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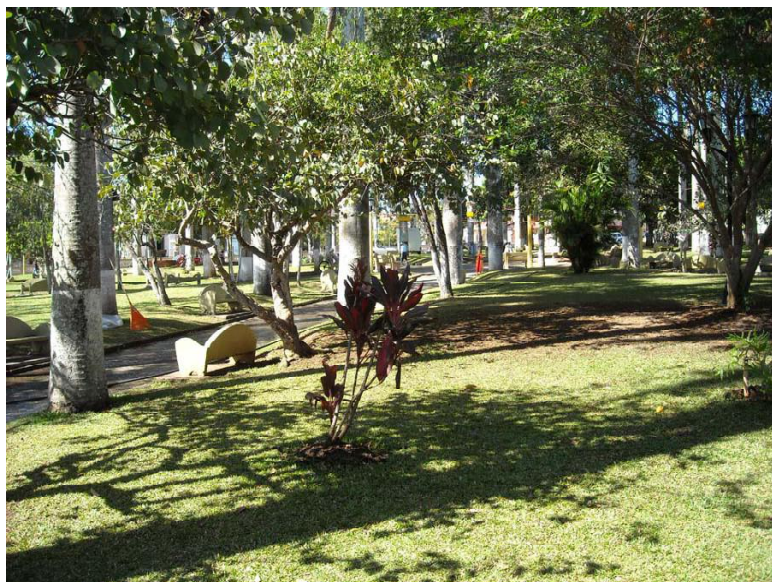
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THE NEW YELLOW PAGES

Don't forget to download and save the latest version of the Yellow Pages. Many new businesses have been listed. This section will help you find the goods and services you need.

ATENAS TODAY



Issue No. 75

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ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 400 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at fredmac222@yahoo.com.

Compositions from back issues are archived on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, www.atenascatuca.com. Click on the English version and then [Atenas Today](#) on the business page.



DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

New names and numbers have been added to the directory. With each issue Atenas Today subscribers will receive an updated file containing the names and contact information of people who have chosen to be listed. Simply download the PDF file attached to this Atenas Today email and print it or save it on your computer.

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to fredmac222@yahoo.com.

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Armed Home Invasion in Roca Verde

by Fred Macdonald

It is about 11:45pm and Chris Dougherty is watching a movie on TV. His wife, Shannon, is asleep beside him on the couch. His three children, ages 12, 8, and 3 are sleeping in their bedrooms. He hears a noise and looks up, thinking one of the kids has awakened. Suddenly three men are in the room pointing pistols at him.

This was the scene on Saturday, March 12, at one of the new homes in Roca Verde. Chris and his family had rented the house in January to begin a new life adventure in Costa Rica. The terror they experienced that night will never be forgotten.

Two of the men were dark skinned, and the third lighter, almost pale. They wore no masks or gloves. Chris, who knows guns, immediately realized that the two revolvers and one automatic were real. The apparent leader put a gun in Chris's face and made a SHSHH noise with his mouth. Chris's immediate concern was for his children, and he blurted "No, my children, ninos.."

Shannon woke up, horrified. The men forced them to lie face down on the floor, continuing to indicate they should be quiet. Chris kept protesting, wanting to protect his kids, and the men were getting angry. Somehow Shannon remained calm enough to realize that the best course was to go along. She urged her husband to be quiet.

Their hands were forced behind their backs and their wrists tied. One man, the youngest and scariest, was left to guard them while the other two searched the house, demanding to know "donde esta el dinero?" They yanked the phone out of the wall, and turned off the lights in the TV room, which were the only ones on in the house. Chris had \$3,000 in cash in a duffle bag in the closet, money he was going to use to buy a car. He thought if he gave it to them they might be satisfied and leave, so he indicated where it was.

The next hour was a nightmare. After stripping Chris of his watch and wedding ring, and Shannon of an expensive ring, the two older men, both in their thirties or forties, ransacked the house, taking four laptop computers, 2 additional watches, Shannon's purse, 2 cameras, a pair of walkie-talkies, and all the cash they could find. They bypassed the girls' room, probably not wanting them to wake up and make noise, but ransacked the 3 year old's room as he slept. Blessedly all the kids slept through the whole thing.

Chris and Shannon spent the hour on the floor, tied up, looking at each other and trying to provide mutual support. All Chris could think about was the fact that since the men wore no masks he and Shannon would probably be killed. The twenty year old guarding them appeared to be spaced out on drugs, and he delighted in torturing Chris by rubbing the barrel of his gun up and down

Chris's back at the same time he was founding Shannon. Chris describes him as having long, dirty hair that swung around his face, occasionally revealing unfocused beady black eyes. To the helpless couple he seemed like a true monster.

Finally, after brow beating them some more for the location of more cash, the men prepared to leave. This was the most terrifying moment of all. Taking some T shirts, the men then covered Chris and Shannon's faces. They expected to be executed. The young monster put his gun up to Chris's temple. "Boom, boom," he said. "No poliza.. boom.. boom."

Then they were gone. For a while the couple just lay there, listening, hoping. Shannon had managed to work a knot in her bindings partially open, and they sat up, back to back, so Chris could free her, and then she him. He jumped up and immediately searched the house and yard.

When he was satisfied the robbers had gone, he turned on the lights and bundled his family into one room, with Shannon holding a screwdriver. Because the thieves took the house phone and mobile phone, he rode his motor scooter down the hill to the guard house at the gate to Roca Verde to get help. Shouting "Car? Car? Polizia! Polizia! Banditos! Banditos! Tres hombres, Pistolas en mi casa!" he roused the guard. The guard said "no cars" and immediately called the police. Chris took his scooter back up the hill and went to his neighbor's house to alert them and get help, as Chris speaks very little Spanish. He pounded on their door, but could not wake them.

In about ten minutes a police car arrived with two cops. One had an assault rifle at the ready as they searched the area. When it was clear the bad guys had fled, the police made a list of the stolen items and then left, telling them to go to the police in Alajuela the next day to report the crime. It seemed like a very weak response to the terrified family. Shannon felt the police acted like it was the Roca Verde guard's job to protect the residents, not theirs.

Louis, a guard at the gate who arrived just after the police, came armed with a pistol and spent the rest of the night with the Dougherty's. They were all afraid the robbers would have second thoughts about leaving the witnesses alive and come back. With no weapons to defend themselves, and no police protection, they felt helpless. At one point Chris fell briefly asleep and was angry at himself for doing so.

The next day the Roca Verde community learned of the event, and was very supportive. Spanish-speaking friends took Chris and Shannon to Alajuela to file the report. The police wrote down the information, and at about two o'clock that afternoon they came to the house to take fingerprints. The robbers had gained access to the house by slitting the screen in the laundry room window, and there were probably lots of prints. However, many people had been in the house by that time. It was not exactly treated like a crime scene. Later the Dougherty's were told that it would be days before a detective could be assigned to the case.

Of course everyone is asking where the robbers came from and why they picked that particular house. It seems they came up the hill and saw the laundry window from the road. The fact that there was no car in the driveway, and very few lights were on inside, may have led them to believe no one was home. But they came with guns.

Armed home invasions are something new for Atenas, and this event has shocked the community. What can people do to protect themselves? The Dougherty's house was not alarmed, and they did not have a dog. Now they are working to get both, including a system with obvious video cameras so potential robbers will know they are being recorded. Chris immediately went to try to buy a gun, but learned that it takes at least thirty days to get all the permits, and he knows that a gun wouldn't have helped him that night anyway.

In addition to the emotional trauma, this family has suffered a financial loss that will set them back for months. They came to Atenas having sold everything in the U.S. and turned their house over to the bank. The laptop computers were for home schooling their kids, and the \$3,000 was what they had set aside to be able to get a car. Chris has a job providing technical support on the internet, but it will take them months to recover financially. Shannon's ring was one of the few extravagances in their lives, and it is gone.

Their dream of starting over in Costa Rica and giving their kids a "world view" education is not dead, but it is shaken. They love the house they are in, but are afraid to stay there. When asked if they wanted to make the details of their experience public, they did not hesitate. They feel a part of this community and want the community to be alerted.

LATE UPDATE

The residents of Roca Verde held a mass meeting and decided to implement additional security measures for their community. Video cameras are being installed to monitor activity on the road, and an additional guard will be patrolling the area at night. The Dougherty's now have a guard dog.

Atenas Today Interviews

Robert Tessier

Developer of Bella Luna



AT: I understand you are another Canadian from Quebec who is developing property here in Atenas, in the tradition of Jean Luc and Andre Bastien.

Robert: Yes. In fact it was Jean Luc and Andre's nephew, Norman, who sold me on Atenas.

AT: I have seen a new sign by the entrance to the new highway advertising Bella Luna, your new community in Santa Eulalia. What are you doing there?

Robert: I have 31 lots on a beautiful mountain. The infrastructure with paved roads, electricity, water, etc. is within a few weeks of completion. It will be an up-scale, gated community, much like Roca Verde.

AT: Are lots now for sale?

Robert: Yes, I would like to sell a few lots at introductory prices, but I am not waiting for that to start building. I have plans to construct three luxury spec houses. My goal is to set the standard for architectural excellence and quality and create a super attractive environment. I am in no hurry.

AT: Is your background in real estate?

Robert: Far from it. I graduated from the university in Quebec in 1984 with a degree in software engineering. After working a year and half in a dull job for an insurance company I started my own software business.

AT: What type of software?

Robert: Mainly material requirements planning and human resources management. It was a very successful business and led to my establishing a chain of retail outlets selling technology and electronics. We now have 25 stores throughout Quebec.

AT: That's quite a business. Are you still running the company.

Robert: I still own the company and set the policies and strategy, but I have managed to delegate all the details. My son is in the business and is developing new stores. Last year I spent only four months in Quebec.

AT: Is business as bad in Quebec as in the U.S.?

Robert: Fortunately no. Our banks were much more conservative in making loans. Also, our economy is based on three industries that are still growing: high tech products, medium sized airplane manufacturing, and hydro power generation. We have no recession.

AT: It's amazing that you can run a company like that from an office with a computer in Atenas, Costa Rica.

Robert: The internet has changed everything. One of my side businesses is a website that publishes classified ads—it's sort of the Craig's list of Quebec. It runs automatically and generates almost \$200,000 a year in revenue.

AT: Do you have a family?

Robert: I was married for 27 years and have a son and a daughter. My wife and I separated 18 months ago, but are still best friends. She comes and goes from Quebec, and I am building a house for her on another lot in Roca Verde. In fact we are in business together developing a retreat center on some land I purchased in Morazon.

AT: What kind of retreat center?

Robert: It is based on a concept developed by the Hippocrates Health Institute in Palm Beach, Florida. We plan to duplicate their facility and programs here in Atenas.

AT: Can you describe the concept?

Robert: The description on their website says it best:

The Hippocrates Health Educator Program was developed to provide an extensive learning experience about the practice and teachings of the living foods lifestyle.

Our program provides guests with the tools necessary to take control of their own well-being, to allow the body to maximize its potential and heal itself naturally.

The Center offers a diverse and exhilarating range of therapies allowing one to experience the ultimate in a resort destination.

AT: Wow. That's an ambitious undertaking, but one that would certainly put Atenas on the map.

Robert: I really want to be a part of this community and made a contribution.

AT: How do you have the time to do all this?

Robert: I rely on good people. My style is to provide the concepts and funding and let other people do the work. I'm having a great time.

AT: Have you met many Ticos?

Robert: Absolutely. I probably know more Costa Ricans than Gringos. My house is always open. We've had some great parties.

AT: If someone is interested in looking at lots in your Bella Luna development whom should they contact.

Robert: Attorney Pablo Arias in Atenas is managing the project for me, and people can reach him in English or Spanish at: ariaspa77@hotmail.com

Once the infrastructure is complete we will start a formal marketing program.

AT: Do you want people contacting you?

Robert: Sure. I like meeting new people. Email me at: bobtessier@gmail.com

AT: Best of luck to you.

Atenas Today Interviews

Salo Ponchner

Director General and CEO of MultiFRIO



AT: We have all seen the MultiFRIO signs leading into Atenas and wondered about them. Now I see them in front of the old jeans factory in Sabana Larga.. What is MultiFRIO?

Salo: We are primarily a distributor of air conditioning units and systems. Recently we added a line of construction equipment for mining and tunneling operations.

AT: What brought you to Atenas?

Salo: We were looking for a place to consolidate our operations, which were located in many places in San Jose. Atenas was appealing because of it's location on the new highway and the availability of this large factory building. And of course it has the best weather in the world.

AT: What about the country setting?

Salo: Absolutely. The congestion and traffic in and around San Jose was costing us a lot in lost time and productivity.

AT: Is this now your only facility?

Salo: We still have some depots in San Jose and Guanacaste, but this is our headquarters and primary warehouse. We have invested heavily in renovating and expanding the existing building.



AT: Tell me about your product lines.

Salo: There are three businesses:

1. Individual air conditioning units of our own *airpro* design that are manufactured for us in China.



2. Large HVAC systems that we assemble and install using units we buy from the world's best air conditioning companies.



1. Construction equipment for companies for whom we are the Costa Rican distributor.



AT: How large is your business:

Salo: We are one of the top 400 companies in Costa Rica in terms of revenue, and have about 35% of the air conditioning market. Our systems are installed in hotels, office buildings, banks, hospitals, condos, retail stores, factories, you name it.

AT: How many employees do you have?

Salo: About 100, of which 70 or so are now in Atenas. Plus we employ over 500 sub contract workers in doing installations.

AT: Your headquarters employees must have special skills. Do they commute to Atenas from San Jose?

Salo: Yes. Some drive themselves, but we bring 25 every day in a company bus. Gradually we are adding people who live in Atenas, and now have about 20 locals.



AT: What kind of jobs do you have here?

Salo: Most of our positions are in the office, where we design systems, order the components, and manage the installation process. These jobs are technical and specialized.



Salo: But we also have a large warehouse and need material handlers.



Salo: Finally, we have a sheet metal shop where we make air handling ductwork.



AT: Tell me about your background and the history of the company.

Salo: I was born in San Jose in 1966. After graduating from the University of Costa Rica, I attended the University of California on a fellowship program and got a master's degree in horticulture. The terms of the fellowship program said that I had to work for the Costa Rican government for four years, so I was a professor of horticulture at the

university, ending up the head of the fruit department.

AT: A long way from the air conditioning business.

Salo: Yes. In fact my first job after that was to be the Research and Development Manager for Chiquita Bananas in Central and South America.

AT: I noticed a lone banana plant outside your main entrance.

Salo: Our Japanese and Chinese visitors like to see the local color. There are also coffee and pineapple plants.

AT: How did you get into air conditioning?

Salo: My younger brother got a masters in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois, which is a leader in refrigeration science. I was tired of all the traveling with Chiquita, so we got together and started a car air-conditioning repair shop on Avenida Ten in San Jose. This was fifteen years ago.

AT: And it grew from there.

Salo: We are a good match. He does the technical, and I do the management and sales.

AT: It's quite an achievement. Did you receive any official recognition?

Salo: Yes, I was named 'Entrepreneur of the Year' for 2006-2007.

AT: Do you have a family?

Salo: I've been married for 17 years and have two children, ages 10 and 14. We live in Santa Anna.

AT: How would you describe your company's place in the Atenas community?

Salo: With my horticultural background I am steeped in the ideas of community that farmers have. It is very important to me and my brother that we be a contributing member of the Atenas community. Obviously we bring jobs and opportunity. But we also want to be involved in promoting development in general. One example is that we are working with the authorities to get the access road to the new highway repaired. Also we are starting a kind of "intern" program with the young people of Atenas to introduce them to work opportunities.

AT: Well, we Ex-Pats welcome you to our new home in Atenas, where the weather is the best in the world, and the people are the friendliest.

Salo: Thank you. I believe it.

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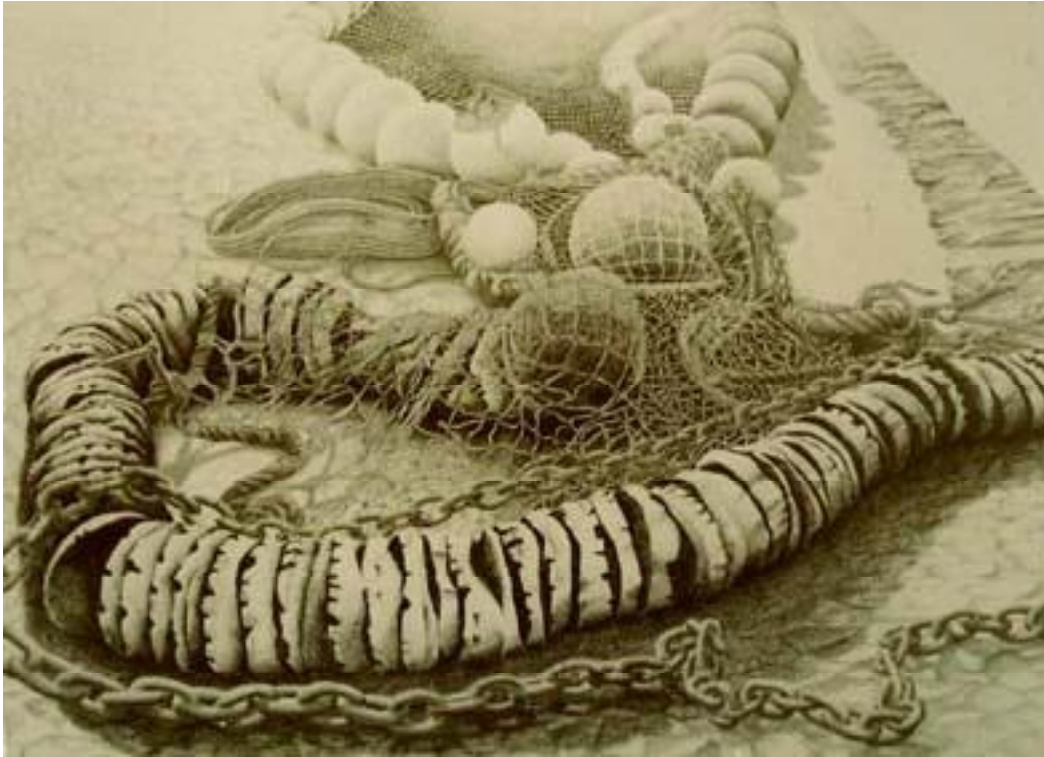
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The Atenas Today Art Gallery

The Art Gallery is a regular feature of Atenas Today. Local artists are encouraged to submit photographs of their works to be included in the gallery, and to send a new picture each month. The artists may be contacted via the email addresses shown.



Marine Still Life

Steve Wiens
sjwiens@gmail.com

Creatures' Dialogue

Evelyn Levtchenko
levtchenko.art@gmx.eu





Rose Bouquet, Silver Tray

Alice Constantine
www.aliceartworks.com



Teresa
Al Alexander
jeanandal@gmail.com

Betelgeuse, Betelgeuse, Betelgeuse.



by Richard Sheppard

Everyone has heard of Betelgeuse. The name is unforgettable. But there is little appreciation for what an incredible celestial object this strange word represents.

Betelgeuse is omnipresent.

Betelgeuse is in the constellation Orion, the Hunter.

To find Betelgeuse, look up or to the left (depending on the time of night) of the three stars of the belt of Orion. It is very bright and conspicuously orange. It is the only star in the constellation that is not stark white.

A star over a spot close to the North Pole cannot be seen by someone in the

Southern Hemisphere. It is hidden by the bulge of the Earth, always below the horizon. Betelgeuse is situated in the sky almost directly over the equator. That means it can be (and always has been) seen by every person on earth.

Betelgeuse is ancient.

If you pronounce it like the garrulous ghost in the movie Beetle Juice you're close, but the preferred pronunciation is BET'L-juice.

The exact origin of the name is a little uncertain, but "abet" is the Arabic word for "armpit" and al-Jauza (which means "the central one" or "the giant") is an historical Arabic name for the constellation as a whole, a feminine

name in old Arabian legend. That name was passed down from the ancient Sumerians through the Babylonians and the Egyptians.

Humans have been calling that star by the same name for 5000 years!

The Sumerians, however, did not see a great hunter in the stars of Orion but a sheep, actually a ewe. So that means Betelgeuse has its origin as “the armpit of the ewe.”

Betelgeuse is huge.

In terms of mass, Betelgeuse is thought to be about 18.5 times the mass of the sun, but 600 times wider and more than 200 million times its volume! If we imagine the Earth being the size of a period in this sentence, then at that scale Betelgeuse would be a sphere big enough to hold a 20 story building. If Betelgeuse were placed at the center of our Solar System, its surface would extend past the asteroid belt possibly to the orbit of Jupiter, wholly engulfing Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars.

Only a handful of stars are big enough to have had their diameters measured. Betelgeuse was the first. It is the only star big enough to be resolved by the Hubble Space Telescope as a disk. Hubble can resolve the star even though the apparent size is 20,000 times smaller than the width of the full Moon — roughly equivalent to being able to resolve a car's headlights at a distance of 6,000 miles. All the rest of the zillions

of stars are seen as mere points of light — no matter what the magnification.

Betelgeuse is also surrounded by a huge dusty circumstellar shell composed mostly of sodium, extending up to 600 billion miles from the star and composed of matter that has been ejected in the form of a vigorous stellar wind.

Betelgeuse is the single largest thing the naked eye can see. True, we can see the Andromeda Galaxy, but that little smudge represents the light of millions of stars, not a single object.

Betelgeuse is bright.

Betelgeuse is classified as a semi-regular pulsating variable red super giant. All red super giants are variable, so if you see a red star it is sure to be a super giant because ordinary red stars are too faint to be seen even with binoculars.

Betelgeuse varies from the 7th brightest star in the sky down to 12th in a cycle of just over 5 years. Its radius varies from 1.7au to 5.4au. Don't expect to see a blood red star. Technically, the astronomical type of Betelgeuse is “red” but it really appears just the orange side of yellow. Similar to the color of Mars, another “red” object, Betelgeuse is 643 ± 146 light-years away. 1 light-year = 5,878,499,810,000 miles (6 trillion). So it is about 4 quadrillion miles away from us. And it is still one of the brightest stars in the sky.

On top of that, only about 13% of the star's radiant energy is emitted in the form of visible light, with most of its radiation occurring in the infrared. If our eyes were sensitive to radiation at all wavelengths, Betelgeuse would appear as the brightest star in the sky. It has a luminosity in excess of 180,000 Suns at maximum. When the star contracts, its luminosity diminishes to about 130,000 Suns.

Betelgeuse is going supernova.

Astronomers believe Betelgeuse is only 10 million years old, but has evolved rapidly because of its high mass. For comparison, the age of our Sun is 4.6 billion years and it has another 5 billion or so years before it blinks out.

Betelgeuse has at most just one million years left. When it dies, Betelgeuse will explode as a type II supernova. During this event the core will collapse, leaving behind a neutron star about the size of a small town. Such a supernova explosion will be the brightest ever recorded, outshining everything but the full Moon in the night sky and becoming easily visible in daylight. It will cast shadows on the ground as strong as those of the Moon.

The supernova will brighten over a two-week period, and then remain at that intensity for 2 to 3 months before rapidly dimming. This could happen tomorrow or anytime in the next million years. In fact, Betelgeuse may have already become a supernova centuries ago; if so, the light is still in transit.

Fortunately for us, it appears that there will be few, if any, adverse effects to Earth when Betelgeuse goes supernova.

RECOGNIZING A STROKE

During a BBQ, a woman stumbled and took a little fall - she assured everyone that she was fine (they offered to call paramedics)she said she had just tripped over a brick because of her new shoes.

They got her cleaned up and got her a new plate of food. While she appeared a bit shaken up, Jane went about enjoying herself the rest of the evening.

Jane's husband called later telling everyone that his wife had been taken to the hospital - (at 6:00 pm Jane passed away.) She had suffered a stroke at the BBQ. Had they known how to identify the signs of a stroke, perhaps Jane would be with us today. Some don't die. They end up in a helpless, hopeless condition instead.

A neurologist says that if he can get to a stroke victim within 3 hours he can totally reverse the effects of a stroke...totally. He said the trick was getting a stroke recognized, diagnosed, and then getting the patient medically cared for within 3 hours, which is tough.

RECOGNIZING A STROKE --- REMEMBER THE FIRST 3 LETTERS STR

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

S *Ask the individual to **SMILE**.

T *Ask the person to **TALK** and SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE (Coherently)

R *Ask him or her to **RAISE** BOTH ARMS.

If he or she has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call emergency number immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

New Sign of a Stroke ----- **Stick out Your Tongue**

NOTE: Another 'sign' of a stroke is this: Ask the person to 'stick' out his tongue. If the tongue is 'crooked', if it goes to one side or the other that is also an indication of a stroke.

Life: A Wonder of Change - I



by Lois Craft

Jim and I were reminiscing recently about our lives and how life is so full of change and surprises. I grew up in Atlanta, GA in the same house into which I was brought from the hospital: Jim was the son of a Naval officer, and lived in many states and many houses. Each environment developed us as people, and brought to our long marriage different experiences and expectations that have allowed us to live a life together that has been totally different and, perhaps, more experimental, than that which we expected.

I had never traveled extensively – my family owned a cottage on a lake near Atlanta and sailed small sailboats every weekend from Spring through Fall months. We lived at the lake in the summer, traveling only occasionally to regattas in Tennessee or Florida.

Jim, on the other hand, traveled to Europe, sailing across the Atlantic at the age of 12, experiencing the people, languages and food of France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland.

The first year we were married, Jim was a graduate student, on retainer to work summers and holidays for PepsiCo International. They assigned him a three

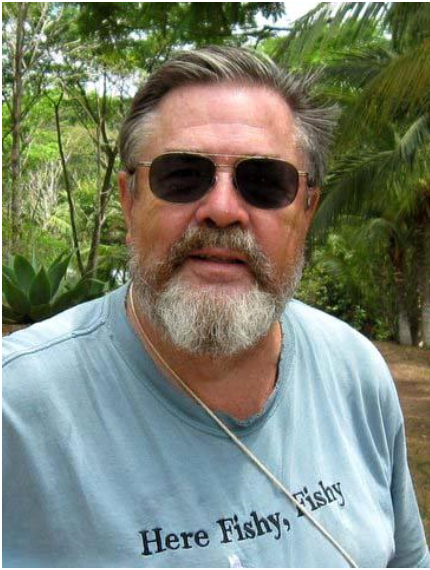
month job in the Philippines, saying that, if he would forgo First Class on the plane trip, they would pay for me to go, and pay all expenses! Our first anniversary was spent in Hong Kong, eating Peking Duck at the Mandarin Hotel. What an experience for a young woman from Atlanta, who had only traveled as far as Nassau at age 16!

We spent the summer in the Philippines, then traveled to India, Italy and France on the way home. Such was the beginning of our life of adventure: such was the beginning of our combined life of security, love and change. We were blessed to work hard together and travel extensively, enjoying the surprises and withstanding the difficulties that life offered.

Which brings us to Costa Rica: we came here to both see a family member who had moved here (Julie Hawkins) and the destination wedding of a friends' daughter. We fell in love with Atenas and with Costa Rica. We had always wanted to live in a different country, and we had found it! So many special people, both Tico and ex-pats from a variety of countries: what's not to love? Perhaps too much rain.....

We plan to be here for a long while, but we are also seeking additional adventures in other countries, so will enjoy exchanging our home here with people from other countries, who want to experience the magic of Costa Rica.

Perpetual Tourist Beware



By Martin Lively

Talk about a shock! While getting paperwork together for our 3 day “get out of Dodge” passport tourist visa renewal trip I examined our passports. Up from the pages jumped “14d” for me and “30d” for my wife and sister.



We were already overstayed by almost two months! How do you straighten this out? What will happen when trying to exit Costa Rica? Is there a fine to be paid?

Under the new immigration law the official at the airport that stamps your passport with a tourist visa has the discretion to shorten the term of your tourist visa from the usual 90 to a shorter period. In theory this is based on your answers to his or her

questions about your visit. But in fact it is arbitrary, and solely up to the official. I gave no indication that I intended to stay two weeks and that my wife and sister intended to stay a month.

Opinions and advice vary all over the lot and no one really knows what to do to avoid a problem at the border if the immigration official balks when the visa date has been overstayed.

Lawyers do not know, and they suggest one talk to the immigration office. (A general criticism of mine of Costa Rica lawyers is that they seldom know the law, and have to call some government office to get the answer. Hell, if my Spanish were just a tad better I could do that. When I practiced law I felt it my obligation to know the law.)

Travel agents do not know, and they suggest that one just leave via Nicaragua where there is less care taken by officials.

So in my Spanish 101 I explain the issue to our housekeeper and she calls first the immigration office at the airport, and then the main office in La Uruca. Both explain that the new law permits shorter periods and that the official “must have had a reason.”

Both say the way to fix the matter is to just leave via Panama or Nicaragua and to be sure that the return entry has a 90 day stay. Both state that no fine or penalty attaches until after one overstay by more than 90 days. This leads me to wonder what the hell is the effect of the 14d and 30d written in our passports? Advisory?

The lesson learned is to be very aware and cautious when getting your passport stamped. State clearly your intent to stay for 90 days and request a 90 day tourist visa. Examine the stamp to make sure you got your full 90 days before moving from the immigration station.

Well, who am I to query Costa Rica law and practice? We all know it is often better to avoid the permit and its fee because the offense and its fine is always less than the permit cost.

Next week, (if I can get my Permiso a Salir for our car) we drive to the Nicaraguan border and try to get across for a three day visit to San Juan del Sur or Granada depending on what our visitor from D.C. want, I like them both.

A WONDERFUL TRADE

I am looking for someone to live free in my house in Alto de Monte (8km from central Atenas), feed my 2 dogs twice a day every day, to skim the pool every day, to generally be around the premises and advise of any problems with the pool equipment or otherwise and to be able to call and let in landscapers, repairman etc. as needed. In return you get a free place to live with 3 rooms and all appliances, even a small tv. All you pay is for the utilities you use with a deposit to me to assure payment. Only someone who will definitely be there until mid-December but if it works out they can stay much longer. I want someone who is very reliable with references who doesn't drink or smoke, who is not at all the party type but a homebody. A single person or a couple but no children. I will check on the person or persons repeatedly and carefully so please approach this honestly for your sake as well as mine. You can contact me at 8866-4292 or gerrybodner@gmail.com.

Gerry Bodner

HUMOR PAGE



The Perfect Husband

Several men are in the locker room of a golf club. A cellular phone on a bench rings and a man engages the hands-free speaker function and begins to talk. Everyone else in the room stops to listen.

MAN: "Hello"

WOMAN: "Hi Honey, it's me. Are you at the club?"

MAN: "Yes."

WOMAN: "I'm at the shops now and found this beautiful leather coat. It's only \$2,000. Is it OK if I buy it?"

MAN: "Sure, go ahead if you like it that much."

WOMAN: "I also stopped by the Lexus dealership and saw the new models. I saw one I really liked."

MAN: "How much?"

WOMAN: "\$90,000."

MAN: "OK, but for that price I want it with all the options."

WOMAN: "Great! Oh, and one more thing. I was just talking to Janie and found out that the house I wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking \$980,000 for it."

MAN: "Well, then go ahead and make an offer of \$900,000. They'll probably take it. If not, we can go the extra eighty-thousand if it's what you really want."

WOMAN: "OK. I'll see you later! I love you so much!"

MAN: "Bye! I love you, too."

The man hangs up. The other men in the locker room are staring at him in astonishment, mouths wide open.

He turns and asks, "Anyone know whose phone this is?"

Bridge is Good for You



by John Randall

Hi,
My name is John Randall and my wife Linda and I have moved to Atenas this past November to become sunbirds/snowbirds. We've recently earned our cedulas and plan to live here Dec-Jan-Feb and June-July-August; no more winters in Birmingham, Alabama—and more importantly, no more summers!

One of the reasons we chose Atenas was due to the large expat community. Back in the States we run two small bridge clubs, as we have for the last five years since retiring; lessons, regular bridge games, adult socialization, meeting new people, making friends, eating—and playing cards. It's all good.

Learning to play bridge is one of the best gifts you can give yourself; in addition

to stopping smoking, wearing seat belts, and reducing the amount of sugar in your diet. How so? Here's an article from a study by the University of California at Berkeley. It shows that there are significant health benefits from learning to play bridge.

“Back in 2000, Professor Marian Diamond showed that playing bridge boosts the immune system. Bridge requires concentration and while you are playing your brain is kept active and stimulated. It seems that this boosts your immune system.

Professor Diamond wanted to find out if it was possible to use the dorsolateral cortex to boost your immune system. He enlisted the help of twelve ladies in their 70s and 80s. He took blood samples and

then asked them to play bridge for an hour and a half. After that, their blood was tested again. A staggering two thirds of these ladies had increased levels of T cells in their bodies - the cells used to fight infection.

Many people find that as they get older their brain seems to slow down. Like muscles, your brain needs to be used to keep it functioning well. People are living longer and many people are concerned about helping their brains to stay active and alert so they can enjoy this longer life to the full.

Playing bridge regularly stimulates your brain and helps keep your memory active and your brain alert. It requires you to use mathematics, strategy and concentration. There is an old saying "use it or lose it" - playing bridge helps you to "use it". While you are playing a game of bridge your brain is kept fully active, working out your hand, working out your best approach to bidding, following your partner's bidding and working out how their hand fits with yours, and then actually playing the hand, working out the best strategy for maximizing the number of tricks won by you and your partner.

Many beginning bridge players concentrate on learning the bidding and forget that learning strategies for play can make a big difference to your overall score. This part of the game is one of the biggest mental challenges, requiring you to concentrate and stay focused long after the actual bidding has finished.

Are there any other health benefits to playing bridge? Of course there are. You will be meeting people and enjoying an active social life. Instead of sitting at

home feeling miserable and lonely and with no-one to talk to, you will be engaging in conversations and getting out and about - which will help keep you physically active too."



I'm not sure what the dorsolateral cortex is, but I guarantee I know 12 ladies in a room playing cards! First of all, six of them are too hot and six of them are too cold! I like the comment about the "playing of the hand" because most new players spend 110% of their time trying to learn how to bid—which is understandable—and -0% of the time learning how to actually play the hand.

I also understand the importance of adult socialization. Playing bridge twice with a group of strangers and you'll end up with a week's worth of laughs/smiles and an e-mail list of people to contact.

I'm 66 years old. My mother started me playing bridge when I was 12 or so by making me "dummy" while she went into the kitchen and cooked dinner for company. When I was 18 I went off to college—Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA—and continued to play. Unfortunately, I didn't do many studies. I met my future wife Linda and taught her how to play. Unfortunately, she didn't do many studies, either. We played merrily on for 40 years until shortly after 9/11 when we decided to tackle duplicate bridge. It took another five years to un-do all the bad things I thought I knew and actually learn the rules of bridge and correct bidding procedure.

In 2006 we decided to start our own club; passed director's tests and went at

it. As of this date we have two clubs in three locations, six games a week with 5-7 tables each; and we've recently started a new club here in Atenas at Don Yajo's on Tuesday afternoons; in addition to playing at the San Jose Bridge Club in Savanna Oeste.

I can best describe the "high" from playing bridge to that of someone who runs. Play 20 hands of bridge and you can feel your brain being occupied by aliens. You can literally feel the stimulation your brain is going through; counting trumps, where are the missing

cards, how high should we bid, can I make an extra trick, why didn't I finesse the spade I could have made an overtrick, how did they make six?

Go to sleep after playing bridge? Forget it. When we play evening games that end by 10 or so, it's 1 in the morning before either of us can go to sleep. Here's another article.

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WHY PLAY THE ULTIMATE CARD GAME?



Bridge exercises both sides of your brain. Bridge is one of the few games that stimulates both the left and right sides of your brain. Every time you play, you use -- and improve -- your skills in communication, logic, math, memory, visualization and psychology.

Bridge can improve your physical health. A 15-year

study by a University of California-Berkeley researcher has shown that a game of bridge can even boost your immune system. By stimulating the brain cortex, bridge-playing activity produces higher numbers of the white blood cells that fight disease. Other studies have found that people who play bridge regularly are 2½ times less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. **Bridge is social.** There's a special camaraderie among bridge players that develops from the social setting and the game's emphasis on teamwork, ethics and sportsmanship. **Bridge is good for kids.** Dr. Christopher Shaw, a researcher from Carlinville, Ill., recently completed a study that shows that children who play bridge perform better on standardized tests than their non-bridge playing counterparts. Shaw believes that learning to play bridge has such a dramatic effect on the test scores because "bridge is a game that develops inferential reasoning skills, which are very difficult to teach elementary students. These skills appear to be used in all five subject areas (reading, language, math, science, social studies) in middle school."

AND THE MAIN REASON TO PLAY IS IT'S FUN!

What did that article end with? AND THE MAIN REASON TO PLAY IS IT'S FUN!

Even if you don't play bridge, you should come and visit us at Don Yayo's on Tuesday afternoons. People ask me, how am I doing?

I reply: "I'm in Costa Rica. I'm playing bridge. And, I'm in a bar. Is life OK?"

Yes it is. Life is good.

Visit our web site at <http://www.riverchasebridge.com> or e-mail me at sierra_marmot@yahoo.com. We'll be back June 1st for three months. If anyone wants to learn how to play the world's best card game, get in touch.

Thanks,

John Randall
Atenas Bridge Club

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