale chocolatiers in the United States will ONLY use Costa Rica-grown chocolate.

Cacao, the bean from which chocolate is made, was a major cash crop in Costa Rica during the 19th and 20th centuries. At that time there were many large cacao plantations in

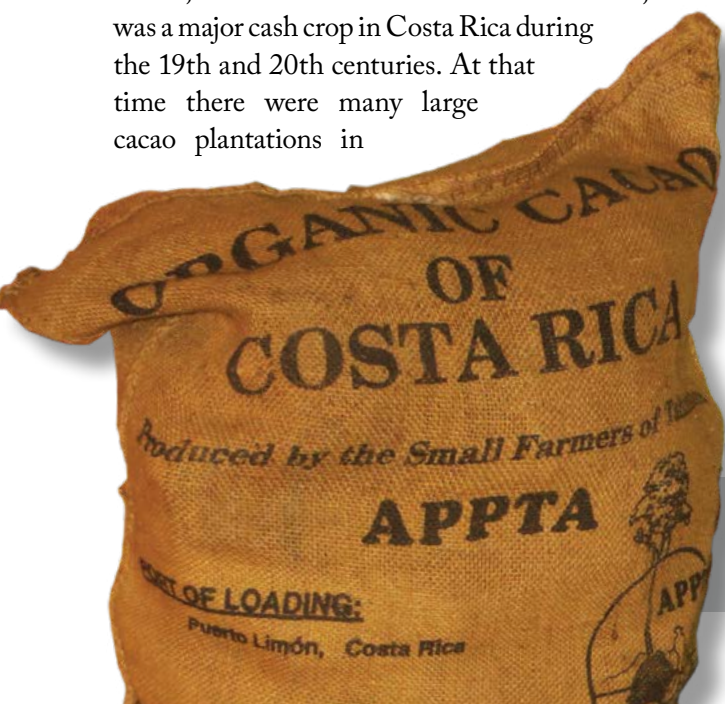


At first glance, you can see that the House of Chocolate is a nice cafe and restaurant; but when you go upstairs, you will find there is much more.

virtually every region of the country. Then, in the 1970's, it all came to a crashing halt because of a fungus that wiped out over eighty percent of the crop.

This fungus infestation was devastating to the chocolate business, not just in Costa Rica but throughout Central and much of South America. Fortunately, with the development of new disease-proof strains of cacao, the industry has been rebounding and chocolate is once again becoming a big business in Costa Rica. Nowadays there are chocolate growers, chocolate makers, and chocolate tours. And, there are some places that do all three!

What is different this time is the emphasis on quality; instead of huge cacao plantations, the country is seeing the development of small farms, many of them organic, producing very high quality chocolate. Additionally, a recent trend among up-scale chocolatiers has been the



In addition to being a pleasant restaurant, the House of Chocolate is also a chocolate factory and a chocolate school, where you can learn to make your own chocolate bar





Workers near Limón gather cacao pods that are ready to be turned into delicious chocolate products.



A traditional grinding stone, called a metate, is one of the methods that is demonstrated in the chocolate-making class.



The House of Chocolate offers a wide variety of gourmet chocolate candies. All the raw cacao beans come from an organic chocolate farm near Limón, on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica.

promotion of single-origin chocolate. Think of it this way; we know that the quality of wine is affected by where the grapes are grown, and we know that the same is true for coffee and tobacco. The general public is now learning that this is also the case with chocolate; some chocolate connoisseurs will tell you that parts of Costa Rica are starting to be recognized as the Napa Valley of chocolate.

It is this new-found interest in gourmet chocolate that led Cedric Begein to open his House of Chocolate in downtown. It is only after you have been taken up to the second floor, however, that you will understand what a unique place this is; because on the second floor there is a small classroom, called The Chocolate Workshop, where you can learn not only about the history of chocolate, but also how to cook with it.

In the workshop you can learn how to make your own chocolate bars. Instructor Ángel Garcia will take you through each step in making your own delicious candy bar. He will show you how to toast raw cacao beans, then, using a traditional grinding stone called a metate, teach you how to prepare your beans to make candy. For the final step, you will be able to add a variety of nuts,

dried fruits, sprinkles, and other delights to make the chocolate bar of your dreams.

The remainder of the upstairs is dedicated to a closed, temperature-controlled room that is the chocolate factory. There, Cedric and his staff make a variety of chocolate bars and bite-size gourmet candies sold in the shop below. Cedric told me proudly that all the raw cacao used in his store comes from an organic cacao farm near Limón, on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica.

In addition, La Casa del Cacao makes some chocolate novelty items such as a chocolate cell phone. These are very popular and make wonderful gifts.

You can visit La Casa del Cacao Monday through Saturday from 10 AM to 7 PM, just for coffee or a tasty Tico-style meal. Then, if you would like to learn how to make your own chocolate candy, you can take the chocolate-making class. The class costs \$8.00 (U.S. dollars) per person and you will need to allow forty-five minutes to an hour to complete it. You have to admit, that is a good deal!



Ángel García, one of the instructors at the House of Chocolate will guide you through every step of the chocolate making process.

The workshop is big enough to accommodate up to ten people and classes can be conducted in English, Spanish, and French. Owner, Cedric Begein, told me that they can also provide a more customized class for groups who want to learn about cooking with chocolate. If you would

like a customized class, you should call 8777-2326 for a reservation, and to determine the price.

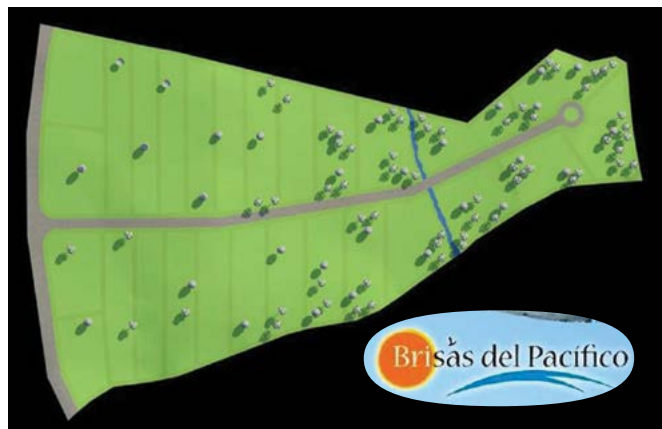
Cedric and his staff invite everyone to visit during this holiday season. He promises that The House of Chocolate will be nicely decorated for Christmas, and that there will be some special chocolate novelty candies with a Christmas theme available.

The House of Chocolate is one of the fun surprises that you can discover in downtown San José, and part of why I think of it as The Real San José. La Casa del Cacao de Costa Rica is located on Calle 11, between Avenida Central and Avenida 2. From the Chinese arch at Barrio Chino, go one block east and half a block north.

*Michael Miller is the author of the first and only guide book that focuses on downtown San José, Costa Rica, titled: The Real San José. Paperback copies can be purchased at the ARCR office, or an electronic version is available at Amazon/Kindle.*

*You can see additional stories that Michael has written about downtown San José at his website: [TheRealSanJose.com](http://TheRealSanJose.com)*

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



# GUANACASTE... FROM A HAMMOCK (11)

by Geoff Hull

## Why I Always Carry a Machete in My Truck

I was driving into Samara a few days before Tropical Storm Nate's ferocious winds and rains caused such mayhem across this country, and learned another lesson about what things I should always keep in my vehicle; I have added a machete to a growing list that includes water, food, flashlight, rope, umbrella, a hammock, and a bathing suit and towel.

It was the middle of September and my favorite part of wet season. The previous night the Howler monkeys announced the onset of a thunderous rain storm that arrived just moments later. The rain beat down on the metal rooftop so loudly that all conversations ceased. Lightening flashed so bright, it blinded me for a second, even though my eyes were clenched shut. The storm continued all night, but the next morning I awoke to puffy white clouds against a bright blue sunny sky.

I soon found that the main road into Samara was now washed clean. There were purple blossoms from wild vines dotting the green jungle on either side, and wild Heliconia in blossom peaking out here and there. Cattle grazed peacefully in pastures while Egrets stood close by preening themselves, and the rivers were flowing a brownish red from the silt it carries under the bridges I crossed.

You never know what you'll see around the next corner when driving in this country, and true to form, I rounded a corner to find traffic stopped due to a fifteen meter tall tree that last night's storm had caused to fall across the entire road; the ground it grew out of was over saturated from rain. Three cars were in front of me with the doors open. Out of each vehicle had exited local men I recognized from town, each carrying a machete. They went to work immediately on the multi stalked tree, hacking off limbs from what used to be the top, and stacking them off on the side

of the road. Four other men worked their machetes from the other side, no doubt from four cars that were exiting Samara. Within minutes they were down to the trunk and had one lane opened. They reminded me of the Leaf-Cutter ants that decimate my tomatoes and favorite "about to blossom" plants at home.

In what seems like the blink of an eye, traffic was moving again and I rounded the last corner to arrive at that magical point where Samara suddenly appears and the line of the horizon outside of Samara's bay splits the two blues between sky and ocean. The road I'm on continues straight and turns into Samara's main street, lined with restaurants, hotels, boutiques and shops. Oceanfront breakfast is being served by Locanda, LuvBurger, Lo Que Hay, Gusto's and Sheriffs. Diners watch the surfers riding the waves. Sticks and frisbees are being thrown for dogs, and couples walk hand-in-hand along the shore, past free roaming horses. A very green Isla Chora beckons for a kayak visit to its sandy beach for a picnic and possibly spotting some of the Humpbacks whales recently seen breaching outside the protective reef. Whether you're arriving from San Jose, Liberia, or just my house outside of town, the road ends at Playa Samara. It simply ends at the beach because you've reached your destination and there is no need to go any further.

I was lucky enough to make the trip that morning and see the sights of nature and the lovely, peaceful village of Samara. But I would have never been able to do so soon, without the help of machetes in the hands of a few local residents. Since then, I've never been without a machete in my vehicle!

*Geoff Hull is a retired fire service Captain and Paramedic from California. He and his family have lived in Playa Samara since he retired in 2010. He spends his days beach-bumming, surfing, gardening, and wrestling his memoirs into a future book. Read excerpts from them at: [www.fireflashbacks.wordpress.com](http://www.fireflashbacks.wordpress.com)*





# ARCR'S **COSTA RICA** SEMINAR

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By Rich Sulzer

## Peter Gilman, Costa Rica's Craft Brewing Company

One afternoon in 2009, some friends were sitting on the beach at Nosara, enjoying a few cervezas, when the conversation turned to the fact that Costa Rica had no full-flavored beers. The discussion included the need for some “proper” beers in Costa Rica and, as the day wore on, someone said, “Why don’t we do it?” And with that the dream began; to create a brewery with first class beer created specifically for the local climate, and to share the rich culture of craft brewing with the people of their newly adopted country. From that conversation, Costa Rica’s Craft Brewing Company was born.

Later in 2009, the defunct KyS brewery in Cartago was purchased. KyS, while officially out of business, provided a collection of the necessary brewing equipment, but more importantly, it was a company with all the required Costa Rican permits in place. The dream began to take shape.

One of the group, Peter Gilman, from Boulder, Colorado, (and later from various other points around the world) spearheaded the effort. With a degree in Business Economics from U.C. Santa Barbara, and a self-proclaimed entrepreneur who has lived abroad for over twenty-seven years, he was the natural choice for leadership. Not only had he traveled around the world and speaks several languages, but he had also helped to pioneer the Japanese surfing scene with an import surf shop on the island of Shikoku. His intercultural experience qualified him to head up the enterprise and he became the CEO of this country’s most successful artisanal brewery.

Recently I had the pleasure of sitting down with Mr. Gilman and his world renowned brew master, Chris Derrick, at their modern brewing facility in Brasil de Mora, Ciudad Colón. After a lengthy conversation we went on a grand tour of the impressive facilities, culminating in sitting at a table on the outdoor terrace, where I received not only an oral education on the history of artisanal beers, but was also able to sample several of their excellent products. These were served in “flights”—wood panels of up to five small samples of freshly-poured brews.

In that short session I learned that when the group began Costa Rica’s Craft Brewing Company, everyone told them they were crazy; they’d be crushed by Florida Ice & Farm Company (FIFCO) who had a strong hold on the market. It was a challenge; at that time the majority (98.9%) of the beer in Costa Rica was domestic beer which comprised an estimated \$610 million annual market. Additionally, FIFCO calculated that the remaining Costa Rican market for imported beer (which includes specialty and craft beer) was very small, approximately \$7 million (or 1.1% of the entire market).

But, with the exceptional water quality already available here, new technologies, global concepts and commerce, along with the ability to import specific ingredients, their dream progressed.

It was quickly recognized, however, that the most important key to unlock the dream was missing, a real brewmaster. They knew that to be successful, they must have a person who: 1) could create and brew amazing beer, 2) was a one-man army with the experience and knowledge of building a brewery from the ground up, 3) could maintain and repair the machinery and finally, 4) was fluent in Spanish. Piece of cake? A huge piece of cake!

Fate was with them, however, and enter Chris Derrick. Found relaxing on a northwest Florida beach, he was perfect; not only does he speak fluent Spanish, but brought with him a vast experience gained over twenty-three years of craft brewing in the United States. He had studied General



Biology at Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado, plus had attended various courses at the Siebel Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois. Siebel is world renowned in the brewing industry for having alumni in more than sixty countries, working in almost every brewery on earth.

Already the recipient of many brewing awards in the past, Chris has now increased his status with awards for the Costa Rica's Craft Brewing Company, several times; including two Silver Medals from the Copa Cervezas de America awarded in 2011 and 2015.

Chris, who admits it took a lifetime of study and experience, said that in actuality it only took two to three weeks to develop each of the company's initial brews.

The brewery commenced operations in 2010, but it was soon realized that the original KyS brewery wasn't satisfactory, and the decision was made to move the operations to Brasil de Mora. The relocation required the construction of a purpose-built facility and increasing their capacity by supplementing their initial inventory of fermentation tanks and kegs. Like all start-ups, there were a few early glitches, but all were quickly solved.

During the planning process they decided to include a small bar and restaurant, to offer lunch and dinner menus that feature quality foods as well as their own pizza, and,

of course, their own brews, as part of the facility. Today there are about thirty people involved with the preparation and serving of the food and drinks. Accommodations for lunch or dinner can be had in the interior bar/dining salon or on the spacious veranda, which at night has an intimate, romantic atmosphere including a view of the surrounding jungle.

All the Craft Brewery's products are hand-crafted from the finest malted barley, malted wheat, hops, water, and yeast. Additional grains are used in their Seasonal beers to enhance and complement the flavor profile of a given brew. Their target market is locals, expats, and all those who appreciate quality products. Further goals include increasing public awareness of the existence of their company, and to continue to educate the public about the natural ingredients in their brews.

When asked to what he attributes the explosion of artisanal brewing in Costa Rica, Peter replied, "There have been multiple failed breweries, until our brewmaster, Chris, shot for the best quality possible." Their example has resulted in there now being over eighty other legal small breweries in Costa Rica, and Peter sees more sharing in the future. To him, this is a long term investment and he hopes to get more locals and expats alike interested and aware of his product line.

The Craft Brewery's output is now approaching 1,800 barrels a year (that's the equivalent of about 600,000 twelve-ounce bottles!) and is available on tap or in bottles at their Brasil de Mora location, or in draft and bottles at about five hundred bars, restaurants, and pizza houses in the Central Valley, plus an expanding number of Pacific shore locations. You can check out their unique line of food and beverages in person at their Brasil de Mora site, or go to their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/craftbeercostarica/> for more information)

Cheers!

*Rich Sulzer moved to Costa Rica in 2007. He's the author of a book entitled "The Hut, Adventures of Coming of Age in the '50's", available on Amazon in both book and Kindle versions, and also in the Local Authors' Library in the ARCR office. He lives with his wife in El Rodeo, San José Province.*





By Marshall Cobb

## Cachivache



I was ready for the big sale... but not so much the many related questions that came with it, like, “But what does it do?”

It was, in fact, an excellent question. Unfortunately there was no easy answer, particularly in Spanish. I went with something like, “It make air hotter.”

“¿Que?”

My answer sounded stupid to me as well, but this was my third round of attempting to explain what a portable, propane-powered space heater was, and why anyone would want one. It didn’t help that all involved were sweating from the heat during these exchanges, or that it never gets much colder here than 55 degrees (13 Celsius).

So, why was I in this fix? It all started with a word that sounds innocent enough, cachivache.

My on-line Spanish dictionary offers a variety of potential translations for cachivache, including: piece of junk, trash, rubbish and a bit more optimistically, contraption. Here in the land of Pura Vida, cachivache is a term that quickens pulses and makes fingers itchy. The closest translation is probably “garage sale,” but then you have to factor in the fact that many Ticos are not fortunate enough to have a garage. Further, most Ticos, probably for the better, have

never had the desire or the ability to gather multiple versions of the same thing—or store expensive gifts that they never really wanted, much less used, like we gringos.

What really amped things up was the fact that our particular cachivache was populated with goods from the United States. Some of what we had to offer truly was lower-end-made-in-China stuff, but NOT the same China that supplies products to Costa Rica. The general, justifiable feeling is that the Chinese-manufactured goods available in Costa Rica must have fallen short of the lofty quality standards of U.S. chains like Dollar General. So, the ability to buy a lousy toaster that actually works for more than a week and doesn’t catch the house on fire, is a big deal.

The buzz around our pending cachivache gathered steam leading up to the big day and I lost track of the number of times someone pulled me aside to whisper a variation of, “You will, of course, allow me over before the sale for a special preview.”

We did our best to keep the playing field level, and paid to have a cattle truck ferry our stuff down to a small, rural town for the actual sale. There were a couple of altruistic ideas behind this approach. First, it gave access to a community

that normally doesn't have the opportunity to spend seventy-five cents on a used space heater that no one will ever use. Second, we were donating much of the clothing and money to families farther north who lost much of what they owned in the recent hurricane. Plus, selfishly, moving things afield also allowed us to avoid a situation where the population of our entire town ended up in our driveway, which is likely what would have happened if we'd kept it local.

By 11:30 A.M. we'd actually sold a fair amount of stuff. Did it leave me feeling that the process of sorting, hauling, pricing, and selling everything was really worth the effort? Well...sorta. It did, however, give me the opportunity to mistreat the Spanish language in completely new ways.

For instance, "This is radar detection. There is alarm for police if you exceed maximum speed. It goes in window in front of car."

Both my explanations and my Spanish drew giggles and confused looks. That was possibly because my own car, like many other local vehicles, is physically unable to exceed any speed limit, and run-ins with the transit police have a lot

more to do with being in the wrong place at the wrong time versus an actual speed trap. (The guy that actually bought my top-of-the-line radar detector—for about \$4—told me he wanted to see it go off when police were around, or he wanted to impress girls—I'm not sure, maybe both.)

For me the important thing was that people were happy—that someone was taking my ski-bib to a local tailor to shrink it down to a size where it will serve as wet-weather gear for motorcycle rides, or that my bride's ski pants will be pressed into duty as an extra layer of protection by a local beekeeper.

At the end the sale turned into, "anything you can carry for 500 Colones." It was not a profitable venture in terms of currency, but we did enjoy expanding our Spanish vocabulary and interacting with a lot of nice people. I hope the girlfriend of the guy who bought my radar detector was impressed. If not, I suspect I can dig out something else from our never-ending collection of stuff that we no longer need and make it available for *Cachivache*—*la Segunda Parte*.

You can read more about life in the Monteverde community by going to: [www.marshall-cobb.com](http://www.marshall-cobb.com)

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## Ask ACS

*We received a couple interesting queries to our mail bag this time. We hope you find this information useful too!*

**I'm working on applying for residency here in Costa Rica and I plan to stay here for an open-ended period of time. The Costa Rican government asked me if I was registered with the Embassy. What does that mean and why should I register?**

By registering with the Embassy, a US citizen informs the Consular Section of his/her arrival and stay in Costa Rica. Previously, U.S. citizens travelling abroad were encouraged to visit the U.S. Embassy in person to register their stay by filling out a registration card.

Now, U.S. citizens overseas can register online at the Department of State website at through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <http://step.state.gov>. After adding your information to this "opt in" service, you may wish to retain a copy of the confirmation for your records in case you need it for your residency filing.

Why should you register? We can think of a few reasons. If there is an emergency and the Embassy decides to issue an advisory, we need to be able to reach the U.S. citizen community quickly. Though we also utilize other channels for communication in an emergency, such as our social media page and our warden network, STEP works directly with our blast e-mail notification system.

Moreover, if there is a natural disaster that would require the evacuation of U.S. citizens, registration allows the Consular Section to identify more quickly those U.S. citizens in need of services. Registering through the STEP also allows the Embassy to better assist you in an emergency.

**I live in Costa Rica and am eligible to obtain Costa Rican citizenship and a Costa Rican passport. Will I lose my citizenship if I acquire dual nationality?**

No, the act of relinquishing or renouncing U.S. citizenship under these circumstances is a bit more complicated than that. In order to lose US citizenship, the law requires that the person must apply for the foreign citizenship voluntarily, by free choice, and with the intention to give up U.S. citizenship. However, a dual national is subject to the laws of both countries. Either country has the right to enforce its laws, some of which may even apply outside of the country -- such as the U.S. requirement to file taxes.

However, if you do have dual citizenship, you must use your U.S. passport to enter and leave the United States, even if Costa Rica requires you to enter and leave Costa Rica on that passport. Use of a foreign passport does not put you at risk of losing your U.S. citizenship – but it does mean if you feel homesick and want to travel back to "los estados," you may need to carry both passports.

**I'm a U.S. citizen but I'm trying to help a friend with his visa. What should he bring to his appointment? Will he need to be there in person for the interview?**

We've heard many variations on this question over the years and though we can't help with visa applications in ACS, we at least want to get you pointed in the right direction. The best and most thorough source for information about visas, American Citizens Services and the U.S. Embassy's programs throughout this region is the U.S. Embassy website <http://cr.usembassy.gov> and our online application system at <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/cr/>.

Via this web site, you can find information in English and Spanish on both immigrant and non-immigrant visa types, contact information, steps to apply, and required fees, among myriad other subjects. Though we're always happy to try and help, we strongly recommend U.S. citizens try to check these resources first. The answers to many questions might already be out there!



In this edition we thought we might look at some of the recent events in the Caribbean. We have all been following events around Hurricanes Irma and Maria and many of us will have friends and family who have been affected. How do British Diplomatic Missions cope when something of this scale affects their country and the British tourists and residents there at the time?

Let's look at Dominica, which was very seriously affected by Hurricane Maria. The whole island was devastated. Almost all the trees lost their foliage; many were felled by the winds. Most of the overhead power cables on the island were knocked down and everybody lost power. Most houses with laminate sheeting lost some or all of their roofs. There were flash floods which deposited rocks, earth and tree trunks in the middle of communities alongside the many rivers.

All this is a massive problem for the Dominican Government and international aid agencies, but also a problem for the British High Commission in Barbados which has responsibility for Dominica. They had to keep families in the UK informed, where possible,

and to gather information on British citizens and dual nationals on the island. The volunteer Honorary Consul on Dominica worked tirelessly to provide this. Calls were being received from worried families in the UK and elsewhere. Other countries too were trying to support their own citizens on the island.

It took several days for countries to get teams into the region and ready to deploy to the island. The UK Government set up crisis centres in London and Bridgetown to deal with the extra work. Staff from London and the Americas, as well as volunteers in Rapid Deployment Teams (RDT) arrived in the region to reinforce the effort. RDT staff arrived in Dominica and started the process of helping British citizens and dual nationals to leave the island, if they wanted. Many had lost everything and needed help with travel documents, accommodation and travel arrangements. Once the initial wave of priority cases were being helped, RDT personnel started to explore the island, looking for people whose families in the UK had not heard from them and needed to know they were safe. Many such people were found and their worried relatives reassured.

Now, several weeks later, the volume of cases has reduced and the British High Commission in Bridgetown can cope with their normal staffing levels. The RDT teams have returned to their usual jobs, all around the Americas, waiting for the next call for help.

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# Map of Atenas



## Places of interest

1. Parque Central
2. Municipalidad de Atenas
3. Feria del Agricultor
4. Oficinas CCSS
5. Clínica CCSS
6. Biblioteca Pública
7. Mercado Municipal
8. Correos de Costa Rica
9. Tribunal Supremo Elecciones
10. ICE
11. Plaza de Deportes
12. Escuela Central de Atenas
13. Escuela Colina Azul
14. Escuela de Fátima
15. León Learning Center
16. Liceo de Atenas

17. Col. Profesional de Atenas
18. Escuela de Música
19. UNED
20. Hogar de Ancianos
21. Ctro. Recreat. Los Vientos
22. Estadio Municipal
23. Iglesia Católica de Atenas
24. Iglesia Católica San Martín
25. Iglesia Católica de Fátima
26. Iglesia Cat. de Los Ángeles
27. Banco Nacional
28. Banco Popular
29. Gasolinera

# Map of Grecia

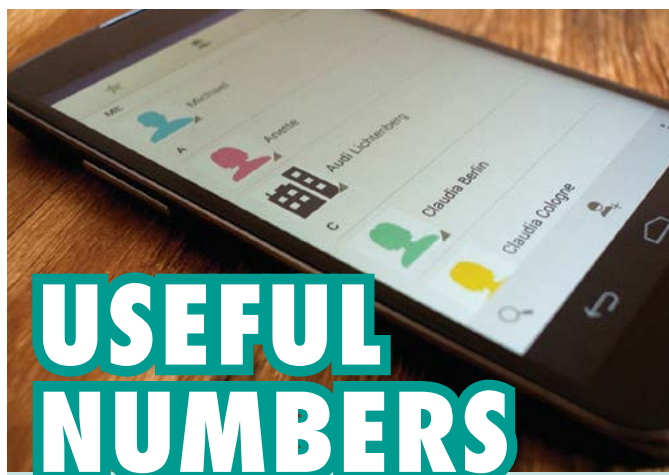


## Places of interest

1. Parque de Grecia
2. Parque Infantil Bella Vista
3. Polideportivo Griego
4. Cancha sintética
5. Estación de Bomberos
6. Cementerio de Grecia
7. Tribunales de Justicia
8. Correos de Costa Rica
9. ICE
10. Mercado Municipal
11. IMAS
12. INS
13. Tribunal Supremo Elecc.
14. INA
15. Hogar de Ancianos
16. Delegación Fuerza Pública
17. Estadio Allen Riggioni
18. Hospital San Francisco de Asís
19. Escuela Simón Bolívar
20. Escuela Eulogia Ruiz
21. Centro. Educ. Bilingüe Santa Josefina
22. Centro de Educación Especial de Grecia

23. Liceo León Cortés Castro
24. Liceo Deportivo de Grecia
25. Centro Cultural de Idiomas
26. ULatina
27. Universidad. Intl. San Isidro Labrador
28. Iglesia Nuestra Señora de Las Mercedes
29. Terminal TUAN
30. Parada San Roque
31. BCR
32. Banco Nacional
33. Banco Popular
34. BAC San José
35. Gasolinera





# USEFUL NUMBERS

## United States of America Embassy

Phone: (506) 2519 2000

Address: Vía 104, Calle 98, San José

Hours: 8AM–4:30PM

American Citizens Services: (506) 2519-2590

Fraud prevention Department: (506) 2519-2117

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

## United Kingdom Embassy

Phone: (506) 2258 2025

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

Hours: 8AM–12PM, 12:30–4PM

Website: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/costa-rica)

Email: [costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk](mailto:costarica.consulate@fco.gov.uk)

## Canadian Embassy

Phone: (506) 2242 4400

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

Hours: 7:30AM–4PM

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

Email: [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca)

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

## French Embassy

Phone: (506) 2234 4167

Address: A022, San José, Curridabat

Hours: 7:30AM–12:00PM

Email: [ambafrcr@gmail.com](mailto:ambafrcr@gmail.com)

## Spanish Embassy

Phone: (506) 2222 1933

Address: Calle 32, San José

Hours: 8AM–4AM

Email: [emb.sanjose@maec.es](mailto:emb.sanjose@maec.es)

Emergency assistance: (506) 6050 9853

## Venezuelan Embassy

Phone: (506) 2231 0974

Address: Boulevard de Rohrmoser, Calle 80A, San José

Email: [embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com](mailto:embavenezuelacostarica@gmail.com)

Hours: 9AM–12:30PM, 2–4PM

## CONFUSED BY THE METRIC SYSTEM?

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

(These are APPROXIMATE factors, NOT EXACT.)

Milliliters × .034 = Fluid Ounces

Kilograms × 2.205 = Pounds

Millimeters × .039 = Inches

Meters × 3.28 = Feet

Square Meters × 10.764 = Square Feet

Square meters × 10,000 = Hectares

Hectares × 2.47 = Acres

Kilometers × .62 = Miles

Centigrade × 1.8 + 32 = Fahrenheit

Liters × .264 = Gallons

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

Ask for one at the ARCR Reception Desk. It's FREE!

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# Bookshelf: LOCAL AUTHORS

*Costa Rica is blessed with a large number of excellent writers, many of whom have published books. ARCR supports these authors and has compiled a listing of some of their works for members to order or purchase. Copies of some can be found in the ARCR display cases in the office. Check out the brief descriptions below (there are some new additions) and decide which ones you need to add to your library. Christmas is coming up and maybe someone you know would appreciate a good book!*

## FICTION:

**ALEX THE WHITE FACED MONKEY.** Kevin Fortier. (2014) A children's story about a white faced monkey who comes out of the forest to eat fruit left for him by a young boy. With help from a friend and family, over time a bond develops between the two. There are disappointments but with love and respect a lifelong friendship is built. Available at ARCR and from Amazon.

**AVALON THE RETREAT.** L. Michael Rusin. (2012) Only a million people are left after World War III. A small group who prepared for the apocalypse retreat to a hidden place where they attempt to survive. Faced with repeated threats from outside, the book details everything they need to live a basic survival existence. Available at ARCR, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other online outlets.

**AVALON, BEYOND THE RETREAT.** L. Michael Rusin. (2014) This sequel to Avalon the Retreat begins where the first book left off. The book introduces new characters and covers the beginning of the rebuilding of the United States. Available at ARCR, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other online outlets.

**CALIFORNIA'S CHILD.** L. Michael Rusin. (2014) A fictionalized account of true events, places, and people. It details the trauma that children, not members of a traditional family, endured in the early forties as the Child Welfare system and bureaucrats relegated them to a status of criminals. Available at ARCR, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other online outlets.

**COOKING THE RICH, A POST-REVOLUTIONARY NECESSITY.** Aaron Aalborg. (2017) A spoof recipe book, it skewers politicians and the under serving rich with humour and insight. Is it a nasty attack on the fabric of society with malicious intent? Let the reader decide and have a few laughs. Included are hilarious recipes for 'Trump a la mode', 'Billionaire Bourguignon', 'Murdoch Stew', 'Real Windsor Soup' and many more. Available on Amazon.

**DOOM, GLOOM, AND DESPAIR.** Aaron Aalborg. (2016) A series of darkly humorous short stories to make you

think; sex, bloody murders, fierce man-eating animals, fierce man-eating men, suicides, mass extinctions, and the end of the universe are all included. What jolly japes! Settings include Costa Rica, Panama, France, the UK, the USA, Heaven and Hell. Available on Amazon.

**EVEN IN EDEN.** Albert A. Correia. (2014) A young tico doctor, Gerardo, envisions free medical clinics throughout Costa Rica. His rival, Orlando, wants money and power – and the country's presidency. Thrown together by powerful fathers, driven by strong, beautiful women, they had to clash . . . and the eruption is felt throughout the Central American nation. Available at ARCR, Libreria Lehmann, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other online outlets.

**FUN TALES: SAINT PATRICK'S DAY, IDES, AND APRIL FOOLS' DAY TALES FOR KIDS 12 TO 112.** Albert A. Correia. (2015) On April Fool's Day, after a coin manages to escape a leprechaun's pot of gold, two youngsters learn the value of money. Unaware of the danger signs all around him, a man rides into a stormy night during the Ides of March, and two other humorous stories! Available from Amazon.

**GREAT NEW AND FUN HOLIDAY STORIES. THANKSGIVING, CHRISTMAS, AND NEWYEAR'S STORIES.** Albert A. Correia. (2015) A hunter saved by locals ends up as a main course for the annual feast. Santa fakes a malfunctioning sleigh to stop and taste a woman's tamales. A movie cowboy asks Santa for a horse, but landing on an icy roof with a heavy load turns out to be easier said than done. Those stories and more! Available from Amazon.

**GREEK GHOSTS.** Helen Dunn Frame. (2003) Jennifer Vandergriff, a single mother of an unexpected child, leaves behind her son and travels to Greece with her dead husband's secret past fresh in mind. There, stalked by an international organization and encountering fanatics and criminals, she seeks help from a friend who works for Interpol and Scotland Yard. Full of suspicions, intrigue, and danger. Available at ARCR, Amazon and other online outlets.

**MARIPOSA, A LOVE STORY OF COSTA RICA.** Bob Normand. (2016) Based on the Legend of Zurqui. The story of



two young indigenous who lived in a natural wonderland called Costa Rica circa 1000 AD. Each the favored child of a chief, but of different tribes hostile to each other, they fall in love. They face great difficulties overcoming events between their tribes. Their experiences reflect the mystery and spirituality that is Costa Rica. Available from Amazon.

**RETURN TO SENDER.** Fred H. Holmes. (2014) An unique new method of time travel sends a traveler back in time intending to change events in the past that will alter present day, all to fit the nefarious present day plans of one person. One man can stop the events. Available from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other online outlets.

The sequel to Return to Sender, **ESCAPE FROM HELMIRA** is a fictionalized version of a daring escape from a Federal stockade where twelve thousand Confederate POWs were held in a prison designed for four thousand. The escape is aided by a time traveler sent back to save one prisoner, and his attempts create a thrilling novel. Available on Amazon in early 2018.

**REVOLUTION.** Aaron Aalborg. (2016) This exciting political thriller opens with the destruction of world leaders in London. Chaotic international revolution spreads to the US and elsewhere. The plotters emerge from being sleepers in positions of power to establish their vision of a 'perfect' form of socialism. Counter-revolutionaries fight back. The dramatic ending is totally unexpected and cataclysmic. Available on Amazon.

**SECRETS BEHIND THE BIG PENCIL.** Helen Dunn Frame. (2014) A fictionalized account of an actual, major scandal. Ralph Carter is haunted by events from his youth which affect his career and personal life. As a buyer for a military organization he finds a domineering boss and an alcoholic associate have sucked him into a corrupt system of kickbacks and defamation. Available at ARCR, Amazon and other online outlets.

**SEEKING SERIES.** Albert A. Correia.

**SEEKING SAFE HARBOR.** (2015) The Arthur family's sailing vacation in the South Pacific was marvelous . . . until all communication systems went out. When almost run down by an aircraft carrier they find they have returned to a world – what's left of it – gone mad. Available at ARCR, Libreria Lehmann, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other online outlets.

**SEEKING A SANE SOCIETY.** (2015) Sequel to Seeking Safe Harbor. The Arthur family arrived on Catalina Island thinking they would be able to sleep well, but awoke to find that a self-proclaimed governor was demanding "taxes" from all the residents, and collecting locals as "slave labor" in California's central valley. Although weakened by months of strife, the people fight to bring sanity back to the society of their devastated world. Available from Amazon.

**SEEKING LIFE AND LIBERTY.** (2017) Third in the "Seeking" series. Communities on Catalina Island and

California's Central Valley slowly began reorganizing following a nuclear holocaust. Ex-Army Ranger, Zach Arthur, head of the newly formed "state militia", was called upon when families began being taken to a maximum security penitentiary and used as forced labor. Even for someone with Arthur's experience, rescuing prisoners from a well-guarded prison appeared impossible. Available on Amazon.

**TERMINATED** – The making of a serial killer, Aaron Aalborg. Two volumes. Available on Amazon

**Volume 1.** (2016) Alex, a poor boy from Scotland succeeds, against the odds, in education, business, and espionage, but his love life is a mess. Under cover, in Argentina, he plays a crucial role, assassinating French technicians during the Falklands War. Following a thrilling chase to Chile he returns as a hero to a stellar career. Fiercely ethical in consulting, he is terminated for opposing corruption.

**Volume 2.** (2017) Alex, moves on to success in investment banking and running a global company. Pursued by an unknown enemy with horrific results, he is again terminated for opposing evil business rivals and sexual blackmail. He disappears into a Thai monastery. but resurfaces years later in a race against time whilst he is under attack and his enemies are murdered.

**THEY DESERVED IT.** Aaron Aalborg. (2015) Based on a true story, it is a fast moving historical and contemporary thriller. Mass poisonings of husbands in 17th Century Italy lead to panic among men and intervention of an evil pope and sadistic bishops. We move to modern New York, where a divorce lawyer and her female lover dispose of husbands. Fleeing around the world, there many twists. Available on Amazon.

**WETUMPKA WIDOW.** Helen Dunn Frame. (2016) An epic romance story fired by murder, sex, greed, and manipulation. Once again sleuths Jennifer Haslett Vandergriff and Lady Sarah Clarke team up after being recruited to resolve a monumental family conflict. Assisted by Alabama and California police forces, this multi-textured tale takes their crusade to Switzerland where Jennifer's former lover, an Interpol agent, provides International assistance. Available from Amazon.

## NON-FICTION:

**BOHEMIAN ROAD TRIP (2016).** Paul Furlong takes his reader on a trip; one as old as the written word. This is one man's journey to find himself; "For me, racing motorcycles, being serious about it, requires a rider with faith; faith that success will come before skill or money runs out." Right after Daytona in 1972 came Road Atlanta, where it all ran out. A cosmic adventure. Illustrated. Available at ARCR, [motorcycletourscentralamerica.wordpress.com](http://motorcycletourscentralamerica.wordpress.com) and [facebook.com/bohemianroadtrip](http://facebook.com/bohemianroadtrip)

**COSTARICA KALEIDOSCOPE (2011).** This collection of stories, personal essays, informative articles and charming tidbits by Carol McCool and other authors (collectively known as the

Bards of Paradise) is for expatriates, newcomers, visitors and armchair travelers. It offers a kaleidoscope of their adventures in their adopted country, revealing the joys, challenges, and quirks as experienced by writers with different personalities and expectations. Edited by Greg Bascom and Robin Kazmier. Available on Amazon.

**ENGLISH GIRL, GERMAN BOY– World War2 From Both Sides.** Tessa & Martin Borner. (2005) A fascinating true account of two people growing up during WW II in England and Germany. They meet, fall in love, marry, and raise a family in Montreal. The book describes several return visits to East Germany during and after the communist era. Available from the author directly at [mimosa.co.cr](http://mimosa.co.cr), Amazon, and Goodreads.

**ENTREPRENEWEL, THE SIX STEP RECOVERY PROGRAM FOR SMALL BUSINESS.** Robert A. Normand. (2005) Details classic management principles that can be employed by small business owners to turn troublesome businesses around and structure them for future profitable growth. Includes concepts in Strategic Planning, Human Resources, Profit and Expense Controls, and Sales & Marketing. Available from Amazon and Smashwords.

**FOODS THAT CONFUSE AND AMUSE - 1,200 ECLECTIC NAMES DEMYSTIFIED.** Lenny Karpman MD. (2015) Did you know that mapo tofu is named after the Sichuan woman with the pock-marked face? Or that “Cats Pee on a Gooseberry Bush” is the name of a popular New Zealand wine? Bizarre names for foods and beverages titillated Dr. Karpman to explore the culture, history, and substance behind them, resulting in hundreds of fascinating details filling the pages. Available at Amazon.com.

**LOVE IN TRANSLATION.** Katherine Stanley Obando. (2016) When a Phoenix schoolteacher buys a one-way ticket to Costa Rica, she expects adventure, but not a decade-long affair with the country's sly and hilarious street slang. Ms. Stanley, a Tico Times editor, presents this ingenious and soulful phrase book that portrays a Costa Rica most tourists never see. Available at ARCR office, The Tico Times Store, and from Amazon.

**MI VOZ, MI CRECIMIENTO EN SILENCIO.** M. Chabot. (2016) A volume of poems, stories, and illustrations that is really a book of self-exploration. Presented in a spiral bound diary format with lots of room for notes and writing, it challenges the reader to deepen their connection with themselves, better identify their needs, and find inner peace. A portion of the purchase is used to help others. Available at: <http://moniquechabotcostari.wixsite.com/book-diary> (In Spanish only.)

**THE GOLDEN GRINGO CHRONICLES, A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RETIREMENT IN COSTA RICA.** Bob Normand. (2014) Actual experiences of an expat who moved to Costa Rica, in three parts: 1) leaving the homeland, 2) surviving in Costa Rica, the early years, and 3) becoming Tico, maybe. Based on over 60 articles published in the Golden Gringo Chronicles monthly newsletter, it covers

culture, agriculture, residency considerations, medical concerns, history, and legends of Costa Rica. Available from Amazon.

**THE GREEN SEASON.** Robert Isenberg. (2015) A collection of essays, profiles, and travel stories by a former Tico Times staffer. Isenberg chronicles his first year in Costa Rica with funny and moving tales about everything from San José traffic to a centuries-old indigenous ceremony. His encounters with taxi drivers, poets, surfers, and survivors of the illegal sex trade offer a broad look at modern-day Costa Rica. Available at ARCR office, The Tico Times Store, and from Amazon.

**SLOVENIA A LA CARTE – All You Ever Wanted to Know About Slovenia.** Tessa Borner & Joze Borstnar. (2016). Tessa and Joze first met in 1977 when Slovenia was a republic in Communist Yugoslavia. They reconnected in 2015 and co-authored this book about Slovenian politics, social history, tourism, beautiful destinations, and life under communism. Plus, there is a memoir of Joze's Slovenian National Hero father included. Available from Amazon, Goodreads, and Authors.

**S.O.B.E.R. HOW THE IRRITATING ACRONYMS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS GOT ONE DRUNK SOBER.** Bob Normand (I. M. Asotte). (2006) Based on a real life experience, the book chronicles the first thirteen months of a successful fight with overcoming alcoholism. Exposes the typical inner workings in AA meetings and the discovery process a person goes through trying to recover. Available from Amazon.

**THE HUT.** Rich Sulzer. (2016) A true story of coming of age in the 1950's. Written from the viewpoint of an adult looking back at his youth, it is the story of the author's life growing up in New Jersey and how innocent bravado led to trouble, guilt, fear, and the ultimate growth from puberty to young adulthood. Available at ARCR and from Amazon.

## TRAVEL/RELOCATION/COSTA RICA CULTURE:

**COSTA RICA: FOLK CULTURE, TRADITIONS, AND CUISINE.** Jack Donnelly. (2014) The book addresses Tico folk culture such as la Nigüenta, la Yegüita, agüizotes, legends, etc. A lengthy chapter deals with national traditions and there are four chapters on food—it's better than you think! An invaluable resource for English-speaking tourists, students, and residents. Available at ARCR and from Amazon.

**FEASTING AND FORAGING IN COSTA RICA'S CENTRAL VALLEY.** Lenny Karpman, MD. (2014) The revised, comprehensive guide to food and restaurants in the Central Valley. An encyclopedia of ingredients, definitions, restaurants, and recipes; there is more about Costa Rican cuisine than most people could ever hope to learn in a lifetime of dining out. Available at ARCR.

**GOLDEN DOOR TO RETIREMENT AND LIVING IN COSTA RICA — the official guide to relocation.** Christopher Howard. (2017) The updated 18th, 800-page



edition of the perennially best-selling guidebook covers everything you need to know to make the move. Available from Amazon.

**HOW TO LIVE IN COSTA RICA ON \$1500 A MONTH.** Fred Holmes. (2012) Much more than an evaluation of the cost of living, it is a compilation of experiences from over nine and one half years of living in Costa Rica. The book is filled with good information on how to live in Costa Rica on a limited budget. Available from Amazon and other online outlets.

**POTHOLE TO PARADISE - Living in Costa Rica.** Tessa Borner. (2001) Describes the writer's journey in creating a new life running a bed and breakfast in Costa Rica, including all the do's and don'ts of living in a new culture. Part diary, part travelogue, part advice column. Available at ARCR, Amazon, and Goodreads.

**RETIREMENT 101.** Helen Dunn Frame. (2017) A booklet which addresses planning what to do with your new found free time – time that could be as much as 25 to 33 percent of your life. It helps the reader determine if they want to retire full time, part-time, or at all. Only available from Amazon.

**RETIRING IN COSTA RICA OR, DOCTORS, DOGS AND PURA VIDA, 3rd edition.** Helen Dunn Frame. (2017) The adventures of the author in Costa Rica. Information about how to make decisions about retiring, investing, or living here part-time. Contains questions to ask, resources for answers, suggested books to read. Covers some of the things that can make the difference between a mediocre experience and a wonderful adventure. Available from Amazon and other online outlets.

**THE REAL SAN JOSE.** Michael Miller. (Updated for 2018) Often maligned, Costa Rica's fascinating capital city has much to offer. Written to introduce new arrivals (and old hands) to San Jose, the book will help people become familiar with the layout of downtown and find its hidden gems. Descriptions of museums, the Central Mercado, the cathedral, and a tremendous variety of other diversions and attractions are included. Available at ARCR and from Amazon.

## WORTH SEARCHING FOR:

There are literally hundreds of books, fiction and nonfiction, about Costa Rica available on Amazon and other online sites in new and used condition. Space prevents including all of them in this list, but here are a few worth looking for.

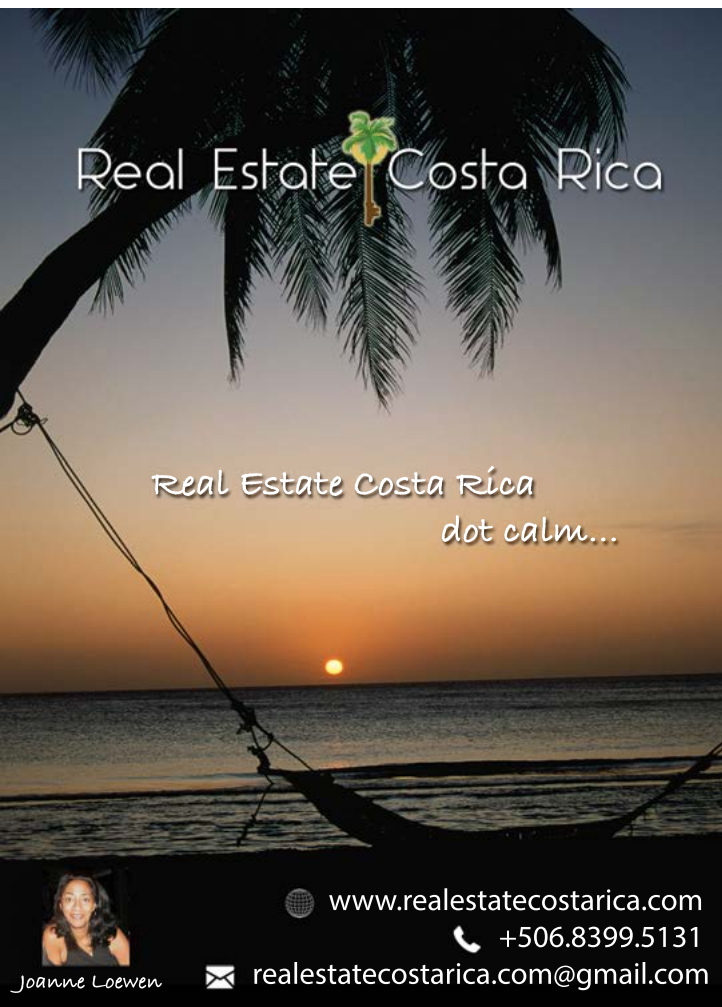
**CHRISTOPHER HOWARD'S GUIDE TO REAL ESTATE IN COSTA RICA.** (2009) The guide contains 550 carefully researched pages including information for renters. Available from Amazon and in e-book from costaricabooks.com.

**MARRIED TO A LEGEND, "DON PEPE".** Henrietta Boggs. (2011) A rare firsthand account of Costa Rican

history. Henrietta Boggs' memoir of meeting, living with, and leaving Don Pepe takes place in the formative years of his brief but profound revolution, when the constitution was rewritten and the army was abolished. It also recounts the frustrations of a new gringa living in Costa Rica in the 1940's. Available from Amazon.


**OFFICIAL GUIDE TO COSTA RICAN SPANISH, 3rd edition.** Christopher Howard. This 248-page pocket-size book is the only source for Costa Rican idioms and slang translated into English, survival Spanish for daily situations, pronunciation exercises, and Spanish-English and English-Spanish dictionaries. It has time-tested tips and shortcuts for learning Spanish. Available from Amazon.


**THE TICOS: CULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN COSTA RICA.** Biesanz, Biesanz, and Biesanz. (1998) Written with over 50 years of first-hand observation, this social and cultural history describes how Costa Rica's economy, government, education, and health-care systems, family structures, religion, and other institutions have evolved, and how this evolution has affected Ticos lives, beliefs, and values. A comprehensive introduction to the country. Available at Biesanz Woodworks in Escazú. Telephone: 2289-4337. Also available from Amazon.





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## Saber Teeth!!

**O**k, so no. If you are thinking of the long-toothed cats that once roamed the earth, Costa Rica cannot boast that it houses them in the forest. But a Sabre-Toothed Blenny fish, well, yes that does actually thrive in the waters off the coast, along with many other species that are specific to this seacoast.

Costa Rica's oceans are alluring and there is still much that is undiscovered here, and I don't mean just sunken treasure. There are underwater ecosystems that have been found which appear likely to host species unique to the waters along the Jacó Scar. There are even many known species that visitors and residents alike never hear much about. Blennies are one such fish, and while there are many varieties the world over, Costa Rica has an abundance, and even some that she can call her very own, making them worth watching for.

Blennies is really a commonly used name for a number of fish species that have similar characteristics, and most are visually striking. They usually have long bodies with large eyes and mouths, and spend most of their time in crevices and reefs, or burrowing into





sand on the ocean floor. True blennies are referred to as blennioides, a family which consists of about 833 species.

You have a good chance of seeing blennies in their habitat when snorkeling or diving in Costarican waters, often being that little flash of color and movement that will attract the attention of those floating peacefully underwater. While most hope for a glimpse of larger creatures, such as sharks or rays, it is still exciting to witness a large variety of life when exploring the deep.

The Tufted Blenny, or *Mccoskerichthys sandae*, is found along the Pacific coast of Costa Rica and Panama. Being just eight centimeters in length, it will feed on crustaceans, and is the only known member of its genus. Hancock's Blenny is another found only along the coasts of those two countries.

For the more adventurous, Pacific barnacle blennies, named the Cocos Barnacle Blenny, can be found out near the Isla del Coco. It is a more recently discovered addition to the species, about 3.2 cm in length, with a unique dark color morph.

Both coasts of the country offer their fair share of these colorful little fish to discover and, while not necessarily the exact attraction that divers go looking for, they are definitely worth taking some time to stop, watch, and learn a little about; at least until a big shark comes along.



## So, You Have a Corporation!

I have had many inquires about the use of having a corporation in Costa Rica, so I think it is time to explain one of the ways having a corporation can be a benefit.

The most common type of corporation are Anonymous Societies, often called SAs. They are anonymous because the stockholders are never mentioned anywhere other than in the first document, or Constitution, the Notary Public takes where he notes the parties that creates the corporation. After that first and only mention, the National Registry does not take note or register any changes in stocks or stocks certificates or sale or transference of stock ownership (although starting this year, and in work by the central bank, there is new legislation that will require the corporation to assign and register, before the central bank of Costa Rica, the final beneficiary of any dividends originated from the corporation's commercial activities.)

The stocks in an SA are transferable with only the stockholder's signature on the back and can change hands as many times necessary. They are presented at the annual meeting so the Board of Directors can take note of the presence of the stock and its holder.

The Commerce Code of Costa Rica, which is a revision from the Mexican Commerce Code, which is a copy of the Spanish Commerce Code, had the original objective of providing a way for people to unite in a corporation; to make it possible for entrepreneurs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to finance a trip to the new-found lands of America, and then distribute their gains from their overseas adventure. This gave the explorers a legal instrument to finance their expeditions and, at the same time, gave them security in their investment; because they owned a percentage of the corporation they therefore owned the same percentage of the benefits from it. In other words, the corporation in this sense was a legal individual who represents the interests of its stockholders, and thereby allowed a stockholder to be able to claim a piece of the riches found in the new-found lands once the trip was finished

Through time the idea of an SA hasn't changed a lot; the legislation was intended for a corporation with a lot of stockholders who start a new business or service, and who

initially finance the business, to get back their percentage of the earnings when the business is running.

But times have changed and we lawyers have found new uses for the legal entity of a corporation; it is still intended for the initiation of a business that would generate income, but there are also other uses for it.

One of the most common ways a SA corporation is used in Costa Rica is to hold assets, as it is a good way to limit a person's personal liability and responsibility. For instance, if you buy a house or real estate in Costa Rica, it is a good idea to do it thru a corporation. The reason is that a SA provides that properties held in the corporation are isolated and safe from the stockholder's personal and/or individual assets and responsibilities.

To constitute a SA corporation, it is required that:

- At least two people, or partners, must be included. This is to make the name "Society" conforms to the word's meaning.
- An amount of capital to give economic ground to the corporation must be determined. (How much would the stock cost, and how many shares should be created, as determined by the participants.)
- There is a Board of Directors, made up of at least a President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- A fiscal representative be declared, someone who has the responsibility of maintaining vigilance of the corporation's activities.
- A Resident Agent, who normally is the Notary Public who creates the Corporation on behalf of the stockholders, must also be designated. This person will be responsible for receiving any judicial and extra judicial notifications for the corporation.
- A legal representative for the Corporation shall also be denominated. That person is normally the President of the Board of Directors and the Secretary, acting together.
- The limitations of a power of attorney given to a representative must also be specified. This defines



the limits to which a representative may go to buy or sell assets in the name of the corporation, or in any other way decide on the disposition of the assets of the corporation.

A SA corporation will have a set of three legal books. These are required to support the stock distribution and ownership, and to legally record any changes needed to any of the bylaws of the corporate covenant. These books are titled:

Stock registry  
General Assembly  
Board of directors

Many corporations never use their books because they never have any commercial activities, and its Board of Directors is never changed. This is most often the case when the corporation is used only to hold real estate or vehicles, never does any type of business, and stays away from any trouble that a physical person may face in his or her daily activities.

A juridical person (defined as a corporation, association, foundation, etc.) never has the possibility of having liability for accidents or criminal activities of the stock holders. There are, however, exceptions to that rule, such as:

- Vehicle accidents: The corporation will be responsible for the damage caused by an accident with a corporate owned vehicle. If the vehicle is not well insured, or the deductibles are not paid, other assets held by the corporation can be seized to pay for the amounts pending. Therefore it is important to maintain good insurance on corporate owned

vehicles, and keep cars and real estate in separate corporations.

- If the corporation has employees, it is responsible for their work benefits and accidents, as well as of following the regulations on work risk insurance and social security.
- In case of mortgage to any real estate held in a corporation, if the property given in the mortgage does not cover all the expenses of a foreclosure, any other real state registered in the same corporation would be liable for the amount pending after the final foreclosure.

The principle officer of the corporation may change the board of directors, the powers they have, and all the possible agreements necessary for the corporations to operate.

It is very important to have control over the Board of Directors so that assets and properties held by the corporation are not lost. Also, the stocks and legal books should be kept in a safe place. A corporation should always have a lawyer and a good accountant keep the corporation up to date with all its requirements, and to file all tax statements on time to avoid penalties for late payments.

If you need more information on this subject, please contact me at:

*Rómulo Pacheco*

*Attorney at Law, Notary Public*

*Pacheco, Marin, and Associates*

4052-4055

[romulo@residencycr.com](mailto:romulo@residencycr.com)

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**For more information or to begin the process, please contact the ARCR office at 2220-0055, or email to: [info@arcr.net](mailto:info@arcr.net) or [infoarcr@gmail.com](mailto:infoarcr@gmail.com)**

(This service does not include payment of any pending amounts for taxes, penalties, or government fees.)

by Ivo Henfling

## Corporate Taxes: Just paying them it isn't enough!

**T**he Finance Ministry of Costa Rica (Hacienda) has decided that the new corporation tax also requires owners of inactive corporations to file a Form D-140; just paying the 2017 tax is not enough, filing the form is now mandatory!

Form D-140, Declaracion De Incripcion En El Registro Unico Tributario, must be filed personally, or by a personal representative with a power of attorney. If you are not in the country, but have someone in Costa Rica with the power of attorney to file for you, it is a pretty easy. If you do not have someone in the country who can make the filing for you, I strongly urge you to contact an attorney to find another solution.

Why? First, there are many existing corporations that are inactive but show as active. Active corporations are charged a higher tax, or "Impuesto a las Personas Jurídicas". If you have a corporation to hold real estate, and nothing else, you can file as an inactive corporation.

Second, filing on time is important. Each corporation is required to file Form D-140 by the following schedule:

- a) Corporate ID ending in 1 and 2: During the month of October 2017.
- b) Corporate ID ending in 3 and 4: During the month of November 2017.
- c) Corporate ID ending in 5 and 6: During the month of December 2017.
- d) Corporate ID ending in 7 and 8: During the month of January 2018.
- e) Corporate ID ending in 9 and 0: During the month of February 2018.

Failure to file Form D-140 by the established deadline will lead to a penalty, as established in Article 78 of the Tax Code, and ranges from half base salary up to a maximum of three base salaries, determined by the delay in filing the form. (The base salary for 2017 is 426,200 Colones.)

Form D-140 can be filed in any of the Finance Ministry's offices. The new D-140 form (the 2011 form was replaced by another in 2016) is two-sided and has space to give the power of attorney to someone so they may present the form in your name. If you use this, the signature has to be authenticated by a lawyer or a notary public. If you present the form yourself, you can sign in the same space. Be sure to take the following: 1) A copy of the Personería Jurídica, which can be obtained online from the National Registry website. 2) The NISE number from your electricity bill. (Whether you present a cedula or a passport, it must be the same document with the same number as recorded in the Personería Jurídica. If you have a cedula, a NIT tax number is not needed.)

For more information, go to:

[www.hacienda.go.cr/noticias/14221-este-viernes-inicia-cobro-de-impuesto-a-personas-juridicas](http://www.hacienda.go.cr/noticias/14221-este-viernes-inicia-cobro-de-impuesto-a-personas-juridicas)

[www.hacienda.go.cr/noticias/14253-impuesto-a-personas-juridicas-vence-el-proximo-lunes](http://www.hacienda.go.cr/noticias/14253-impuesto-a-personas-juridicas-vence-el-proximo-lunes)

Or, you can call the Ministerio de Hacienda, (506) 2539-4949.

*Ivo Henfling is a long time resident of Costa Rica and is a full service realtor. He welcomes any questions about Costa Rican real estate and may use them for a later article. Please email any questions to him at: [ivo@american-european.net](mailto:ivo@american-european.net).*



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by Carol McCool

## From the Campo to the City

**M**oving to Costa Rica was my first experience living outside the United States, in a culture and climate different from what I had always known. My discoveries of life in the tropical, rural, campesino world filled most of my days with childlike delight. But after living on a farm in the mountains for six years, I was ready for a change. The opportunity to own and operate a bed and breakfast in a suburb of the capital, San José, appeared. I took it and began the next stage my life in Costa Rica.

I was so focused on investing in this business that I failed to notice how the larger picture of the U.S. economy would affect my venture. Up north the economy had just shuddered with a huge contraction, later dubbed The Great Recession. Poof! Half of many people's home values and retirement savings disappeared. Much of the rest of the world felt the aftershocks; Iceland was bankrupt, but Costa Rica, with its insulated banking system was not hit so hard—at first. But eventually, tourism here slumped and then skidded off the charts. Of course, when people are fearful about their economic futures, travel becomes a luxury they are less likely to indulge. Yet, I had not given that a thought. Clearly, I am not someone to seek out for investment advice.

The location had housed a bed and breakfast, previously owned by another expat, and was on a cul-de-sac in an older, sort-of-gated community with large trees and flowering shrubs. Two gated entrances to the neighborhood caused people to stop and wait for the guard to lift the barrier, but because the streets were public ones, anyone who wished to walk or drive in could do so if they insisted. The homes appeared to have been built in the mid-to-late twentieth century for middle class and professional Costa Ricans. While most houses were well-maintained, a few had become shabby, with peeling paint, unkempt lawns and For Sale signs.

It was available because the owner had made a number of mistakes that had come to the attention of the Costa Rican government, the kinds of errors made by someone who gets carried away by the apparent lack of consequences until it is too late. To name a few: for years he disregarded the requirement to renew his visa, he failed to obtain at least three of the licenses needed for his business, and some neighbors complained that his activities created a nuisance. At first he believed the rules did not apply to him, but in the end he was swept away as if by a riptide and barred from reentering the country.

To his credit, I will say that his business failure was not for a lack of trying; he had worked very hard, but the aforementioned economic forces prevailed. At the end, a few of his friends and I helped out by negotiating with the landlord. Assets were liquidated with a huge going-out-of-business sale. Our efforts gave him a large chunk of cash with which to start a new life. In the meantime, I kept the place running as it still had a few guests.

*At first it was fun—*

For two months, I managed the place and found the hospitality work appealing. In addition to the usual tourists, some guests stood out as memorable. Some rooms and one of the bathrooms on the first floor were wheelchair accessible, so a wheelchair-bound guest from another part of Costa Rica was staying there. The accommodations allowed him to be self-sufficient in

affordable lodging with other people to talk to when he wanted company. He was in the Central Valley to be near his gravely-ill mother in a nearby hospital. When it became clear she would not recover, he made plans to take her to his home in the mountains overlooking Lake Arenal and drink aged rum with her on the balcony for her final days.

Another was a family of three sisters who gathered from New Zealand, Hawaii and Texas to be near their seriously-injured father, also in a nearby hospital. These sisters had not seen each other for many years. I put them in rooms close together on the second floor.

Among others, memorable guests included two special education teachers from Chicago who stayed at the place for their honeymoon, and a marijuana grower from California who owned a teak farm in southern Costa Rica. I had designated two rooms across the patio for guests traveling with pets, and a couple with two beautiful, well-behaved Belgian shepherds stayed there frequently.

#### *Then work—*

The place needed a lot of work. The previous owner had been a “collector,” so I hired a crew to remove truckloads of junk. Initially there were rats, and over the months of cleaning and redecorating, we discovered some boa constrictors, nasty in temperament but not venomous. After the rats were gone, the boas usually stayed away.

Behind the enclosed patio was a steep, jungle-covered hillside leading down to a river. One surprise during the renovation phase was the discovery that the bathroom for the two guest rooms on that side of the patio had a toilet with a drain that ended in an open pipe jutting out over the hillside. Waste flew out of the end of the pipe and fell untreated to the ground below. In what I think was my last conversation with the previous owner before I stopped speaking to him, he explained that that toilet was for people who only needed to pee. I had the toilet removed.

#### *Then fun again—*

I saw potential, and decorating was fun. I planned each guest room around a story of life in Costa Rica, illustrated with framed photos and original art. The place was rustic, had a patio with luxurious tropical plants, bordered a wild riverside, and attracted exotic birds and pizotes (cute,



raccoon-like animals). Iguanas, some six feet long, liked to sun themselves in a tree in the middle of the patio.

I learned many details of the earlier life of the place from people who stopped by as I was cleaning, fumigating and redecorating in preparation for my own business there. After listening to those stories, I decided to hire a shaman to remove any lingering spiritual contamination.

The spiritual cleansing involved incantations from the shaman as we went from room to room with burning sage. At the conclusion of the cleansing she asked me to state my purposes for starting the business and to ask the spirit world for help in realizing those goals. I expressed my hope of providing affordable lodging and healthy food to travelers, of offering comfort and a beautiful space to people away from home and helping newcomers with their adjustment to Costa Rica. I asked the universe for pleasant and interesting guests of good will.

However, I failed to use the opportunity to ask that I make a profit—an unfortunate oversight. The universe *did* grant the wishes I thought to ask for. I lived there for four years with my cat, three dogs, and assorted friends who came and left, often staying for two years or more while they were in transitions in their lives. With one exception my guests were enjoyable. I did not make money but I heard some interesting stories.

About the author: Carol McCool moved to Costa Rica many years ago after retiring from working as a psychologist in schools in the Chicago area. Her stories about living on a farm in the mountains of Costa Rica are published in the anthology, *Costa Rica Kaleidoscope*. Her next book, due out next year, continues the adventure and includes many stories told by other people.



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**(34) PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM**by **Tony Johnson****You Are the Key to Happiness**

**E**ver conclude that the pursuit of sustained happiness is hopeless, a lost cause? We may have the right to “pursue happiness”, but it seems that happiness also has the ability to reject our courtship. And does so quite regularly and successfully. Why does it sometimes seem so damn hard?

Although rooted in the word happen, most experiences of happiness don’t just occur out of the blue. Some do, but most often we must create them; ever try to bake a cake without a solid understanding of the fundamental principles involved? Without baking skills? How’d that go? Were you happy with the results? As in baking a cake, the better we understand and skillfully APPLY the principles of attaining the desired result, a cake or happiness, the better the results.

So, what are the principles of happiness? As complicated as happiness is, research has reduced it to three basic elements: genes, conditions, and choices. Furthermore, studies have discovered that happiness is about 50% genetic, or inborn temperament, 10% conditions, and 40% life choices. Each of those three elements makes contributions to our overall happiness, so happiness ultimately comes down to some aspect of who we are. While some of our happiness is out of our control, but a big chunk is up to us. In each of the three areas, you are the key to the results.

**It’s In Your Genes**

The genetic component of happiness doesn’t mean some people have a fixed level of happiness that never changes, that they are always happy, or that others are permanently stuck in misery.

We’ve all known people who are blessed with joy filled natures and hardly anything seems to disrupt their balance and throw them into negativity. And, if they do experience some downer, they quickly recover their happiness. That’s because the genetic component is more like a set point; the level we naturally return to after the inescapable setbacks of living. It’s like a thermostat set at 70 degrees, when the temperature goes down, the furnace turns on and restores the

warmth to the preset level. So, some return to a higher level of joy set by their genes after a setback, and others typically revert to feeling down, negative, and pessimistic at some lower level.

**Genes have other impacts on our happiness. But we can also impact those effects.**

Humans, for example, seem to have evolved a negative bias. We tend to look for the worst, expect the negative, and continually prepare for danger. While this enhances our chances for survival by keeping us vigilant for risk, it can make happiness harder to attain and maintain. Being too comfortable can blind us to the dangers in our environment. There’s no possibility of happiness if we don’t first survive, so this tradeoff makes a great deal of evolutionary sense.

We also seem to be programmed to become “habituated”, used to our life’s reality. That shiny new car, that wonderful new house, or that perfect new relationship eventually becomes old hat. Been there, done that. What’s next? We seem to be genetically programmed to a certain degree of discontent. That’s not all bad either, discontent is one of the things that compelled early humans to leave Africa and hunt for better conditions.

So does this mean our innate need for happiness is a lost cause? Irredeemably blocked by our genetic realities? Not at all. Recall the last time you were happy. Regardless of genes, happiness is not impossible. Afterall, 50% comes from conditions and choices.

**Unconditional Happiness? How Can That Be?**

Beyond the three basic elements, happiness can be reduced to two categories: Happiness from within (genes and mindset) and happiness from without (conditions). This distinction provides us with a clearer view of happiness and better ways manage our ultimate well-being.



Happiness from without refers to the external conditions that produce or reduce good feelings. Happiness from within is the source that we have inside us, and the one we have the most control over: our reaction to those external events.

Living, as we do, in an ocean of inescapable external conditions, many of them will naturally have an impact on our happiness. When we feel safe and see our physical, emotional, and social needs as fulfilled by the circumstances of our life, we tend to feel happy. Things are going our way; the world and I are in harmony, not in opposition. So, freed from worry and want, we experience the world as a place that welcomes and cares for us.

But, when we face deficiency, frustration, adversity, we feel unhappy. Imagine happiness as a level of life that we reach for from a level below that ideal. When conditions thwart, obstruct, hinder, or impede closing that gap between where we are and where we want to be, we feel unhappy.

But if conditions are “inescapable”, how could we possibly attain “unconditioned happiness”?

## Conditions can assist or reduce happiness.

Some conditions are sometimes under our control. We can, for example, have some choice in where we live and work and who we partner with, and how we spend our fleeting and precious life moments. But as carefully and effectively as we sometimes arrange our life conditions to produce happiness, we are never, ever guaranteed those circumstances will remain unchanged. What one day brought us happiness may the next day be completely reversed. And if our happiness is totally dependant upon those ever changing externals, our happiness is at the mercy of events often beyond our control.

This has led a curious and restless humanity to seek unconditional happiness; happiness that is not at the mercy of shifting, changing reality; a happiness that is not vulnerable to unchanging change. And to achieve that, we have to turn our focus inward, away from changing externals.

## Two Means of Attaining Unconditional Happiness

As mentioned, there are two types of general happiness, from within and from without. And there

are also two sources of inner happiness: 1) A flexible ability to rebound from unwanted change and restore our happiness by managing our perceptions of those changes and, 2) The discovery of place within us that is always happy regardless of externals.

Once again, remember that we can manage and maintain internal happiness by managing the MEANING that we give to the changing externals. The weather changes for the worst. We may be powerless to restore the sunshine, but are enormously capable of restoring our good feelings by changing our perceptions of that event. Our choices are to feel sorry for ourselves, OR we can realize that the world wasn't created especially for us and that sometimes the external reality will be at odds with our wishes. If we cling to some notion of how things should be, of what we are entitled to, we're going to find ourselves frequently in a damaging – to us – adversarial relationship with reality, and that's a fight we are unlikely to win. For instance, instead of thinking the world is unfair, we can be grateful for how good the weather has been recently. By doing so we change the MEANING of the changing weather, and thereby change our feelings for the better. The whole damn universe is not out to screw us, even though it seems that way sometime.

Another way to manage the perceptions that impact happiness is to remove our SELF-IMPOSED conditions to happiness. Many of us have an IF ONLY mindset . . . if only I were rich and famous or, WHEN I'm rich and famous, THEN I'll be happy.

Ask yourself, is it really impossible to be happy BEFORE being rich and famous? Am I setting unnecessary conditions on my own happiness? Am I myself, rather than reality, preventing my own happiness? If I see happiness as something only possible under certain conditions, am I denying myself the pleasure of happiness that can occur before achieving my goals? Am I afraid to free myself of those self-imposed conditions because I fear losing my motivation to become rich and famous? Does being rich and famous really assure happiness?

## Our Inner Core of Happiness

WHO are you, really? Your thoughts and feelings? Your perceptions? Your physical sensations? Your history? Your experiences? Your personality? We are all those things . . . more or less . . . and those things can change; they come and go.

The spiritual masters who have achieved unconditioned happiness would point out that we are what is permanent and unchanging in us; our awareness. The unchanging, permanent observer behind that impermanent river of thoughts, feelings, etc., is who we really are.

And what does meditation show us about that awareness when we remove thoughts and feelings? It's calm, peaceful, content, happy. And UNIMPACTED by conditions.

So unconditional happiness is enjoyed by going to the condition of peace and happiness always within us.

YOU, at your essence, are happiness.

I know. I know, all this sound kinda flakey, airy-fairy to the western ear. But, may I recommend that you explore it, experience it before you reject it?

To sum up, there are 3 basic approaches to optimize your happiness:

Manage the external conditions of your life – to the extent we can.

Manage your REACTIONS to those conditions – learn the skill of changing our mindset.

Manage your access to your imperturbable, calm, inner happiness – learn to meditate.

Change ourselves, improve our happiness.

Any of this make sense?

*Tony Johnson is a retired university mental health center psychologist. He explores, learns, and lives happily in the Southern Zone. He can be contacted at: [paradise.we.have.a.problem@gmail.com](mailto:paradise.we.have.a.problem@gmail.com)*



## Randall Lindner

70, owner of U.S. Tax and Accounting, died September 5, 2017. Mr. Lindner, a regular presenter at the monthly ARCR seminars for many years, passed away from injuries received in a plane crash in Costa Rica. Originally from New York and Florida, Mr. Lindner had called Costa Rica home for over 20 years. His company, which provides tax preparation services to countless expatriates, will continue to provide accounting and other services to those needing them. Their contact information can be found elsewhere in this issue. He is survived by his wife Jane, son Justin, and daughter Freda.



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**Organizations are invited and encouraged to post their group activities, information, meeting schedules, and notices of special events FREE in the ARCR Facebook account. Go to [www.facebook.com/ARCR123](http://www.facebook.com/ARCR123)**

### ► **Alcoholics Anonymous**

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

### ► **Al-Anon Meetings**

English language Al-Anon meetings are open to anyone whose life has been/is affected by someone else's problem with alcohol. Al-anon meeting information can be found at: <http://www.costaricaaa.com/category/al-anon/>.

### ► **American Legion Post 10-Escazú**

The A.L. Post 10 has relocated the monthly meetings to Casa de España in Sabana norte. There is an elevator so those with a handicap will not have a problem entering the building or reaching the meeting area. If you wish to attend, for directions please call or text Terry Wise at 8893-4021 or email him at: [ticoterry33@gmail.com](mailto:ticoterry33@gmail.com)

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

Meetings are held 4 p.m. 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday every month at Banana Bay Marina. The Golfito GOVETS have been helping Southern Costa Rica for over 20 years. Contact Pat O'Connell at: [walkergold@yahoo.com](mailto:walkergold@yahoo.com) or 8919-8947, or Mel Goldberg at 8870-6756.

### ► **American Legion Auxiliary**

The Legion Auxiliary meets the second Saturday of each month, at 1300 hours in Moravia. Contact Doris Murillo 2240-2947.

### ► **Bird Watching Club**

The Birding Club of Costa Rica sponsors monthly trips to observe local and migrant birds in various areas of the country. For more information, please visit our website: [www.birdingclubcr.org](http://www.birdingclubcr.org)

### ► **Canadian Club**

The Canadian Club welcomes everyone to join us for our monthly luncheons, and at our special annual events, like our Canada Day Celebration, 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 visit our website: [www.canadianclubcr.com](http://www.canadianclubcr.com) or email Pat at: [canadianclubcr@yahoo.com](mailto:canadianclubcr@yahoo.com) to sign up.

### ► **Cooking Class Club**

Meets the first Wednesday each month from 10am to noon. Learn how to create memorable dishes from a culinary expert. Each class will be followed by a four-course lunch and beverage at a special price. For location, directions, and more information, contact Barry Blazer at 6008-9944. (Reservations recommended.)

### ► **Costa Ballena Women's Network**

Costa Ballena Women's Network (CBWN) started in Ojochal with a handful of expat ladies almost 10 years ago. Our focus is networking, community, business, and social activities as well as offering an opportunity to meet new people. Monthly lunch meetings are held the 3rd Saturday of each month at various restaurants with guest speakers talking on interesting topics. For more information please contact: [cbwn00@gmail.com](mailto:cbwn00@gmail.com) and see our FB page - [www.facebook.com/CostaBallenaWomensNetwork](http://www.facebook.com/CostaBallenaWomensNetwork)

### ► **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, 11:00 a.m. Contact: [bbrashears0@gmail.com](mailto:bbrashears0@gmail.com), 8684-2526.

### ► **Democrats Abroad**

Democrats Abroad meets on the last Saturday of every month at Casa LTG (Little Theatre Group). Contact Nelleke Bruyn, 8614-2622, e-mail: [cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com](mailto:cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com). Join Democrats Abroad at: [www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org). Register to vote absentee at: [VoteFromAbroad.org](http://VoteFromAbroad.org)

### ► **First Friday Lunch**

Each month ARCR sponsors a "First Friday Lunch." All are invited to join ARCR Officers and others for an informal lunch and BS session. There is no RSVP or agenda, just food and meeting new and old friends. Attendees are responsible for their own food and drink expenses. The FFL takes place at 12:00 PM on the first Friday of the month. Gatherings are at the Chinese restaurant, Mariscos Vivo, located behind the Mas x Menos grocery store (located across from the Nissan Dealer) and not far from Hotel Autentico (the former Hotel Torremolinos, where the ARCR Seminars are held).

### ► Little Theatre Group

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

### ► Marine Corps League

Meets at 11 a.m. the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month, at Tres Hermanas Restaurant on the service road opposite Hospital Mexico. Look for the big bull statue in front. For information call Bill Enell at 8812-0126 or write to [mcleaguecr@gmail.com](mailto:mcleaguecr@gmail.com)

### ► Newcomers Club

Newcomers Club of Costa Rica (for women) meets the first Tuesday of every month, September through May. Contact: 2588-0937, email us at: [costaricaporo@yahoo.com](mailto:costaricaporo@yahoo.com) or visit our website at: [www.newcomersclubofcostarica.com](http://www.newcomersclubofcostarica.com)

### ► PC Club of Costa Rica

The PC Club meets the third Saturday of each month; social, coffee, doughnuts at 8:30 a.m. The meeting starts at 9 and ends at 11 a.m. Guests are allowed one free month before joining. Meetings are held at the Pan American school in Belén. For information call Dick Sandlin at 2416-8493, email him at [d\\_sandlin@email.com](mailto:d_sandlin@email.com) or visit our website at: [www.pcclub.net](http://www.pcclub.net)

### ► Pérez Zeledón International Women's Club

PZIWC was 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 PZWIC meets for luncheons on the SECOND Tuesday of the month, hosts Walkers Day on the THIRD Tuesday of the month, and has a Games Day (board and card games) on the FOURTH Tuesday of each month. Event sites change frequently, so call or check our website for locations. More information can be obtained from Jane Gregson at 8899-6859 or Cathy Carrolan at 8384-8281, or email to: [pzwomansclub@gmail.com](mailto:pzwomansclub@gmail.com). Please visit our website at: [www.pzwomansclub.org](http://www.pzwomansclub.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. The meeting charge is 4,000 colones for visitors, members 3,000. Membership fee is 12,000 colones and includes listing in the business directory, if desired. Meetings 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.pwnrcr.com](http://www.pwnrcr.com)

### ► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information write Walter Bibb at: [wwbbsurf40@yahoo.com](mailto:wwbbsurf40@yahoo.com)

### ► Wine Club of Costa Rica

The wine club usually meets at 1 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Join us to tantalize your taste buds and expand your education. For more information on upcoming events please contact us at 2279-8927.

### ► Women's Club of Costa Rica

The Women's Club of Costa Rica is the oldest, continuously operating, philanthropic organization for English-speaking women in Costa Rica. The Club is focused on serving community needs in Costa Rica, 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 and further information and a calendar of planned events can be found at: [www.wccr.org](http://www.wccr.org)

### ► Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Open to men too. English language group in Cariari de Belén, English-Spanish group in Heredia, Spanish language group in San José. We work on peace and human rights issues. Call Mitzi, 2433-7078 or write us at: [peacewomen@gmail.com](mailto:peacewomen@gmail.com)

"Club members should review the contact information for their clubs and make sure it is up to date. Send any changes or corrections to: [info@arcr.net](mailto:info@arcr.net), Subject line; El Residente."

