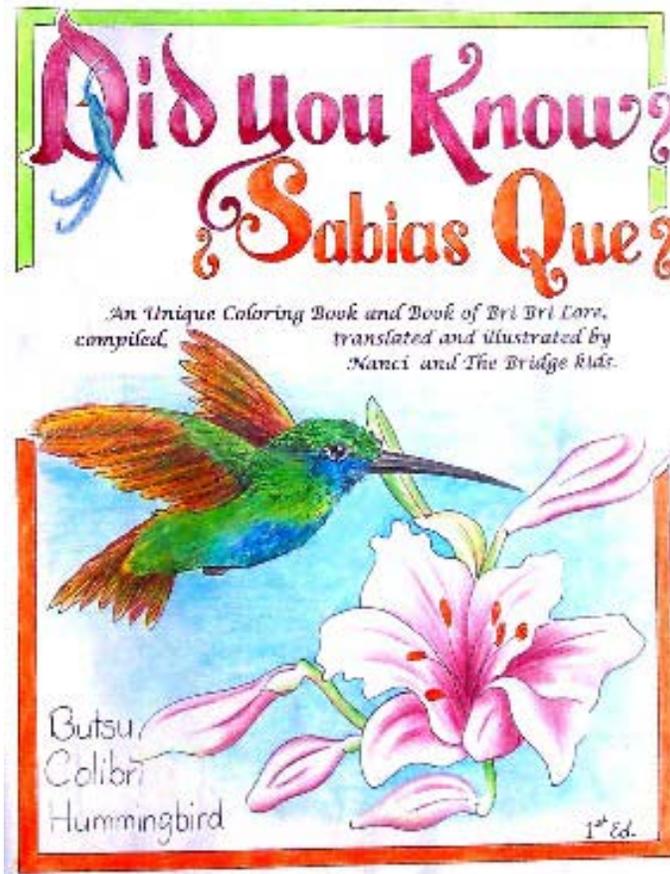


Thursday, June 05, 2008

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Here's the cover of a "Bridge Coloring Book", being assembled by Nanci and The Bridge Kids... more on this great project below.

RECENT NEWS

Ronualdo has "adventures" with medicine men, and even so, we finally got his "Imp" back. Nanci and the kids are assembling a Color-Full Book – a coloring book filled with animal images, the names of the animals in three languages, and "old sayings" and bits of knowledge from Bribri lore. A Father's Day pitch for GoodShop. News of a \$1,000 a month donation.

RONUALDO AND THE MEDICINE MEN

By Nanci Stevens

It was about as the year was coming to a close when the Solano Vargas family moved into the area. Fresh out of the interior, they weren't yet familiar with the Spanish language and as such unable to communicate. The four boys, Dani 14, Erick 12, Erasmo 10, and Ronualdo 9 years old began to make up their own language. At first I thought they were trying to mimic English, it sounded so close, then I realized that their gibberish was a great and successful attempt to level the playing field. So Barry and I gibbered back in kind, earning us instant acceptance into their new and totally foreign world. "Ba stabba da o mono oi sabanna." One of them would say to me and I'd offer back, "weeda ho ho caba daya!" And off we'd go learning more about each other than if one of us had had a superior grasp of the language. Now that they speak Spanish, I kind of miss the early, easy silly days.

The boys are relatives to the Vargas family, their mother is sister to Abel, Mayra's still troubled husband. I was relieved to note that this group seemed to be caring and functional if not schooled. Nobody in the family had ever had any formal education, so I began my campaign to get the little Indian boys enrolled in 1st grade when it began again in February.

Kids all over the world have different advantages and disadvantages. My granddaughter in Tennessee has been playing computer games since she was two. Like most American kids, she's had coloring books, paints, story books and all sorts of learning tools preparing her wonderfully for a grand entrance

when she starts her formal education at five. These Boys, however, had never even held a pencil or a crayon, never even seen a book or any written language. They were going to start in school in just three months to study totally foreign topics in a language they were just now beginning to use. The sun goes down here at five thirty year around. They would be doing their homework by candle light. We ask a lot from these children.

The public school in Puerto Viejo is purported to be the worst in Costa Rica, but I have hopes that with at least a couple of years under their belts and maybe some tutoring at the Bridge, our kids can learn enough reading and math skills to keep them from being too badly taken advantage of .

The day I introduced Elda to Don Candido, our BriBri medicine man, she had brought Ronualdo down from the mountains to find help for a chest cold he had developed. Of the two of them, the great healer himself seemed to be in the greater crisis. He was clearly distraught. Apparently, the farm land where he has been growing his miracle pharmacopoeia of plants belongs to a neighbor Tica woman. She'd just put the property up for sale and was stubbornly refusing him access to it unless he could cough up her \$48,000 asking price. Sick with grief, he told us he was no longer able to take anymore patients because the land was off limits to him. Pulling from his available stores, he brewed Ronualdo up a tea, and teary with disbelief we went on our way.

A few days later, Elda brought her child back to me. Even with Candido's tea, Ronualdo hadn't been able to shake the cold. With no other option open to her, Elda had to learn the ways of the clinic. I took her for her first run through, early that morning around seven. Then after seeing her through the registration process, I left, leaving her instructions on how and where to use the bus back home. It appears that after they waited until nearly closing time, Ronualdo got a quick checking over and was sent away untreated.

The next time she brought him to me, another three days had passed. It was late in the evening and Ronualdo was sicker than ever. Now he was having trouble breathing. This time, too, he was joined with his three older brothers and their father, all suffering from one stage or another of chest cold. The clinic put the little kid on oxygen for several hours until nearly morning and then transferred him and his mom to the hospital in Limón an hour and a half away. Pneumonia. "Now," I thought, "At last he's in good hands." Then armed with pharmaceuticals for the rest of the family, we headed home.

I didn't expect to hear from Ronualdo and his mom for a few days, so I was surprised in after just two, that they were back. He hadn't been treated at the hospital. At first chance, they had put him back in another ambulance and sent him home. So back again we went. This time the doctor on call at the clinic was Dr. Brown, a very capable and delightful man with a smile and bedside manners I've never seen elsewhere. After some shouting and very un-Brown-like language to someone on the phone, Dr. Brown admitted that the staff at the hospital, some who didn't like Indigenous people, had let him go. As once again, we watched the ambulance drive away, I sincerely hoped that our seriously sick little boy would finally get treated well this time. I made it up to Limón once during the ten days or so that Ronualdo was being kept. Elda had had no money or clean clothes for days. A mother gets a chair beside her child's bed.

After a week or so I suspected she might appreciate a change of undies. I also picked out a couple of coloring books and a stuffed teddy bear for our sick little kid.

I could hear him crying from a very long ways off a week or so later when his mom brought him yet again to me. The funny little imp I once knew was gone. In his place this child's face held the look of great fatigue and pain after the long and arduous battle that they seemed to be losing. His body was now stiff as rigor mortis, swollen in places twice his normal size, with a case of hives surrounding his body. Terrible reactions to foreign and poisonous medicine. I'd never seen a child so sad. It was time to try Candido again.

It took about a month after Don Candido snuck back onto the old lady's farm for Ronualdo to become his old self again. The good doctor had gathered wonderful teas and body washes, and slowly the swelling began to taper off, until finally rupturing from a quarter sized hole on his left thigh, the foul poisons and antibiotics of western medicine.

And what happened to the greedy old lady? Well, during her own land investigation, it was discovered that 'her' land was indigenous property and since she wasn't indigenous, she was paid \$7000 and told she had to leave. Candido is back in business.

Ronualdo's father hired a one-eyed BriBri shaman to lift the family hex that he believes has made them sick. It seems that some of the Vargas Vargas are feuding with the Solano Vargas for I don't know what and hexes are not uncommon down here.



Here's Ronualdo, doing his "Imp" look over his shoulder as he works with Nanci and volunteer Nicki Goh.

Ronualdo's imp is back. He's lost a lot of momentum in school, so we checked him back into first grade again this year. We won't hold that against him, though.

A COLOR-FULL BOOK

Nanci and the Bridge Kids – the group that hangs around here a lot – have been working on drawing pages for a coloring book. The images are of jungle animals, and the name of the animal is presented in Bribri, Spanish, and English. On the cover, our lead picture for this issue, the hummingbird is shown, with its Spanish name – colibri – and its Bribri name – butsu. (Please don't ask me to pronounce it in Bribri.)

Each page also contains a tidbit from Bribri lore – such as "Did you know that Sibö said that 'you must let the birds eat fruit first, then you may eat?' " (Sibö is the Bribri name for God).

You'll see more of this as it progresses.

When completed, this will be available through the online publishing website LULU.COM. Cash raised by its sale, like all other product revenues of The Bridge, is put into Bridge programs.

AND NOW – AN UNABASHED COMMERCIAL FOR GOODSEARCH AND GOODSHOP

FATHER'S DAY IS COMING –

Get him something – shop online, save time, and help The Bridge!

GoodShop Father's Day Deals

The stores at [GoodShop](#) have some great ideas for dad!

- Check out Dick's Sporting Goods for some new golf and sports equipment.
- Get dad a new set of tools at Sears.
- Find all of dad's barbeque needs at Amazon!

And don't forget to book all of your summer travel through our GoodShop partners including Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, Budget Rent-A-Car, Hotels.com, Carnival Cruise Lines and more!

Just one extra click can support The Bridge!

Would you make one extra click to help The Bridge? Just one extra click to help put kids in school, and ensure that their families have nutritious meals?

More than 700 name-brand stores are now participating in GoodShop.com and will donate to up to 30% of each purchase to The Bridge when you shop online.

The next time you buy a new pair of shoes, book, computer, birthday present, flowers, plane ticket or just about anything else, go to GoodShop.com and then click over to your favorite store.

Yes, it's that easy!

Just one extra click can change lives.

Will you GoodShop for The Bridge?

PS. And don't forget to use GoodSearch.com the next time you search the Internet. This Yahoo-powered search engine donates about a penny to The Bridge each time you search!

If you've not used Goodsearch or Goodshop before, [CLICK HERE](#) to learn how to get started.

AND NOW, WE RETURN TO OUR REGULAR NEWSLETTER!

OUR NEW ADDRESS

We actually have a PO Box address now – MUCH easier than the old one.

Barry and/or Nanci Stevens
APDO 69-7304
Puerto Viejo de Talamanca
Costa Rica

YAY!

YOU CAN HELP US!

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.

DONOR NOTES

We say "Thank You!" again to our regular donors, who faithfully provide a monthly donation to help keep us going! THANK YOU!

You'll shortly be getting a report and update on our financial position. We're pleased that Barry's Social Security has just kicked in, and the \$1,050 a month he receives is being donated to cover just about 50% of our operating budget. Thank you God!

This means that 100% of your donations are now going to support the people who come to The Bridge through the Food, School, and Microloan programs, while we cover the administrative overhead, usually expected to be about 50% in most credible charity organizations.

As you'll see in the next Report, we are relying on receiving just over \$1,000 in donations each month.

Here we grow!

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

**We're grateful at the continuing support we have been getting.
You all are allowing us to continue to serve!**

NOW's a GREAT time to contribute.

Donate online by [clicking here](#), where you can use a **credit card** or an **E-Check**.

Or, mail a check made out to "El Puente" with "**Member 29409704**" in the Memo Field
to

USE Credit Union, 8697 La Mesa Blvd, La Mesa, CA 91941

Deductions are tax-deductible

(And please drop us an email letting us know you've done it
so we can say a proper "Thank You!")

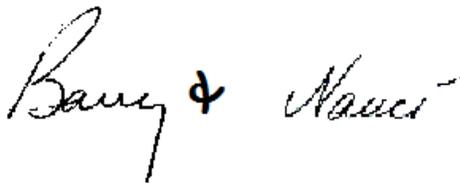
Do it NOW! You'll be glad you did!

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.

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

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

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

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