



Costa Rica's English language newsletter

September / October 2016

El Residente

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Manga

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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Right off you may have noticed that we have again expanded *El Residente* to provide more comprehensive and interesting content to members. And, we are looking forward to growing even more in the future! If YOU would like to share something about life or living in Costa Rica, please submit a draft of your article to: info@arcr.net. You don't have to be a professional writer; we'll help you polish your work and make it shine. Or, if you have an idea for an article but don't want to write it, please send it in and we'll take it from there.

Maps! We'll never be Rand and McNally, but to assist our members in navigating around the major population areas of the country, we have again included a centerfold map of San José. It will be a standard feature in future issues. But, not everyone needs to find their way in San José, so this issue includes two maps of other areas of the country. Because of the space these maps require we can't include every map of every area in every issue, and we will be rotating the additional maps in coming issues. If your area isn't covered here, watch for it in a future issue.

Remember that *El Residente* is not the only way we communicate with our members. As well as regular email, we have a Facebook page and a Twitter account where you can reach us. Also, check out the ARCR Forums site where you can ask questions and get advice from other members. Addresses are in the Contact Information block elsewhere on this page. And, if you would like to meet some of the other members face-to-face, don't forget the First Friday Lunch! (See the Club Corner pages for details.)

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.

If you wish to place an ad in *El Residente*, please contact the ARCR main office or the Marketing Director at the contact addresses located in the masthead. Goods & services offered are paid advertisements. Neither ARCR Administration nor *El Residente* research the companies and take no responsibility for the quality of such goods and services.

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Cover photo credit: A pile of ripe mangoes, photo by www.herald.ng

ACROSS THE BOARD

Notes and News from the Board of Directors

As of August 16, 2016, ARCR has been reorganized under new Costa Rica articles of incorporation. **THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE TO THE PHYSICAL ORGANIZATION OR SERVICES TO MEMBERS.** The update was made to correct a long-standing legal problem with the Costa Rican government, and to better serve our members. Watch for announcements of our improved and expanded services in the near future.

ARCR is excited to announce that the Franklin Martinez Insurance office is in the process of restructuring with the goal of being able to offer members additional providers and types of insurance. Be on the look-out for notices of their expanded lines of coverage.

On June 28, 2016, the national traffic police (Transito) announced the addition of a new, walking police force which can issue drivers old fashioned, paper traffic tickets. The initial 28 persons were drawn from Fuerza Publica forces in Belen, Heredia, Escazú, Cartago, and other locales. The officers will be dressed in local police uniforms with a special Transito appliqué sewn on their uniforms. Additional officers will be added over time and their locations expanded. These officers will not attend traffic accident scenes, but have authority to issue citations to vehicle operators for infractions of various driving laws.

On the subject of crime and the police, a suggestion for Neighborhood Watch Groups has been put forward and the police are enthusiastic about it. It works like this: If something looks suspicious, use your cell phone camera to take a photo, click on “give my location,” and send the photo via WhatsApp to members of the Neighborhood Watch Group and to a police contact. Some police departments are considering providing officers with cell phones for just that purpose. ARCR members may want to look into this program with their local police departments and become involved in this process.

Help decorate the office area. The offer for artists to hang their artwork for sale in the ARCR offices still



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.

stands. Contact Angelica at the reception desk to arrange for your showing. Space is limited.

If, in the past, you have made collect calls to the United States from Costa Rica, be aware that ICE has discontinued that option. They cite non-payment of bills by US businesses as the reason for ending the service.

It may seem early, but it's not. Somewhere in this issue you will find a solicitation for the Tree of Hope charity, ARCR's effort to bring Christmas joy to deserving children who might not receive anything else otherwise. If you are not going to be here during the Christmas season, the BoD urges you to make your donation early. It's a “no-sweat” process - you can call or email the office and authorize a charge against your on-file credit card.

Don't forget the First Friday Lunch that takes place the first Friday of each month. Several ARCR Board members attend and it's a good way to get the answer to that pesky question you have been meaning to ask. Lunch starts about noon and if you need directions, call the office.

Are you up to date on things in Costa Rica? Are considering a move to Costa Rica? Even if you have been here a while, the ARCR monthly Seminar is a great place to get the latest, most accurate information about living here. Contact the ARCR Info Desk for information on Seminar dates and how you can attend.

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6 THE VIEW FROM DOWNTOWN

by Michael Miller

Downtown's International Restaurants

I am often asked why I enjoy living in downtown San José Costa Rica. Some people are surprised when I tell them that one of the main reasons is the city's restaurant scene.

Keep in mind that there are well over a million people living in the greater San José area, which is both the political capital and the economic center of Costa Rica. Consequently, over the past two decades it has been emerging from a sleepy tropical town to an important international city.

It is no surprise then that you will find a wealth of restaurants, both local and international, in the downtown area. I will highlight five great restaurants which feature food from different parts of the world to give a sample of what they can find. It should be just enough to whet your appetite.

Sofia Mediterráneo

Cuisine: Mediterranean

At Sofia Mediterráneo you will find dishes from all over the Mediterranean, with an emphasis on Greek and Turkish. You can choose from freshly made hummus, appetizers of tabbouleh or baba ganoush, and salads with eggplant and tomatoes, all accompanied by house-baked bread.

Entrees include red bell peppers stuffed with a spicy beef and rice mixture, fresh seafood dishes, vegetarian

offerings and more. But the main attraction is the lamb. Sofia boasts that it has the biggest variety of lamb dishes in all of Costa Rica: leg of lamb, lamb chops, lamb kababs, and other dishes. And of course, you will want to try baklava and Turkish coffee for desert.

One of the owners is Mehmet Onurlap, a native of Istanbul. Like any good Mediterranean host, Mehmet is often seen making the rounds of the tables insuring his patrons are happy. He has also been known to suggest the perfect wine to go with your dinners.

To give you an idea of prices at Sofia, you can expect to pay 13,040 colones for leg of lamb, or 8,480 for chicken thigh with prunes and apricots. An appetizer of baba ganoush is 3,440 colones.

Sofia Mediterráneo is part of the trendy new restaurant row called Paseo Gastronómico La Luz, which now boasts sixteen restaurants along five blocks of Calle 33. This part of downtown has not yet been discovered by tourists or expats. Instead you will find Sofia, and other restaurants along this strip, packed with Costa Rica's growing middle and upper-middle class.

Sofia has a full bar and a good selection of wines. The address is Calle 33 and Avenida 1, in the Barrio Escalante section of town. It is usually very busy on weekends, so reservations are recommended. Phone: 2224-5050

La Esquina de Buenos Aires

Cuisine: Argentinean

There is a joke among North American visitors to Costa Rica that goes something like this: "Where is the best place to go to get a good steak? The answer . . . Argentina."

That may be a bit of an exaggeration, but Argentina is known to produce some of the best beef in the world. And Costa Rica . . . well, not so much. La Esquina de Buenos Aires, however, offers a high quality exception to Costa Rican beef and offers excellent beef imported from Argentina. It has been a fixture in downtown San José since 2004.

La Esquina (in English "The Corner") has the look and feel of a neighborhood tavern from the 1950s or '60s, with



Co-owner of Sofia Mediterráneo, Mehmet Onurlap, explains the different appetizer spreads to San José guide, Nury Mora-Vargas and her daughter, Maria Jose



White tablecloths, flowers on the tables and vintage photos on the walls create a mid-twentieth century feel to Argentinean steak house, La Esquina de Buenos Aires.

its white table cloths, flowers on the tables, and vintage posters and photos on the walls. It has a well stocked, and very popular, bar that adds to the ambiance.

As you would expect from an Argentinean restaurant, it offers a choice of many cuts of beef: tenderloin, rib-eye steak, skirt steak, and much more. What is surprising is how diverse the menu is; you can also find chicken and pork selections and fresh seafood specials of the day are on the menu. And, in keeping with the Italian influence found in Buenos Aires, they also serve some excellent pasta dishes.

La Esquina is one of the more up-scale restaurants in San José. You can expect to pay 17,600 colones for the rib-eye steak, and the same for the skirt steak. Pasta dishes range from 7,500 to 9,000 colones. The restaurant has a decent house wine, but most of the wines are sold by the bottle and can be quite expensive.

Because of the prices, La Esquina is not for budget travelers so you will not find young back-packers here. You will see some of the nation's upper crust and international visitors in town with expense accounts. It has also become a "special occasion" restaurant for middle-class Ticos and is almost always packed.

La Esquina de Buenos Aires is on Calle 11, between Avenidas 4 and 6. It is literally across the street from the rear of the beautiful Soledad Church. It has a full bar and an extensive wine selection. You are likely to find it

very crowded every day of the week, so reservations are recommended. Phone: 2257-9741

Sapore Trattoria

Cuisine: Italian

Sapore Trattoria is a popular Italian restaurant. One reason for its popularity comes from the fact that its offerings range from traditional spaghetti Bolognese to more sophisticated dishes from various parts of Italy. The main reason for its popularity, however, is because everything they serve is excellent.

You can start with an antipasto plate of wonderful Italian meats, cheeses, and olives. It is a perfect starter for four or more, while you decide what to have next. You might try Osso Buco with fresh pasta, or risotto with asparagus and champagne, or perhaps fresh tuna livornese . . . Or you might just want to try the classic chicken parmesan.

If you have a craving for pasta, Sapore makes several styles fresh. You can choose from a wide range of toppings including three different kinds of mushrooms, or frutti di mare. If that weren't enough, the restaurant is also popular for its pizzas.

Sapore is one of the bargains of downtown San José. Mind you, I did not say "cheap," but it is reasonably priced when you consider the quality of the dishes. For example, Osso Buco with Pappardelle pasta is 8,950 colones. Risotto



A colorful antipasto platter from Sapore Trattoria, features delicious Italian meats, cheeses and olives.

with Asparagus and Champagne is 9,950 colones. Fresh pasta dishes range from 6,500 to 9,000 colones.

Sapore Trattoria is owned by David Eminente, a native of Rome, and his chef is also from Italy. Together they have created one of the finest restaurants in San José. There is a small bar with a selection of beers and wine available. On the corner of Avenida 2 and Calle 13, it is located two blocks west of the National Museum. Phone: 2222-8906

Casa China

Cuisine: Chinese

Downtown San José is filled with restaurants that claim to be Chinese. However, anyone who has spent time on the West Coast of the U.S. or Canada, or anyone who has traveled to the Far East, knows that most of these restaurants are not truly “Chinese.” Many North Americans label them as “Chinarican” because they have adapted so many Costa Rican dishes.

After an extensive search I discovered Casa China, possibly the most authentic Chinese restaurant in downtown San José. Casa China has a huge menu with page after page of offerings. You might consider starting

with one of the Chinese soups; I had the excellent hot-and-sour.

You will find all the popular Chinese dishes, such as beef broccoli, Kung Pao chicken, chicken with mushrooms, and way more than I can possibly list. Or you might try something a bit different: I had a whole fish steamed with fresh ginger and soy sauce that was the hit of the night. Casa China also has a growing reputation for its dim sum, the traditional bite-size portions served on small plates or in steamer baskets.

The restaurant is huge; it is basically a warehouse with scores of tables, so do not go expecting charm and ambiance. On a recent visit I went early in the week, so very few of the tables were occupied. Thus, I got excellent service.

If you are familiar with Chinese restaurants, you know that the bigger the group you are with the better. Most Chinese dishes are meant to be shared, so having four or more people at your table means that you can order several dishes, and everyone can sample each of them. For example: The small bowl of Hot-and-Sour Soup is 3,936 colones and it will easily serve four people. Kung Pao Chicken is 7,134 colones, and the Shrimp with Cashews is 9,594 colones.

A word of warning: The duck is over-the-top expensive. Duck is a favorite of classical Chinese cuisine, and here, the Peking Duck is 39,360 (about \$75 U.S.)! One gentleman at the restaurant, an attorney, informed me that there are no duck farms in Costa Rica, so they are all imported.

Casa China is on Calle 25A and Avenida 10, fifty meters south of the ultra-modern Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart (Templo Del Sagrado Corazón). There is no bar, but wine and beer are available. Phone: 2222-1374

Club Alemán

Cuisine: German

Many people are surprised to learn that there is a German restaurant in downtown San José. This may be because it is hidden away on a quiet residential corner of the Los Yoses neighborhood. It is Club Alemán (German Club) Restaurant and Biergarten. There has been a Club Alemán in Costa Rica since the 1880's, and its current owners are Hans and Sabine Wehnemann.

The Wehnmanns have a deep knowledge of German dishes along with a keen ability to take advantage of Costa Rica's fresh produce. Hans told me, “Nothing comes from a can here. We make everything from scratch:

the soups, the sauces, the mushrooms, everything.” The couple owns a spice farm near Quepos where they grow their own cardamom, cinnamon, black pepper, and many other spices.

The most popular dishes are Jagerschnitzel, a Milanese of pork with a mushroom topping, and Rouladen vom Rind, a beef roll with a sauce inside. They also have several popular goulashes. Of course, it would not be a German restaurant without sausages, so Club Alemán boasts a big variety of German sausages (bratwurst, bockwurst, weisswurst and much more.) Hans told me they come from local farmers and are processed by a true German butcher.

This fall the restaurant will host its popular Oktoberfest celebration. There will be music, dancing, food and, of course, lots of beer. The festival will be held on two weekends: September 31-October 1, and October 14-15.

Dishes at Club Alemán are reasonably priced. For example: The Jagerschnitzel is 8,500 colones, the Rouladen vom Rind is 9,000 colones, and the goulashes range from 8,000 to 9,500 colones.

The restaurant has several rooms, including a lovely screened-in porch big enough to accommodate a dozen people. There is also a billiard room which is available to all guests. On the ground floor, there is a separate bar, or biergarten, where dishes from the kitchen are also available.

Club Alemán is located on the corner of Avenida 8 and Calle 35. Since it is hidden in the Los Yoses Barrio, let me give you directions. The easiest way to find it is to start from the National Theater. Take the broad Avenida 2 toward San Pedro. As you climb up the hill, you will see a new Starbucks Coffee on the right. (That is Calle 35.) Take that right and go down a steep hill to the next corner. Club Alemán is closed on Sundays and Mondays. Phone: 2225-0366

This has been just a small sampling of the tremendous variety of restaurants in downtown. The San José restaurant scene is exciting and always changing and growing. As Costa Rica continues to prosper over the coming years, you will see more and more international restaurants in downtown and beyond.

Whether you live in downtown, or you come in from the suburbs occasionally to enjoy the art galleries or the symphony, there are now more and more good reasons to linger for a fine dinner.

No compensation was asked for, nor given by, any of the restaurants discussed in this article.



Michael Miller, hard at work doing extensive research for “El Residente.”

Michael Miller is the author of the only guide book that focuses on downtown San José, titled: The Real San José. Paperback copies are available at the ARCR Office, and an electronic version is available on Amazon for Kindle.

You can also access other stories by Michael at: TheRealSanJosé.com



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by Allan Garro

There is More Paperwork After Property Purchase

Buying property in Costa Rica involves a prior process called Due Diligence. This involves making a study of the status of the property in the Land Registry, checking for the existence of encumbrances and easements, analyzing the plot map, verifying that municipal taxes are paid, and getting a document certifying that the property is suitable for development or construction, just to name a few. All these points (and more) must be properly determined before it comes to the time to set a date for the closing.

Closing is when the parties meet in front of a Notary Public to sign the transfer deed and pay the final price agreed. From that moment on it is the responsibility of the notary to undertake the registration of the title transfer in favor of the new buyer, something that under normal circumstances should be completed in the following 10 - 15 days. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is important to note that once the transfer documents are registered with the Land Registry, there are other steps that are equally important and should be taken.

The first thing a buyer, or their representative, should do is go to the local Municipality where the property is located and request a change of ownership in their records. This requires filling out a form updating the value of the property as well as providing other documents, such as a certificate of ownership, a copy of the plot map, and a copy of the new owner's identification document (cedula or passport). Thus the tax payment receipts and other services will show the name of the new owner.

The same procedure is required to update the owner's name on the accounts of the utilities, such as water, electricity, cable, and the like, which provide services to the property. The new owner's information must be filed with each separate institution providing the services, by completing documents that are similar to those to be provided to the local municipality. Usually, private companies tend to ask for fewer requirements and

are more flexible than public institutions to record the changes. This is the usual way things are in Costa Rica.

If the new owners do not make the above mentioned changes, the result is that future bills and payment receipts will continue to be issued in the name of the previous owner. Further, if a company providing a service requires contacting the property owner for some reason, it will use the old phone number/email address or similar information recorded in their system. Not to mention that in order to obtain some bank services or receive a debit or credit card, it is required to present a copy of a utility receipt in order to verify the petitioner's address.

If the property is located within a condominium, it is important to deliver a set of the documents that prove the ownership change to the Condo Management offices. This is important not only to ensure that future bills/receipts will appear under the new owner's name, but also so that the new owner will be informed of all meetings scheduled by the Homeowners Association, where each owner has the right to participate and have a vote in making decisions relevant to the condominium.

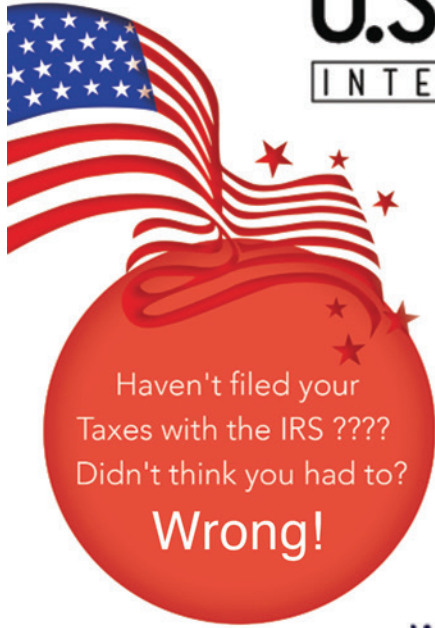
Owners should remember that it is important to keep a copy of all the documents submitted to these businesses and institutions, and the receipts. These papers should be retained for the eventuality that one of the institutions will call and say they have lost the first set of documents, something which sometimes happens in Costa Rica.

In summary, it is important for a new property owner to remember that a change of ownership recorded in the Land Registry does not automatically change the records of other institutions which provide services and utilities to the property. There is more work needed to be accomplished after the purchase.

ALLAN GARRO N.

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(12) TASTE THE TROPICS

by Maxima van Houten

Manga

The word mango (plural “mangoes” or “mangos”) originated from the Portuguese “manga” which in turn comes from the Malayalam word *māṇṇa*. Malayalam is the dominant language of Kerala, an Indian state in South India on the Malabar Coast. The Portuguese began spice-trading there in 1498.

In Costa Rica the word manga is used to describe a sort of mango that is two or three times larger (it can weigh up to 1kg) than a regular mango, which has more fiber and is less sweet.

The mango/manga is giant drupe, or stone fruit, belongs to the genus *mangifera*, which consists of numerous fruiting trees cultivated for their edible fruit. They all belong to the family of flowering plants Anacardiaceae.

It is believed that mangoes originally came from Northwest India and Myanmar. The exact origins of the fruit are not known for sure, but mango fossils from about 20 million years ago have been found in Southeast Asia. The fruit is also often mentioned in religious and mythological documents; documents from 4,000 years ago represent mangoes as a symbol of attainment, the fruit of self-realization, regarding the devotee's potential perfection. A good example of one of those mentions is seen in an image of Lord Ganesha where the god of intellect and wisdom in Hinduism is depicted holding a mango.

According to legend, when Ganesha was a child living with his parents, Shiva and Parvati, and his brother Kartikeya, a mischievous sage came to their house to test which one of the brothers was more intelligent. The sage presented the boys with a ripe mango and asserted that whoever ate it would attain wisdom and knowledge. He then proposed a challenge to the brothers: whoever went around the world three times and returned first would be awarded the mango.

Each of the brothers had an animal as their means of transportation: Ganesha traveled on a mouse, Kartikeya on a peacock. Kartikeya was confident he would win, as he believed there was no way Ganesha's mouse could outrun his peacock. Nonetheless, when Kartikeya returned from circling the world three times he found that Ganesha had been awarded the mango. He did not understand how that could be.

The sage explained, “Ganesha said that Shiva and Parvati were his parents and were his whole world. He asked them to stand together and circled them three times and claimed the fruit.” Kartikeya recognized that Ganesha had won fair and square, then Ganesha offered the mango to his brother. This fascinating story shows how mango is considered food of the gods. The tree has spread and it is now widely cultivated in all tropical regions of the world.



Mango trees are big and round with a dense top. They can grow up to be 30 meters in height and 80 cm in trunk diameter. A fast growing tree, it can produce fruit after 4-6 years, and can live for a very long time; there are 300 year old specimens that still produce fruit! Just last year a 300 year old mango tree in Vietnam was awarded the title of heritage tree. It is the national fruit of India, Pakistan, and the Philippines, and is the national tree of Bangladesh.

Mango trees bloom and give fruit from January to July. The flowers are small, yellow and pink and grow in clusters, and the fruit is oval 8 to 30 cm (3-11 inches) in size. The immature fruit is green and turns yellow, orange, red, or purple as it ripens. When ripe, the flesh is yellow, fragrant, sweet and tender, with a flavor similar to peaches or plums.

In Costa Rica green mangoes (mango cele in Spanish) are eaten with salt and lemon, Tabasco, or even Salsa Lizano. This is a staple Costa Rican snack; you will see street and roadside vendors with the plastic bags filled with pieces of the fruit marinated in salt and lemon. This is a treat for tartness lovers.

As for the nutritional value, mangoes are considered a super-food: 1 cup of mango equals 100% of daily vitamin C requirements, 35% of vitamin A, and 12% of dietary fiber. A mango also contains small amounts of minerals such as iron, potassium, and magnesium. It is important to point out that mangoes are cholesterol, sodium, and fat free, and a cup of mango has about 100 calories.

CAUTION: The skin of unripe, pickled, or cooked mango can be consumed, but contact with oils in mango leaves, stems, sap, and skin has the potential to cause contact dermatitis of the lips, gingiva, or tongue, and can even cause anaphylaxis in susceptible individuals.

Mangoes can be eaten in a wide variety of ways; they are used in different recipes and preparations which use mangoes as a main ingredient, or as a garnish. Some examples are salads, marmalades, chutneys, and tarts. Mango flesh can also be made into juices, smoothies, ice cream, fruit bars, aguas frescas, pies, and sweet chili sauce, among other dishes.

This nutritious and versatile fruit of the gods is readily available in Costa Rica. Even mangas, with their sweeter taste and less fiber, which are really hard to find in non-sub-tropical areas, can be easily found in the fruit stands of our tropical paradise. A mango does not need to be a rare treat and there is no need to limit yourself, so go ahead and eat one a day to keep your doctor away!

Here is a recipe for a mango ceviche; the recipe substitutes ripe mango for fish and gives it a similar treatment.

Ingredients:

- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 large ripe mangoes, peeled, pitted, and dice into 3/4-inch (2 cm) cubes
- Juice of 4 limes
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 habanero chili, seeded and finely chopped
- Leaves from 2 cilantro sprigs, finely chopped

Directions:

Place the red onion in ice water for 10 minutes while you prepare the other ingredients. Place the diced mangoes in a bowl and add half the lime juice and salt. Taste for balance and add more of both if necessary.

Add the chili, then drain the onion and add it along with the cilantro leaves.

Stir everything gently to combine, then refrigerate for 5 minutes to chill and marinate.

Serve in individual large glasses or bowls.

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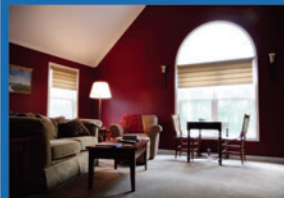
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DEAR ACS...

15

by American Citizen Services

This month's edition of Ask ACS will feature information from our Federal Benefits Unit (FBU). The Unit is a regional office which assists individuals who receive benefits from the Social Security Administration, Railroad Retirement Board, Office of Personnel Management, and the Department of Veterans Affairs throughout the western hemisphere countries except, Canada, U.S.A. and Mexico.

Visit our website for more information at:

<http://costarica.usembassy.gov/service/federal-benefits.html>

Our office in San José stays busy: there are approximately 67,000 beneficiaries throughout the region and the staff is responsible for administering USD \$450 Million in benefit payments. In Costa Rica alone, they have approximately 4,500 beneficiaries, who receive an estimated USD \$ 4 Million in monthly benefits. 20 percent of these payments go to Costa Rican nationals who have not lived or worked in the United States, but are the widows, spouses and children of individuals who are eligible for federal benefit payments.

The American Citizen Services Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica has recently received a number of questions from individuals regarding the Social Security Administration's my Social Security online tool.

Based on the messages we have received, many are expressing concerns over the notification they received in July 2016 from the Social Security Administration regarding accessing their my Social Security accounts. Please note that the Social Security Administration recently removed the requirement to use a cell phone to access your account.

In order to use this tool, a person must meet the following requirements:

You must be able to verify some information about yourself and:

- have a Social Security Number;
- have a U.S. mailing address;
- be at least 18 years of age;
- have a valid e-mail address;

If you currently receive Social Security benefit payments and have a Costa Rican mailing address on your record, you are unable to open a my Social Security account. The Federal Benefits Unit encourages customers who have concerns about accessing their personal my Social Security account to visit their website at www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/contact to learn about other ways to access their benefits information.

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Email: info@nursinghomescostarica.com
Website: www.nursinghomescostarica.com



Map of Jacó



Places of interest

1. Parque Johannes Dankers
2. Terminal Jacó-San José
3. Estadio de Jacó
4. Gasolinera
5. Servicentro Jacó
6. Iglesia de Jacó
7. Policía de Garabito
8. Comisaría de Jacó
9. Municipalidad de Garabito
10. Centro Cívico Jacó
11. Teatro Jacó
12. Correos de Costa Rica
13. Poder Judicial
14. Colegio Técnico de Jacó
15. Citi Cinemas



Map of downtown San José

Museums

1. M. de Arte Costarricense
2. M. de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo (FANAL)
3. M. Nacional
4. M. del Ferrocarril
5. M. de Jade
6. M. de Criminología
7. M. de Oro y Numismática
8. M. Filatélico y Telegráfico
9. M. de los Niños

Hospitals

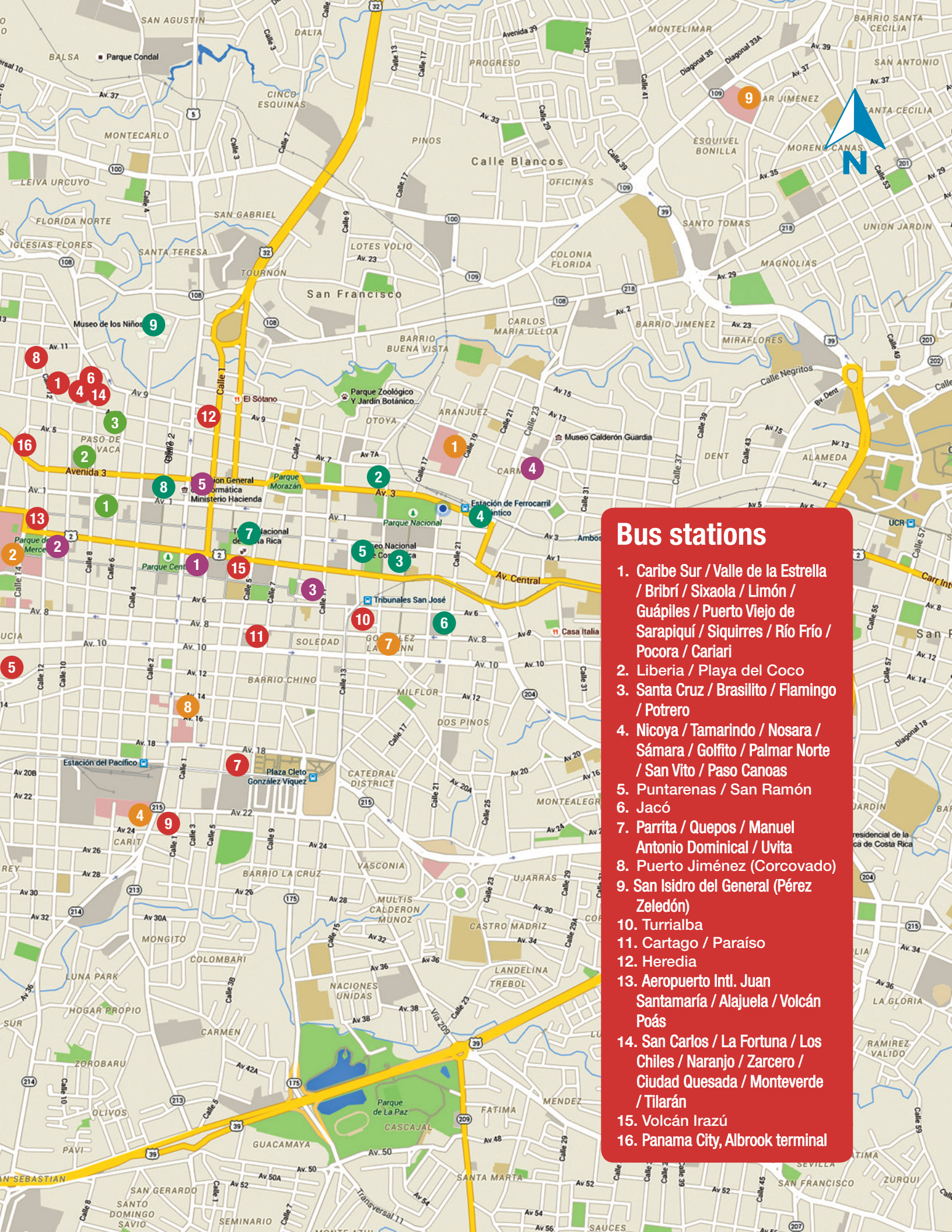
1. H. Calderón Guardia
2. H. San Juan de Dios
3. H. Nacional de Niños
4. H. de la Mujer
5. H. México
6. Cruz Roja Costarricense
7. H. Clínica Santa Rita
8. H. Clínica Bíblica
9. H. Clínica Católica

Markets

1. Mercado Central
2. Mercado Borbón
3. Mercado Paso de la Vaca
4. Mercado de Mayoreo
5. Mercado de la Coca Cola

Churches

1. Catedral Metropolitana
2. Iglesia La Merced
3. La Soledad
4. Santa Teresita
5. El Carmen



Bus stations

1. Caribe Sur / Valle de la Estrella / Bribí / Sixaola / Limón / Guápiles / Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí / Siquirres / Río Frío / Pocora / Cariari
2. Liberia / Playa del Coco
3. Santa Cruz / Brasilito / Flamingo / Potrero
4. Nicoya / Tamarindo / Nosara / Sámara / Gofito / Palmar Norte / San Vito / Paso Canoas
5. Puntarenas / San Ramón
6. Jacó
7. Parrita / Quepos / Manuel Antonio Dominical / Uvita
8. Puerto Jiménez (Corcovado)
9. San Isidro del General (Pérez Zeledón)
10. Turrialba
11. Cartago / Paraíso
12. Heredia
13. Aeropuerto Intl. Juan Santamaría / Alajuela / Volcán Poás
14. San Carlos / La Fortuna / Los Chiles / Naranjo / Zarcero / Ciudad Quesada / Monteverde / Tilarán
15. Volcán Irazú
16. Panama City, Albrook terminal

Map of Liberia

Places of interest

1. Parque Mario Cañas Ruiz
2. Parque del Encino
3. Parque Héctor Zúñiga Rovira
4. Parque de Moracia
5. Plaza de fútbol Barrio San Roque
6. Museo de Guanacaste
7. Escuela Moracia
8. Escuela La Victoria
9. Escuela Aplicación Alba Ocampo
10. Escuela Jesús de Nazareth
11. Universidad de Costa Rica
12. Universidad Nacional
13. Instituto de Guanacaste

14. Hospital Dr. Enrique Baltodano Briceno
15. Hospital Clínico San Rafael Arcángel
16. Cruz Roja
17. Campo Ferial
18. Mercado Municipal de Liberia
19. Estado Edgardo Batodano
20. Buses San José-Liberia Pulmican
21. Autobuses La Pampa
22. Terminal de Buses Municipal de Liberia
23. Registro Civil
24. Tribunales de Justicia
25. Delegación de Policía de Liberia
26. Ermita de la Agonía
27. Parroquia Inmaculada Concepción
28. Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Fátima
29. Iglesia de Santa Lucía
30. Iglesia Católica Barrio La Victoria
31. Iglesia Pueblo Nuevo
32. Mall Centro Plaza Liberia
33. Centro Comercial Plaza Sta Rosa
34. Banco Nacional
35. Banco de Costa Rica
36. Gasolinera TOTAL

by Allen Dickinson

The Tica Zone... Again

I have just returned from another foray into the “Tica Zone...” and I’m exhausted! You may recall that in the past I have written about living in the Tica Zone (“... a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind...”) Well, this time I made the trip by car.

We, my wife, my number two daughter (by age) and I, recently delivered the oldest daughter and her two children (ages one and three) to a friend’s home for a visit. It was a trip I was pleased to make because I knew the result would be a couple of days of greatly reduced seismic-decibel noise (yes, I know those are separate measurements of energy, and I use them deliberately to describe the condition of living in a small home with two very young children.) Noise, and my love of quiet, is something I have also written about here, so you might have some idea of my anticipation.

The trip, involving a jaunt of about twenty kilometers each way, was from Santa Ana to the other side of the Central Valley, above Barva Heredia, a location I am not familiar with. When we reached the area I was pleased to learn our final destination was to be a house somewhere in a rural area surrounded by lots of coffee fields and nice homes, a quiet community where crime seems not to have penetrated; the homes generally didn’t have fences, walls, or gates. At most, there were just small hedges alongside the road. It was a beautiful landscape and my kind of neighborhood.

We had set off to find this friend’s home without any firm directions. I don’t own a GPS or have Waze on my cell phone (many of my friends swear by Waze but, generally, I don’t want to know where I am - where’s the adventure in that?) It’s nearly impossible to get very lost in Costa Rica as it is a small country, every road goes somewhere, and exploring them can be fun.

My wandering around the many back roads of Costa Rica over the years has resulted in discovering a multitude of interesting and scenic places. Since this trip was to a specific destination, I expected that even though neither I nor none of the Ticas in the car knew exactly where

we were going, finding the location shouldn’t be too difficult. More to the point, there were three full grown Ticas in the car with me, each possessing a cell phone, and certainly someone could call for the final directions when necessary. Right?

Normally, to my Gringo way of thinking, getting directions should be easy. Call the person and have them tell someone in the car, “On this road go X kilometers, turn left at the _____, go Y meters to the _____ house on the right, etc., etc.”

You would be mistaken if you think that with three cell phones in the car one of those Ticas might have gotten some helpful directions. But no! Not saying that calls weren’t made - they were. But getting logical directions? Not so much. That’s not the Tica way; the use of landmarks and distances to determine driving instructions is a concept that just doesn’t seem to have taken hold. So what I had to work with was something like, “Look for the road by old oak tree” (the one that isn’t there anymore) then look for “macrobiotica” (health food store) next to a yellow house (in an area where one in three houses were yellow).

Apparently the spirit of Rod Serling lives in the neighborhood because somewhere along the way I was sure he had joined us (maybe he just needed a ride). As we approached what should have been our first turn, things rapidly deteriorated - imagine, three Ticas, all talking at the same time, each one of whom has a totally different interpretation of the meaning of the “directions” given by phone, and you have the materialization of the Tica Zone. Not good for my stress level!

Through a barrage of rapidly spoken Spanish announcing different interpretations of where we were to go, I deciphered that we were apparently looking for “a road” and on it a macrobiotica next to a yellow house. The question of which was the correct road, and if it was possibly the one onto which we were considering turning, was vigorously discussed. In the end it was decided, with each Tica declaring (with varying degrees of certainty) it was the right road. We turned.

Time to explore. We proceeded for a few kilometers, looking for a macrobiotica alongside a yellow house. Ultimately, as the homes became fewer and farther apart, we arrived at a point where we were in the middle of a ravine between sprawling coffee fields; where the track had become so narrow the cows were walking single file. Following some spirited discussion it was decided that we were probably on the correct road (something about which a consensus had still not been reached) but that we had indeed gone too far. Of course, by that time we were in an area where there was no cell phone reception, so it was impossible to verify or disprove the assumption.

Fortunately the road was still paved, but where to turn around? We added another kilometer to our drive as we searched for a wide spot and/or a cell phone signal, during which the vigorous discussion about if this was the proper road continued, interspersed with other non-related Tica conversation about such things as, “Is wearing white after labor day acceptable?” and, “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” (I may have misinterpreted some of the conversation; my rapid-fire Spanish translation is not that good.) Naturally, not everyone agreed. On anything. We finally found a place wide enough to safely reverse direction and we headed back. We discovered (eventually)

that yes, we were on the right road and finally found the macrobiotica – but only after we had passed it two more times because there was no sign, and only then because the friend we were meeting was standing along the side of the road looking for us. We later learned that the house next to it had at one time been yellow, but was now orange. And, apparently, the existence of the macrobiotica is a secret because even the locals we stopped to ask for directions didn’t know where it was.

Ah, but all is well that ends well.

Mr. Serling must have gotten out of the car along with my daughter and her kids because the ride back home was peaceful, easy, and quiet; we made without a single missed turn the whole way. After the two and one-half hours needed to make the forty kilometer round trip, I returned home knowing I had survived another foray into the Tica Zone. The upside was that along the way I had seen a new and lovely area of Costa Rica, and knew that now I could enjoy the reduced seismic-decibel conditions normal in our house. Strangely, I found it disconcertingly quiet.

As my stress level receded I realized that it’s surprising how one can become used to those special family noises and soon be missing them.



PARADISE, WE HAVE A PROBLEM (23)

by Tony Johnson

The Key to a Loving and Lasting Relationship...

...lies in our COMMITMENT to making the efforts necessary to achieve that level of connection. There must be a commitment to treating each other with kindness and generosity, not with criticism and contempt.

Few would plant a garden and neglect to water, weed, or feed it and expect it to survive, let alone thrive. Yet many think the singular work in creating a caring and satisfying relationship lies solely in selecting the right partner.

True, there are individuals we could never have a good relationship with regardless of how hard we work at it; similar character, values, habits, personality do matter, so careful selection is vital. But some fail to see that even after a careful selection process and finding our “soulmate”, our “other half”, our relationship “garden” still requires careful cultivation. There is no effortless, automatic pilot for a fulfilling and enduring connection.

If your love is wilting rather than flourishing, ask not only, “Have I chosen wrong?” but also, “Have I done what’s necessary for its growth?” Love is essential to a growing connection, and loving treatment of each other is essential for that love to grow. In short, we must make the necessary effort to cultivate our own garden.

What is the “necessary effort?” It is the simple basics of treating each other kindly and with concern for each other’s well being. It is making each other a priority and showing love regularly. These are the essentials. They cannot be purchased – nor would we even want to try.

Maintaining love and a strong relationship can’t be done by others. We cannot buy a service that treats our partner well. Nor would we really want to miss the joy of giving our partner love. It must be done by us, and it’s how we imagined our relationship, at its best, would be. Yet, too often, we overlook our own role in tending the garden.

The Good, the Not-So-Bad, and the Ugly

It’s typically easy and deeply enjoyable to be kind, considerate, and loving when things are going well.

When life and our relationship are good we are usually good to each other. We eagerly anticipate and meet each other’s needs. We are deeply interested in each other’s feeling and concerns. We’re understanding and forgiving of each other’s human failings. We support and encourage each other in the face of setbacks. And, we continually communicate how important we are to each other.

In short, we meet each other’s basic needs for acknowledgment, appreciation, attention, and loving affection. In providing these basics, we create a virtuous cycle: treating each other special makes us happy in our relationship and that happiness produces more loving treatment. We are doing the “gardening” necessary for love to flourish and grow.

The not-so-bad occurs when other commitments in life – jobs, bills, kids, relatives, problems -- arise and our attention is directed away from our partner and toward life’s “fire alarms.” We mistakenly assume “the garden can be watered later.” We may not be intentionally hurtful toward each other, but we assume that “Our partner can wait; they’ll understand.”

A good relationship can withstand some TEMPORARY changes in our priorities. We usually agree that the economic/social/legal/practical foundations of our life together deserve some tending also.

Too often, however, the temporary becomes the norm. Consumed with the rest of life we forget our commitments to each other and, while the relationship is not so bad, it’s nowhere near where it could be or where we need it to be.

Then there’s the ugly. It can happen when we are stressed to the max; when we have little time, patience, or energy for the crushing demands of life and we begin to treat the needs of our partner like “one more damn thing to do.” We become short, rude, resentful, abusive; our partner is now a burden, not a blessing. And/or when we feel hurt by our partner, disappointed in them, feeling they’re not doing “their share,” we lose our respect for them and feel the poison of contempt.

"I Was Wrong and That Felt So Right"

Conflicts have been extensively studied and researchers have identified the psychology of our behavior in such situations. It explains why things go so wrong, so fast, and offers steps to avoid that painful downward spiral.

First, we must realize that not all disagreements are "conflicts." Strictly speaking, a conflict is a disagreement involving strong, negative feelings: hurt, anger, fear. How do those feelings arise? Note the word "feelings." A conflict can evolve from a disagreement when we **FEEL** that our character, our competence, our value has been attacked.

Recall from previous articles, "Can't you **EVEN** balance a checkbook?" That kind of question feels like an attack – an attack on one's competence, and maybe even one's character and worth. Our partner may not have intended the statement as an attack, but it's easy to see why we would feel assaulted if such a question were thrown at us.

Then, as temperatures rise, both become defensive – which usually means going on the offensive, attacking back. We defend not only by belittling each other, but also by making certain defensive, and conflict intensifying, assumptions:

THE TRUTH ASSUMPTION

We believe that we are **COMPLETELY** right; that we are correct about **ALL** the facts and our partner, if not totally wrong, has very little of the truth of the matter. We assume they have very little to contribute to a solution other than doing it "our way, the right way!"

THE INTENTION ASSUMPTION

Our actions usually have specific intentions motivating them. In a conflict we assume that we know precisely what our partner's intentions are – and they're usually not benevolent.

THE BLAME ASSUMPTION

Something is wrong in our relationship. Someone must be to blame, and that's usually not us.

Given these assumptions we approach our partner with a cocky, know-it-all attitude. We do not expect to learn anything useful from them; we will teach them about the reality of our relationship problems. Scold them for their malicious intentions and blame them for the relationship's problems. The natural response of someone

who is treated like they are an idiot, with a disdainful and imperious attitude, is usually, "Treat **ME** like an idiot will you? Let me show you who the moron here is...." And they assume their rightness, etc.

It's almost impossible to be right about everything leading up to and occurring during a conflict. Can we see the back of our head without a mirror? Can we really know what happened when we were absent from the scene? Can we really know our partner's true motives when we often cannot identify our own intentions?

Inevitably we will discover that we weren't as smart and in as complete possession of the truth as we deluded ourselves to believe. And, if we don't realize it ourselves, our partner will gladly show us the error of our ways, the gaping holes in our understanding of the situation. And we will gleefully point out their errors.

In a conflict we typically see our self in the best possible light – our actions and intentions have been "as pure as the Babe in the manger," while our partner has been nothing but selfish, mean, cruel, and deceitful. So we often proceed as if we have a monopoly on the truth of the situation, and a lot of lost time, energy, and hurt feelings result from our refusing to consider that we too, may be wrong.

Is there some way to avoid all this unnecessary turmoil? To get to the reality of the events more quickly and less hurtfully?

Yes! If instead of the omniscience that each of us assume, we realize that at best we only possess the partial truth. If we accept that **BOTH** sides of the situation need to be addressed to arrive at an effective plan for resolution. If we realize that **BOTH** of us need to do something different to make things better between us. If we approach our partner as an ally who has something valuable to provide the discussion – just as we have valuable information for them – we lessen tensions and create a collaborative problem solving climate, rather than a hostile, aggressive and defensive, problem magnifying mood. We can provide each other with that look at the "back of our head" – with a perspective on **OUR PART**, our contribution, to the conflict; our part and what **WE** need to do to solve things. Because both, in some way created the conflict and only both can solve it

No one likes to be wrong, but we don't need to be completely right to confidently approach our partner about our problems. Partial truth **AND** an openness to learning the "rest of the story" are enough to merit our partner's attention – and they to ours. Such an approach,

researcher John Gottman's "soft start," goes a lot farther towards a solution than "shock and awe."

When the approach, "Can't you EVEN balance a checkbook?" becomes, "Honey, it looks like the checkbook may not be balanced. What is the current status of our checking account?" we may discover, to our relief and chagrin, that, "Dear, I know you worry about our finances, but everything's OK. I went online and checked our balance. The actual check register isn't filled in because you've had the checkbook all week. If you give it to me, I will enter the deposits and withdrawals."

Even when our partner does attack with, "Can't you even...?" we still have options for deescalating things. Rather than exacerbating the conflict by responding in kind, "What's WRONG with YOU??" we could "put on the brakes" and ask instead, "You're very upset, please tell me what's making you feel that way."

WW III can be avoided by a simple switch to "asking to learn" rather than attacking to "win." When we

COMMIT to approaching our partner with an open heart and pledge to nurture our relationship, especially during disagreements, our garden thrives. And the peaceful times are more frequent, more satisfying, and longer lasting.

(A follow up from the last article. It's been reported that Johnny Depp has agreed to pay \$7 million to have abuse charges dropped and to divorce Amber Heard. A good relationship cannot be bought and an unsuccessful one may be very expensive -- in more ways than one.)

More information on these ideas can be found in the many works of John Gottman. The "psychology of conflict" is detailed in *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone, et al.

Next Time: Our relationship isn't just what happens between us. It what we DO with what happens.

Thoughts? Comments? Points about which I'm wrong? paradise.we.have.a.problem@gmail.com



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A Bus Ride in Costa Rica

In 2008, while driving on the Autopista in Alajuela, a public transit bus in the left lane moved right and forced my little Daewoo car off the road. This caused my car to turn over twice in an open, grassy field and land upside down in a ten foot ditch. The bus driver never stopped, and I'll never know if he did or did not see my car.

After surviving that experience, luckily with only a few scratches, I am tentative every time I'm a passenger in any vehicle, no matter who is driving.

Because of that incident, I decided not to own another car because here in Costa Rica I can take a bus or taxi to practically anywhere I want to go. I felt that being ON the bus was much safer, besides being more economical, and if I want to drive someplace I could rent a car. So I have been making most of my trips by bus, feeling much safer.

But I recently saw something that was so extremely dangerous and extraordinary, and at the same time so common, that I thought it important enough to share with others.

In the early afternoon of July 19, 2016, I boarded a bus in Centro Santa Ana. As I entered I observed that the young bus driver, while collecting bus fares with his right hand, was talking on a cell phone that he was holding in his left hand. I didn't think much of it at the time.

I sat in the front single seat, located to the side of the bus driver; close enough to see his every move. I was alarmed to see that after the last passenger had boarded the bus and the driver had closed the doors and put the bus in gear, all with his right hand, he carried on talking on his cell phone. I thought to myself, surely he would end his phone conversation immediately and free his other hand to drive this 3800 pound bus. I couldn't have been more mistaken.

To my horror the driver continued to maneuver the steering wheel with one hand while talking on the cell phone held in his other hand. He changed gears, pulled-over and stopped the bus, and collected bus fares from boarding passengers at the four following stops; all one handed while he kept on with his conversation.

Ultimately we entered the Autopista and the driver still did not conclude his conversation, even though we were traveling at speeds up to 50 mph. The whole time my eyes were fixed on him and I kept thinking to myself, what if he loses control of the bus? I was scared and at one point considered getting off the bus at the next stop, but it was too hot to walk to my destination, so instead I prayed.

I really wanted to get out of my seat and snatch the phone out of his hand! I know that some bus lines post a sign that gives a phone number to report if the driver is observed using a cell phone while driving, but this bus did not have that sign. If it had I would have called it! I considered making a 911 emergency call to report him for putting the lives of his forty passengers in danger, however, I figured I might not be able to speak to an English speaking operator, so I remained in my seat.

We continued down the Autopista and finally arrived at my Multiplaza bus stop, where I thankfully disembarked. The driver was still talking on the phone as he pulled away.

This was my first time seeing a public bus driver display such irresponsible and reckless behavior. Sadly, however, it is not a problem confined to Costa Rica. In fact, the problem is so common in the USA that the National Safety Council (NSC) in Washington, DC, has released a report about the distracted driving problem. The following is partial information from that report, compiled as a result of the NSC's more than thirty brain research studies and reports of investigations made by other global scientists:

"The cognitive distraction from paying attention to conversation from listening and responding to a disembodied voice – contributes to numerous driving impairments. Research studying the impact of talking on cell phones while driving has identified slowed reaction times to potential hazards are tangible, measurable and risky.

"Multitasking is a myth. Human brains do not perform two tasks at the same time. Instead, the brain handles tasks sequentially, switching between one task and another. Brains can juggle tasks very rapidly, which leads us to erroneously believe we are doing two tasks at the same time. In reality, the brain is switching attention

between tasks - performing only one task at a time.

"Drivers using hands-free and handheld cell phones look at but fail to see up to fifty percent of the information in their driving environment. The danger of inattention blindness is that when a driver fails to notice events in the driving environment, either at all or too late, it's impossible to execute a safe response such as a steering maneuver or braking to avoid a crash.

"Hands-free devices do not eliminate cognitive distraction. People typically do not recognize when they are cognitively distracted. Researchers have not been able to find a safety benefit to hands-free phone conversations."

I have often wondered if my accident was caused by a distracted bus driver talking on a cell phone? It is certainly a possibility!

I think that most experienced drivers perform well and usually nothing bad happens, and most of us avoid talking on our cell phone while driving, but when our



phone rings the temptation to answer and talk is difficult to resist; "just this once can't be that bad."

I pass this on as a reminder and make a suggestion. As it quite possibly was in my accident, distracted driving can not only affect the person being distracted, it can have catastrophic impact on those others around them. If you observe a situation like the one

I have related here, take a photo of the driver committing the offense and send it, along with information about the date, time, location, (and the bus number if you have it) to the bus company.

So please, in the interest of safety for everyone on roadways, all of us should avoid unnecessary risks so that we are always prepared and ready to respond to unexpected hazards when we are behind the wheel. Please, don't talk and drive. This is even more important here in Costa Rica where a large proportion of the drivers are inexperienced and unaware of the hazards they may pose to others.

Charles Zeller

from

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by Martha Rollins

PART 1: Our Indigenous Neighbors

Since 2009 I have worked on numerous projects with the Cabécar and Brunka indigenous groups here in Costa Rica. I have come to know and admire these groups who, with great emotion and respect, lead the fight to preserve and protect the land we all enjoy.

During this time I had also followed the actions of Honduran indigenous leader Berta Cáceres, a member of the Lenca who are descendants of the Mayans. Berta was known and loved by the indigenous throughout the world; in 2015 she received the international Goldman Environmental Prize for her leadership. Sadly, March 2, 2016, she was murdered at her home in La Esperanza, Honduras.

From June 27 to July 6, 2016, I traveled with the Alliance for Global Justice to visit her family and other indigenous leaders in Honduras.

Following my trip I concluded that the situation in Honduras had turned very sour after 2009 when the country was opened up to outside investment and exploitation of resources by transnational companies. As a fellow ex-patriot, I want to tell you about my trip and the facts behind my thoughts. This is pertinent to us here in Costa Rica. So far, with the help of our own indigenous people, we have kept our country relatively free of extensive mining, hydroelectric dams, abuse of workers, and illegal use of land. Honduras is still struggling. The following relates high points of the trip and the information I learned.

Our first meeting took place in El Progreso, Yoro, where we met with the indigenous leader Vitalino Álvarez, who, according to the UK newspaper *The Guardian*, is on a military hit list of 100 individuals scheduled to be killed. Berta Cáceres was #1. Vitalino, who works with the United Peasant Movement of Aguan (MUCA), is now #1. He is on the run because of many death threats.

His home area, the Aguan Valley, has been greatly affected by the taking of land by wealthy individuals and multinationals such as Corporación Dinant, which is

responsible for the subsequent, enforced monoculture of export crops (primarily African Palm). Monoculture may be good for an export company, but it is damaging to the environment and to the people of the once rich and fertile Aguan Region.

The next day, in the northern city of Choloma, we met with CODEMUH, the Honduran Women's Collective. These women have been affected by the transfer of US jobs to third world countries where labor is less costly to companies. Choloma is part of a free trade zone and has the lowest minimum wage of all the economic zones in Honduras. Many American and Canadian companies have established factories to produce clothing for brands such as Hanes, Russell, Gildan, Delta, Anvil, and Fruit of the Loom. Because of the long hours of nighttime work and repetitive movements required, they have documented over 110 women with official diagnoses of work related injuries and disabilities. We met some of these women and learned about their ongoing struggle to receive minimal assistance for medical costs and compensation. Needless to say, we did not buy any T-shirts!

We also visited the home of friends in La Lima, the base of operations for the United Fruit Company, also known as Chiquita Banana, and talked with former employees. Around 2015 Chiquita was sold to the Brazilian Safra and Cutrale Groups. Since then the ownership has taken advantage of the Temporary Labor Law passed after a 2009 coup and instead of long term benefits from the company the employees received before the sale, persons are now being hired as contractors for a two-month "probationary" period and then fired for one week. After the week has passed they are re-hired for another two-month probationary period before being fired again. This post-2009 contracting model deprives the workers of any legal claim to benefits such as health care and education. Unions are now controlled by the company and pay has also gone down. For those who are employed, gangs come to their homes to extort from them an "impuesto de guerra" or war tax.

As background, on June 28, 2009, the democratically elected President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya was put on a



Background: Aura Minerals' San Andrés Mine, Azacualpa Community, La Union Municipality, Copin, Honduras / Foreground, left: Crack in the earth near Azacualpa Community Cemetary / Foreground center: Doña Berta, Mother of Slain Indigenous Leader Berta Cáceres / Foreground, right: COPINH Vigil at La Esperanza office of the Public Ministry, Marking 4 Month Anniversary of Berta's Assassination

plane, still in his pajamas, and sent out of the country. His replacement had ties to, and support from, the United States. According to US law, military and development aid should have been cut off. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, however, declined to cut off military and development assistance and refused to insist on the return of the democratically elected president. Subsequently, the new president opened up the country to multinational enterprises. (There currently is a bill before the US Congress to cut off all aid.)

On June 28, the 7th anniversary of the 2009 coup, we participated in a march in San Pedro de Sula to commemorate the resistance to that coup. After seven years, the march was lightly attended, but our presence indicated international support and we were greeted with hugs.

We later met with the San Francisco de Locomapa, an indigenous Tolupan (Xicaque) tribe comprised of 19 villages and 996 families, living in the rural mountains of northern Yoro. Their situation is very complex, involving illegal logging and mining by outside companies, but also complicated by corruption and disagreements within the indigenous group; one indigenous faction received payment from outside companies for granting permissions they were not authorized to grant.

This situation is further complicated by the Honduran Institute of Forestry and Conservation (IFC) illegally

giving permission for logging and mining on tribal lands without indigenous consent. The state compounded matters still further by the introduction of a new measurement system which under-represents the tribal land by not using traditional measures such as mountains and rivers, We did not know prior to the meeting that the two opposing indigenous factions were coming together for the first time... with us.

During our meetings I spoke with the educational representative of the tribe about schools, and with leaders of the women's groups regarding their projects. They would like to communicate with the Cabécar and Brunka teachers and women in Costa Rica since the problems they face are similar.

In Honduras, the president has intensified the privatization of public goods and cutting of services to the people. This includes implementing tolls on roads with private/public partnerships. I do not refer to the construction of new roads; I mean tolls on existing roads, posing a great hardship for people on low incomes who need to enter the cities for work and sale of goods, as well as for students attending university.

We were asked to join demonstrators one evening at one toll road between San Pedro de Sula and Progreso. As we unfurled our banner of solidarity and received hugs and kisses from the crowd, I noticed that the darkness had

turned to light; we were being filmed for that evening's newscast!

The next day we joined the students at the National Autonomous University of Honduras – Sula Valley Campus – to talk with them during their ongoing “sit in.” The purpose of their demonstration was to be included in the discussion of proposed reforms, including hikes in fees. Students do not wish to be photographed and hide their faces with masks for fear of reprisal.

While at the university we received an urgent action alert following the arrest that morning of Jose Nelson Tejada Juarez who, along with twelve other men, was arrested by the elite police unit Intelligence Troop (TIGRES) and Special Security Response Groups (TPI) as part of the so called “Operation Cacique.” Tejada Juarez, who is on the board of a local coffee co-op and a member of the opposition Libre Party; holds the critical job of registering voters for the Libre Party in his town, so there was speculation that it most likely was a political arrest.

We responded to the alert by going to the holding station, then to the main police department in San Pedro de Sula, as an international delegation, to ensure fair treatment and safety of the prisoner. A few members of our delegation spoke with him and the doctor among us examined him at the station. We were able to make sure he and the other prisoners had food and water and that Tejada Juarez was in contact with his lawyer. He initially was charged with three assassinations since 2013, but we were told two days later that charge had been reduced to association with undesirables.

The next day, we responded to another request from the Azacualpa community in La Unión, Copin. Aura Minerals, a Canadian mining company operating the San Andrés gold mine, was scheduled to begin to bulldoze the 200 year-old graveyard which is still serving the community.

We arrived a day after the mining company thought we'd be there; the day they expected us to arrive they had closed access to the mine and community with 200 employees blocking the road. While on site we experienced blasts of dynamite and clouds of smoke and dust as the destruction continued.

In May of 2009, just a month before the coup to depose him, President Zelaya's government had completed the draft of a new mining law that would have increased taxes on mining companies, prohibited open-pit mining, banned the use of chemicals such as cyanide and mercury in mining operations, and required community

consultation and approval of mining projects. Following the coup, those reforms were nixed by the US backed replacement for Zelaya.

According to the Azacualpa community leaders, the mine threatens to ruin the geological foundation of the community; it has dried out thirteen different water holes in the area. Further, in the period of 2009-2010, significant vegetation in the river was destroyed and people were poisoned with arsenic, lead and mercury. And, despite the employment opportunities, community members say that the large majority of people would not be negatively affected if the mine were to close altogether!

We visited the graveyard with members of the community and saw for ourselves cracks in the nearby earth indicating geological damage beneath the community with its homes, soccer field, and community centers. To date the mine has taken most of the mountain and plans to destroy two more. Promises by the mining company to relocate the community with similar houses have proven to be false.

After leaving the mine we met with the mayor of La Unión. He agreed that the mining company had not acted in good faith, but said that he was unable to close the mine. He confirmed that the intent of the company was to relocate the community entirely.

In La Esperanza, the home town of Berta Cáceres, we meet with Berta's mother, first female congresswoman in Honduras, as well as with her sisters, uncle, and daughters. Berta has become a legend. Her mother gave me a necklace with Berta's photo and the saying “Caminantes no hay caminos, se hace camino al andar...” Strangers on the streets and in the airport hugged me when they saw my necklace!

Berta had created an extensive and powerful indigenous organization, COPINH, working at an international level to protect the environment. Among many successful projects she had opposed the proposed four dams on the sacred Gualcarque River in Lenca indigenous land. The dam concession was granted to the Honduran Company Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA) and work began in 2010. Berta maintained that the dams were “illegal, illegitimate and were part of the purposes behind the 2009 coup.”

The night of her death, Berta had dinner with a Mexican environmental activist, Gustavo Castro Soto, and then went to her new home to work because it had internet access and her mother's home did not. Berta's mother cried as she told us that she should have insisted that her daughter come to her home that night. The murderers

shot and killed Berta and wounded Gustavo, taking off part of his ear as he dodged a bullet; they left thinking he was dead.

Police initially accused Berta's friend Tomás Gomes, a trusted coordinator for her indigenous activist group COPINH. Gustavo had seen the unmasked murderer, and when he was interviewed by the police artist, no matter what he told the artist, he kept making the drawing look like Tomás and other members of COPINH.

Ultimately five people were arrested: Sergio Rodríguez, the DESA engineer who had earlier threatened her over opposition to the dams; Douglas Bustillo, DESA's head of security and a former Honduran Armed Forces lieutenant and military intelligence specialist; Major Mariano Diaz, a Special Forces veteran who recruited the gunmen; and brothers Edlison and Emerson Duarte, the gunmen.

The family believes that the Honduran government was the intellectual author of the murder. They have not been given any files, although entitled to them by Honduran law.

Berta's two daughters accompanied us for the next two days as we visited many of her projects, including the Gualcarque River and the site of one of the dams. We visited the house in which Berta was murdered and put flowers in the cemetery on her grave.

On the way to Tegucigalpa, our final destination, we stopped at the Palmerola Air Base, a Honduran military base and the home of US Joint Task Force-Bravo (JTF-Bravo), one of the two forward operating task forces under the United States Southern Command. It was July 4th. We spoke with Captain David Liapis, the director of Public Affairs for JTF-Bravo, who explained that the Task Force is not permanent, though it is the longest established unit in Honduras (since 1983). There are 600 US soldiers stationed at the base and it is the main US Presence in Central America.

Many of our questions concerned the training of Honduran police, military, and military police by the US. He said he believed that the TIGRES received US training, but he was not sure. He was careful to explain that they work only with vetted Honduran units because of the Leahy Law and that the State Department does the vetting. While there we saw at least three DynCorp buses going in and out of the base. He told us that they are a contractor and added that a lot of Honduran nationals work with them. DynCorp has a negative reputation in other countries.

We arrived at the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa in the early afternoon of our final day in Honduras for a meeting to share our observations with US officials. Ambassador James Nealon joined us shortly after the meeting started. Those also at the meeting included Stewart Tuttle, political counselor and acting deputy of mission; Jason Smith, human rights and labor issues official; Anya Glenn, USAID; Sim Ripley, economics official; Jarahyn Hillsman, deputy political counselor; Jessica Hernandez, political section; and a representative of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

After the meeting we held a news conference with local media emphasizing that the situation in Honduras is deplorable; the government, supported by the United States, combined with multinational corporations, has trampled the rights of the indigenous. It has taken their lands, destroyed some of their heritage, impacted their health, and denied them their rights.

You might say, "But that's Honduras, not Costa Rica. What does that have to do with us?"

Many transnational companies don't care about environmental issues or human rights. In the past, we have seen companies attempt some of the same tactics as they have used in Honduras within Costa Rica; Costa Rica currently is being sued by the Canadian based company responsible for the Las Crucitas Gold Mining Project which was put on hold in 2013 when the Costa Rican Congress voted to ban gold mining here out of concern for the environmental impact. We have laws in place to prevent "sweatshop" human rights abuses. And, of course, the construction of El Diquis Dam in the Térraba and Brunka territories has been put on hold. Unless we are aware of what has happened elsewhere, those same companies, or ones like them, will repeat the atrocities they have committed in Honduras. It is important that we remain aware of the possible encroachments on the lovely peoples of our chosen new home country and be ready to help and defend them.

If you are interested in reading a copy of our full report, we will gladly provide one upon request. **Please contact your congressman in the United States to ask for support for the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act H.R. 5474.** The act, which will cease military and police funding to Honduras, is currently before Congress. If you would like to join in delegations to gather current information and help prevent similar events from occurring in Costa Rica, please contact: Martha Rollins, rollinsmartha@gmail.com



LUB

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► **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.

► **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 please e-mail or call for directions. Terry Wise, cell#: 8893-4021, Claudio Pacheco, cell#: 8876-1394, home#: 2225-4239.

► **American Legion Post 12-Golfito**

Meetings are held 4 p.m. 1st 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 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.

► **Asociación Caritativa Canadiense**

The activities of this charity began in 2000 as part of the Canadian Club of Costa Rica. Our Vision is that every student has access to a clean, secure, well-maintained and healthy physical environment in which to learn and grow. We use our donations to complement what the locals can raise. Our volunteer membership is made up of both Canadians and Costa Ricans, male and female. If you would like to contribute or learn more please contact Fred Boden, fredrick.boden@gmail.com

► **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

► **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 or email Pat at: 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 and see our FB page - 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, Escazu, 11:00 a.m. Contact: bbrashears@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, 2279-3553, e-mail: cr.democratsabroad@yahoo.com. Join Democrats Abroad at: www.democratsabroad.org. Register to vote absentee at: 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

► Marine Corps League

Meets at 11 a.m. the 2nd 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

► Newcomer's Club

Newcomer's Club of Costa Rica (for women) meets the first Tuesday of every month, September through May. Contact: 2416-1111, email us at: costaricaporo@yahoo.com or visit our website at: 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 Chuck Jennings, 2266-0123, or visit our website at: www.pcclub.net

► Perez Zeledon International Women's Club

PZIWC was formed in November 2009 to promote friendship between English speaking women in Perez Zeledon 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. Please visit our website at: 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. Monthly meetings are open to the public with an entrance fee of 3,000 colones. Meetings schedules vary. For info on the speaker for the month and to register, call Helen at: 2221-7605 or 2257-3622. Location: Tin Jo Restaurant in San José, Calle 11, Av. 6-8. Or email us at: pwn.costarica@gmail.com.

► Radio Control Sailing Club

Meets at Sabana Park Lake. For information write Walter Bibb at: 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

► 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

"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, Subject line; El Residente."

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- Banking in Costa Rica
- Moving and Customs
- Insurance in Costa Rica
- Living in Costa Rica

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Columbian Peso	2867,31
Danish Krone	6,61
Dominican Peso	46,13
Euro	0,89
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Honduran Lempira	22,90
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Japanese Yen	102,03
Mexican Peso	18,28
New Taiwan Dollar	31,15
Nicaraguan Cordoba	28,87
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Peruvian Sol	3,36
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Holidays and Observances of Costa Rica

Friday September 9th
Children's Day
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Thursday September 15th
Independence Day
Observance

Wednesday October 12th
Day of the Cultures
Observance

Funniest One Liners

In Memoriam: With all the sadness and trauma going on in the world at the moment, it is worth reflecting on the death of a very important person. Larry LaPrise, the man who wrote "The Hokey Pokey", died peacefully at age 93. The most traumatic part for his family was getting him into the coffin. They put his left leg in. And then the trouble started.

I love cooking with wine. Sometimes I even put it in the food.

When you work here, you can name your own salary. I named mine "Fred".

Money isn't everything, but it sure keeps the kids in touch.

- Doctor, please, my son ate some cement. What can I do? - First of all, don't give him anything to drink.



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