

# A Jungle Bridge

**Comments, Thoughts, and Pictures  
From Costa Rica**



Friday, June 22, 2007

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*Frank & Mary Hinkle visited us recently, toting generous donations to support the activities here. As Frank was leaving, Nanci really looked at the T-shirt he was wearing. It read "My head is full of children." She said "I ought to be wearing a T-shirt like that"... and Frank said "I think so, too," and literally gave her... the shirt off his back.  
Thank you, Frank!*

## **RECENT NEWS**

An interesting question asked by a volunteer – “What happened to you?” The answer surprised even me. Voluntary Simplicity – an answer to some of the world’s ills? Guadua Bamboo as a powerful force in reducing greenhouse gases – and more. A link to a wonderfully inspiring piece from a British TV show.

## **“WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?”**

I have no clear memory of exactly when it happened, but my life has changed. What on Earth has happened to this Electrical Engineer from the University of Connecticut? Worked for IBM, Allied Chemical, and other large companies? Got married. Had children. Wrote a book on business planning, for goodness sake. About as conventional-white-bread as one can get.

Now look at this life – sitting here in the jungle living what some have called “a dream.”, doing what we are able to do to help others help themselves.

One of our visitors, a young woman who recently graduated from college, understood this background, and the radical transition that this life represents, and she asked a simple question.

She asked, “what *happened* to you?”

Pausing for only a fraction of a second, I answered,

“I guess I got a heart-on.”

## **VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY**

Nanci and I just began reading an interesting book - "Voluntary Simplicity", by Duane Elgin.

Two quotes from Chapter One should serve to tease you along. Elgin says:

*"voluntary simplicity as a manner of living that is outwardly more simple and inwardly more rich, a way of being in which our most authentic and live self is brought into direct and conscious contact with living."*

Then Elgin quotes historian Alfred Toynbee as saying:

*"The measure of a civilization's growth is not to be found in the conquest of other people or in the possession of land. Rather he described the essence of growth in what he called the Law of Progressive Simplification. True Growth, he said, is the ability of a society to transfer increasing amounts of energy and attention from the material side of life to the non-material side and thereby to advance its culture, capacity for compassion, sense of community, and strength of democracy."*

Something to think about.

## **GUADUA BAMBOO – SHARE IN THE REPAIR**

It's one thing to see news stories about the destruction of the rainforest.

It's quite another to wake up in the morning to the sound of chainsaws, hear the loud, deep CRRRRACK!!! as a giant tree starts to fall, to hear it hit the ground and, if it's close enough, to feel the ground shake when it hits – KAAAABOOOMMM!!! A tree that took 500 years to grow comes to the ground in minutes. More chain saws, and a flatbed truck filled with lengths of tree goes by on road. A couple of weeks ago, we heard this happen daily around us.

Many here feel there is no other way to raise meaningful capital to meet needs here. Yes, it is sad to see the grandfather trees fall, but each tree is worth thousands of dollars as lumber.

Once harvested, the giant trees will take 500 years or so before the next "crop" is ready. In the meantime, we as a species could run out of oxygen to breathe.

One species of bamboo – Guadua – is used as a primary construction material in Bolivia, with a tensile strength greater than steel.

Dedicating land to the growing of Guadua Bamboo is one effort which can help reverse the impact of the raging deforestation going on around us. Guadua is a specific type of bamboo, which can:

- Re-forest large areas of cleared forest land quickly;
- Sequester 4 times more carbon dioxide from the air than "normal jungle";
- Produce 35% more oxygen than "normal jungle"
- Start producing revenue in as little as three years, including products such as:
  - Bamboo as a food product;
  - Bamboo as furniture;
  - Bamboo as construction material (with Guadua being stronger than steel)
  - Bamboo as a source of revenue from "carbon credits"

Although the following reference website is not specifically about Guadua, it can give you an introduction to Bamboo and its characteristics. <http://bamboocentral.org/shareinrepair/whybamboo.htm>

We have about 22 acres of land around us that can be used, in part, to grow Guadua. Once purchased, planting and growing can begin immediately. Got any thoughts on that Let us know!

## **VOLUNTEER CORNER**

***When the going gets tough, the tough go chopping***

We were blessed with two volunteers, brought to us through My Tropical Adventures. Madhu Punjabi, and Masha Nepomniaschy, both recent graduates of New York University, came to The Bridge to see how they could help. Although in the long run Madhu's background in marketing, and Masha's in finance and accounting may prove beneficial to The Bridge, all we had on hand this day was...



*Maria, Madhu, and Masha on Thursday afternoon –  
“veggie chopping day”, when the veggies for the week are prepared.*

Thanks, you two.

We look forward to more discussions in the future.

Madhu has a Hindu family background, Maria is a Bribri Indian, Masha is of Russian extraction, they're chopping veggies on a porch owned by a couple of gringos, in a Latin American country.

Pretty cool, don't you think?

### **AN INSPIRING PIECE**

Once in a while, we run across something that is so amazing we want to pass it on.

You know that Nanci and I believe strongly that anyone can be, do, or have anything they want. It has to do with setting clear intentions. Some would call it prayer. Whatever it's called, it worked in the life of this man – a man that some would describe as ordinary – with one important difference. He had a dream.

Did he realize that dream?

Watch this brief clip from a British TV show, and judge for yourself.  
<http://www.maniacworld.com/Phone-Salesman-Amazes-Crowd.html>

I realize some of you are still on dialup, but I really felt I had to include this here. Not wanting to spoil the surprise, I'll summarize the clip in the next issue for those who find it difficult to “tune in”.

And thanks to Karen Butler, who sent the clip to us!

### **YOU CAN HELP US!**

*Forward this email to two people you know who might also enjoy it.*

## **DONOR NOTES**

Several of you have been very generous in the last few weeks, and for that we give a hearty “Thank You!”

We’re not “out of the jungle” yet, but things are moving along.

**NOW's a GREAT time to contribute.**  
Go to the website donation page by [clicking here](#), where you can use a credit card.  
Or, mail a check made out to “El Puente” to  
Barry or Nanci Stevens, c/o Roberts, 1437 Sierra Circle, El Cajon, CA 92020  
Remember – deductions are tax-deductible  
**Do it NOW! You’ll be glad you did!**

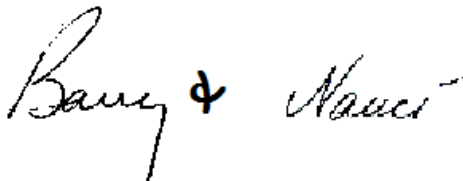
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***Thank you for your support!***

Well,

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Enjoy!



## **IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE SEEING THE PICTURES**

...go to [www.elpuente-thebridge.org/weekly](http://www.elpuente-thebridge.org/weekly) and download the file with filename beginning with the date of this issue. Both DOC and PDF formats are available for downloading.

Go to The Bridge Website by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Go to The Bridge Online Store by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Download a Powerpoint presentation and a brochure by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Go to the newsletter archive by [CLICKING HERE](#)

**Here's some Video clips** showing activities at The Bridge:

[Nanci and Alejandro working together to serve lunch on the porch](#)

[Daniel, Barry, and Alejandro setting up for the movie](#)

[Watching the movie: this day, "Winnie The Pooh" in Spanish](#)

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