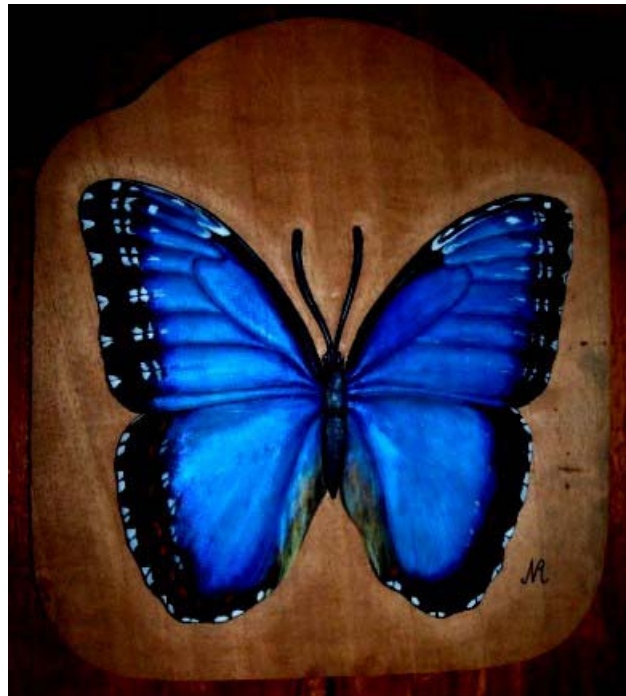




Friday, February 22, 2008
© 2008 Barry A. Stevens



*The newest team effort from Roy Taylor Zuñiga, the sculptor, and Nanci, the Pintor...
"Mariposa Azul"*

RECENT NEWS

The 2008 school year started last week, and 26 Bribri children are in the program, Nutrition becomes an issue, as one family's crisis leads us to explore how to teach it to people who can't read. We've been asked to help buy land for a medical clinic inside the reserve. A little feedback from the GoodSearch project. We're going to try more frequent and smaller newsletter issues, in response to requests to make them easier to download. Please let us know how it works for you.

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE!
The New School Year Begins!

School year 2008 is just starting off this week. With your support, we're up to 26 school kids so far. Although it's too early for photos of more kids...



...we thought you'd get a kick out of seeing this year's very first student... little Daniela, togged out with a knapsack and a kindergarten uniform. Dawn Pruitt visited here, and absolutely fell in love with those dark eyes and great smile. "I GOTTA get her in school this year", Dawn said.

Your wish is our command!

Oh... see those sandals? We're not through yet.

Nanci's taking the kids to the town of Bribri, where the shoe store has given us a discount on school shoes! (Don't get your hopes up... a discount here in Costa Rica is about 3% - and that's a BIG one.) But... every little bit helps.

And Daniela's eyes are saying "Thank You!"

JUST BELIEVE, MARIA

As in years past, the school in Puerto Viejo seems to get off to a ragged start. For one thing, many of the kids won't know what grade they're in until they take the entrance exams. A group of them have been in classes together, and have become very good friends. This is significant, because they're from different families and clans - very often at war with each other in the jungle. Without even being aware of it, this group of little children is breaking down centuries-old cultural barriers and is spreading peace through the jungle. But, if anyone flunks the English exam this year, they'll stay back, and that will fragment this close-knit group of classmates-and-friends.

Some of the kids were afraid. "I'm going to fail this exam", they cried. "I know I'm going to fail!" One of the Bribri moms took the opportunity to apply a little one-on-one Science of Mind. As part of the discussion, she told them, "believe you passed that exam". "If you believe you've already passed, you will pass." I guess our teachings are sinking in. Hallelujah!

When they came back to the house after school, they were very, very, happy. They had all, indeed, passed. They are together again for another school year.

As for that group of kids "spreading peace in the jungle"...

... the little children shall lead them.

NEW-TRITION

Early one morning, a distraught mother and father rang our doorbell. Looking very upset, they came through the front gate. "We need to get to the Clinic. Ronualdo's very sick with the gripe (gree-pay, otherwise known as flu)!" I had access to a car that morning, so I took them up to the Clinic. They were there for the entire day, waiting to be seen.

One of the things we had a chance to talk with the parents about was nutrition. Their belief has been, "someone's mad at us, perhaps has put a hex on us, and that's why Ronualdo is always sick." We inquired about their diet – they eat almost exclusively rice. After discussions about keeping the children dry and warm at this time of year, especially if they're starting to have a cold, we began talking about nutrition.

Alejandro's mom Maria mentioned to us that Alejandro used to be in the hospital in Limón every winter with a bad cold or pneumonia. She went on to say "when he started eating the three vegetable soup meals a week, and we added those kinds of foods to our diet at home, he doesn't need to go to the hospital any more." We passed that story on to Ronualdo's mom, suggesting that they talk together. Making that kind of communication happen isn't an easy thing in this culture. People are trained to live in isolation, and to be distant from and suspicious of each other.

I spent some time researching nutrition materials on the internet. Most of what I found requires that the person using them be able to read. The people we deal with are largely illiterate, and only a very few have finished even 6th grade.

So – I'm figuring pictures.



Ladies and gentlemen, meet these members of the Vegetable Family!

This isn't the entire family, of course – there's probably some brothers, sisters, and cousins that are outside in the garden at the moment...

I'll be making up pages showing combinations of these and other Food Families going into meals, then try them out, explaining things the indigenous way – by word of mouth. We'll talk about the "strength" of the body to fight "gripe" and other illness, about the bones growing strong, and so on. We'll start with a crude sketch of the human body – a box with sticks for arms and legs. A hammer will serve as the immune system. Things like "gripe" will be described as "thieves that steal your strength" – symbolized by pebbles. Thieves – pebbles – enter the body, the hammer squashes them – bones grow strong – all fed by the food they eat. If the food isn't right, the body weakens, and the "thieves" slowly "steal" the body's strength. This should be an interesting experiment.

The Nutrition Coloring Book

Nanci has a great idea! She wants to have the kids help her make a "nutrition coloring book", with all the food groups on various pages, perhaps with combinations of them going into various dishes. It'll be possible to add brief descriptions in English, Spanish, and to have some of the kids translate the Spanish into Bribri, helping to teach a little Spanish and English, and help preserve the Bribri language as well. We'll keep you all posted, of course!

NEW MEDICINE – OLD JUNGLE

We've recently had discussions with Timoteo Jackson, a local tribal leader, about a medical clinic he plans to build near his home in the Reserve. While medicinal plants are part of the indigenous culture, they also use modern medicine when necessary. A clinic here would serve many people.

Timoteo is the leader of a "Comunal", a group of neighbors in Rancho Grande and Watsi. Together, the members of the Comunal want to construct this clinic. The first step is to get control of the land, putting control in the hands of the Comunal.

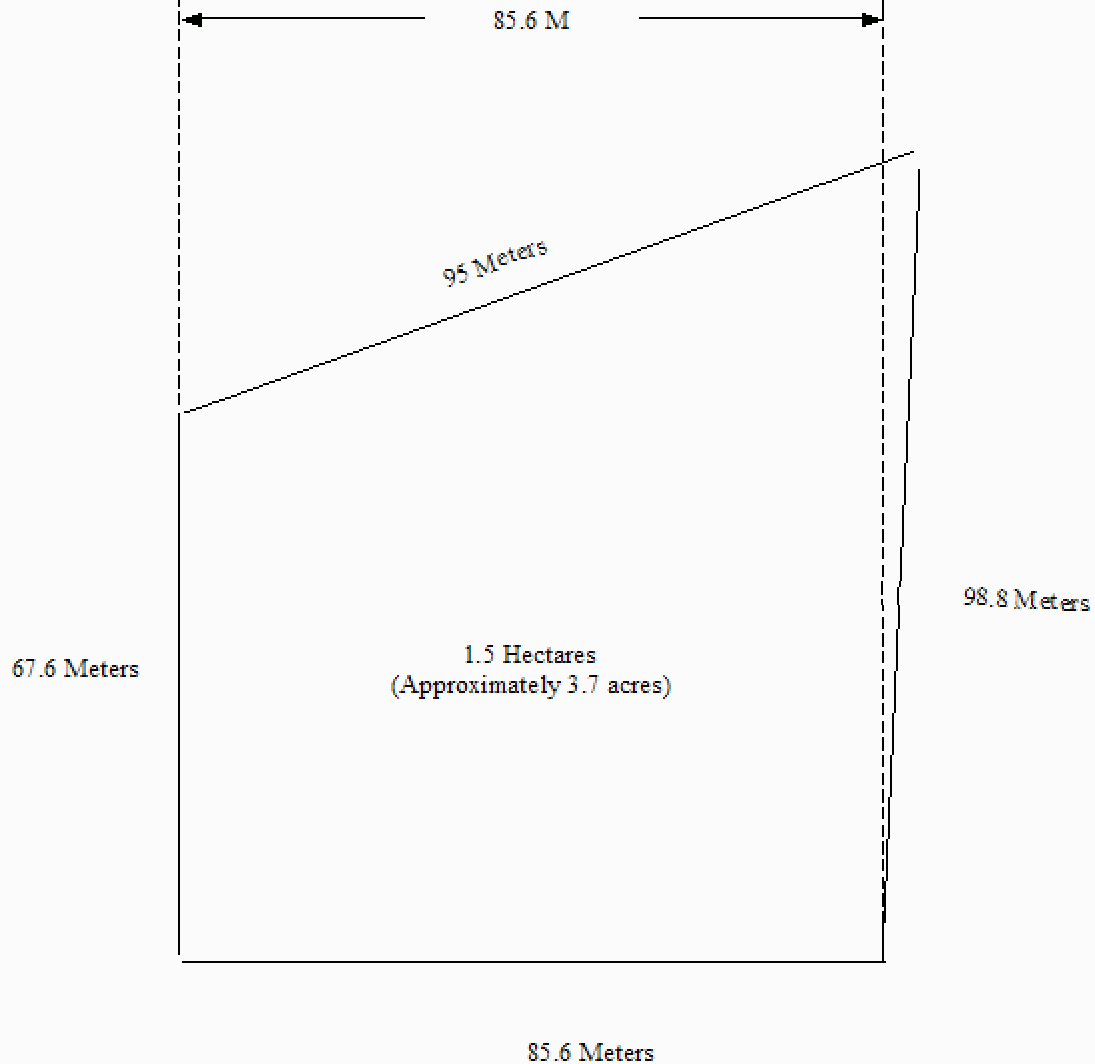
The next step would be to get plans for construction, and cost them out. "Do you have plans yet?" I asked him. "There's another clinic that's just been built in Bambu", he replied. "The plans are available, and the costs of building it are known. We'll build one here like that one." That makes it easy... he's getting a copy of the plans, and I'll be going to Bambu in the near future to photograph that Clinic. You'll see the pictures as soon as I get them!

Timoteo took me to see the land recently. It's about 100 meters from his home in the reserve. Sweeping his hand from side to side, he said "from this tree.... to that tree, then back into the jungle". I took photos, of course, and pasted them together (clumsily) to provide a panoramic view of the frontage. The result is below, along with a sketch of the land with dimensions of each side.

The engineer in me came alive, and I produced four lines drawn to scale and fit together to account for the property boundaries. The resulting photo and sketch are below. A real map is on its way. , as they say in the Patois vernacular here, "Map and picture soon come."

How much will be needed to control the property? About \$9,000. If, that is, the deal is done quickly. There's a line from Shakespeare, I think from "Hamlet", but I'm not sure –

"If 'tis done, 'tis best 'twere done quickly."



By way of a benchmark, the \$9,000 cost for this piece of land comes out to roughly \$0.60 per square meter. Land around our way is being sold to “Norte Americanos” for \$10 and \$20 a square meter. We’re quite close to the beach here, and this land for the clinic is in the interior. Even so, Timoteo was given a very good price.

A GOODSEARCH REPORT

Last December, we received a check from GoodSearch for \$38.62. That means that you used GoodSearch 3,862 times in 2007. Thank You!

You can help us by choosing GoodSearch as *your* Internet search engine and naming El Puente – The Bridge as the charity you’re supporting. [Go to their page on our website to learn more.](#)

GoodSearch has also created a service named "GoodShop", in which 41 brand name stores – names you'll recognize – let you purchase goods online, and donate between 0.5% and 35% of the purchase price to El Puente. To see the brand names, [go to the Goodshop web page by clicking here](#).

And Thank You for your support!

YOU CAN HELP!

There are several ways you can help.

- **Send this email to people you know** who might also enjoy it.
- **Post a message about us on social networking sites or discussion boards** dealing with adventure, travel, volunteering, education, microlending, human services, eliminating poverty, or other humanitarian activities.
- **Send us the names of your local newspapers**, together with an editor's name and email address. We'll add the information to our growing Press Release File.

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

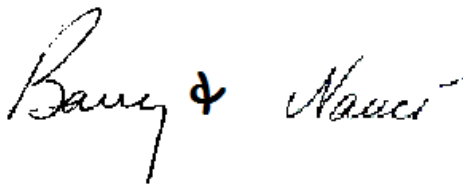
The Questionnaire: We've gotten some feedback from our [questionnaire](#) asking for your opinion, and appreciate the constructive comments we've received so far. We'll leave it up for the rest of the month, and share comments we received in our next newsletter. Thank you for your input!

Thank you for your support!

Well,

...djmiache

Enjoy!



IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE SEEING THE PICTURES

...go to www.elpuente-thebridge.org/weekly and download the file with the date of this issue.

Go to The **Bridge Website** [CLICK HERE](#)

Go to The **Bridge Online Store** [CLICK HERE](#)

Download a **Powerpoint presentation** [CLICK HERE](#)

Download **brochures in Spanish or English** [CLICK HERE](#)

Go to the **newsletter archive** [CLICK HERE](#)

See some **Video clips** showing activities at The Bridge [CLICK HERE](#)

We Value Your Opinion - Give us your feedback [CLICK HERE](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: barrystevens@earthlink.net

Our toll-free number from the US is 1-866-462-7585