



August 18, 2010
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What happens when the INA class is being taught outside and there's a torrential tropical downpour, sending an inch or so of water gushing through the yard? The class moves onto our porch, as in this foto from last week. Boy, did it rain!

"SO, WHAT'S GOIN' ON DOWN THERE?"

You may have noticed that we didn't send out a July newsletter. Here's some news on what's kept us really hopping down here. This is a "video-heavy" issue. There's a link to a video of Mike & Joanna Bresnan, talking about their brilliant "Children Feeding Children Program. You'll see a link to another video – of Barry explaining The Bridge programs. You'll get an explanation of what it means to be in a "developing country", like here in Costa Rica. A brief note about Barry and the Dentist – and yes, how that relates to the indigenous experience as they come up against our medical system. Check out the WONDERFUL new coffee-table book on The Bridge (and you oughtta have it!) The Bridge gets a Test Grant, intended to lead to restarting the Microloan Program. Then, a video you can use to create images of beauty in this world, a far cry from what you're seeing on TV and in the newspapers. Quite an issue! Settle back with the beverage of your choice, turn up the volume on your speakers, and enjoy!

A TRIP TO VISIT FRIENDS – AND LEARN ABOUT THEIR PROJECT

We recently took a week away to visit Mike & Joanna Bresnan, owners of the Vista del Valle Hotel. Mike's on our Advisory Board, with dynamic and useful conversations. He and Joanna are working on a "Children Feeding Children" project. In this brilliant concept, children who attend 1,000 schools in Costa Rica – and their parents – are involved in growing food as part of a school farming class. I imagine that the "final exam" consists of picking the vegetables grown and bringing them home to eat. Tens of thousands of families, all over the country, learning to grow their own food through the public education system. Absolutely brilliant!

A "prototype school garden" has been successfully completed near the Vista Del Valle. The Ministry of Education has already sent 42 teachers to be trained, and 42 more will be trained every other month as the project moves ahead. It's in motion!

We'd sure like to see this kind of project down here, both in Puerto and at The Bridge with families from town and la montaña (on the mountain), where more than half the population living under the World Bank definition of poverty – less than \$2 a day family income. There are about 11,500 indigenous Bribri living up on "the mountain". That's a lot of families that could benefit from growing food.

Mike and Joanna can be seen in a video interview for www.earthsayers.tv .Meet them, hear more about the project, and see some fotos. Go to http://www.earthsayers.com/special_collection/Children_Feeding_Children_A_Thousand_School_Gardens_Johanna_and_Mike_Bresnan/12/16896

DENTAL WORK – AND SOME TIME OFF FOR BARRY

We've been blessed with a volunteer Dentist in Tibas, Costa Rica. My first visit to her was during our trip to Vista del Valle. There's quite a bit of work to be done. Guess what? She's offered to work free. If there's any charges due from "the laboratory", she'll do what she's able with them as well, but I'll still have a tab at the lab. She began by pulling out four teeth she can't fix. I was doing OK. Then I got a prescription for a really "kick-butt" antibiotic. I got three days worth, to knock out any infections that might be lying around in the roots of those bad teeth. Since we've been seeing the good curandero, Don Candido, for 7 years, I've not taken any serious medication in a long time. As a result, that "K-B" antibiotic knocked me – and my immune system – for a loop. My body wound up taking temporary possession of the "2-week super-flu-cold" that seemed to be circulating around town. For the first time in my life, I had trouble breathing. A friend of ours with an MD attached to her name said, "it sounds like pneumonia". Regardless of what it was, we of course went to Don Candido who once again whipped up some miracle medicinal magic, and I am happy to say my breath and strength have returned. Yippee!

After a "couple of weeks of down time", You'll find me once again out and about, enjoying full-speed walks through town getting stuff done.

The dentist had no way of knowing I had a "virgin" immune system, and what would likely happen when as she prescribed what she'd been giving to "normal" people for years. This is analogous to what happens to the indigenous children when they first run into our medications. You might remember how Ronualdo reacted after leaving the hospital in Limón. It took about two weeks to get the effects of heavy medication washed through his system so he could get back to normal. I think I may have had a small taste of what he went through. Poor baby.

Now that I'm back up again and getting around, I'm ready to get back up in the dentist chair. Hope I haven't scared her away.

BARRY DOES VIDEO

Also while we were visiting in Vista del Valle, We met an amazing lady named Ruth Ann Barrett. Ruth founded www.earthsayers.tv , a website with a tag line of "Voices Of Sustainability". She masterminded the video of Mike & Joanna. One day while I was sitting in the restaurant, she sat a TV camera in front of me and asked if I would record a description of The Bridge. Never reluctant to talk about The Bridge, I said "yes"!

Tune into that great video by visiting http://www.earthsayers.com/special_collection/El_Puente--The_Bridge_Helping_People_Help_Themselves_Barry_Stevens/12/16898

And as usual, you can help The Bridge by forwarding it on to your friends.

Thank you Ruth Ann!

I LOVE THE SMELL OF CHOCOLATE IN THE MORNING ***The School Program continues!***

Some time ago, a Special Education teacher at the Puerto school told us that Irene might concentrate better in school with "a little something in her tummy" That expanded to "a little something" for Irene, Mauricio, Sandara, and Griselda. Then, expanded further to one or more of those "four little boys on fire". So when there's early class, at six in the morning, you can find us serving hot chocolate, crackers and, if we have them, ripe bananas.

On some mornings, chocolate blends with homework as the Bridge Kids ask for help.

It is working out.

FROM "THIRD WORLD COUNTRY" TO "DEVELOPING NATION"

The word INA uses for "plumbing" is "plomeria". We're told the word for "plumber" in Mexico is "plomero". One of the complaints of Gringos living here is, among other things, "there are no good plumbers in Costa Rica."

This could be the result of the country's recent history in the status of "third world nation", where there is little if any need for plumbing.

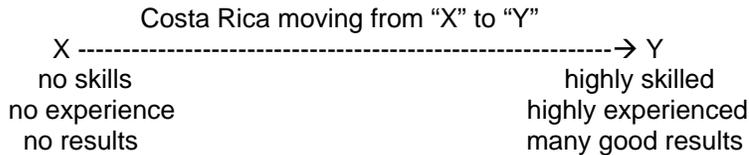
On a broader scale...

What we've been running into here in Costa Rica is a group of people – in whatever profession or trade – struggling to do the best they can without sufficient resources - whether they be money, basic skills, (or what WE would call basic skills), or working experience.

This country just emerged from the status of a "third world country" into the status of a "developing nation."

Our expectations for services, materials, construction, and just about everything else, come from our experience of living in a "highly developed nation."

A visual representation of the situation could look like this:



We have found doctors at the Clinic bending over backwards to produce good results with insufficient resources, inadequate facilities, not enough beds, yet seeming to get the job done anyway.

The lack of good plumbers could be a result of... indoor plumbing not being an issue in a third world country. The same could be true of carpenters, electricians, people who work with concrete, gardeners, housekeepers, whatever.

INA is working to solve the skills problem - bringing as many people as possible from "no skills" to "highly skilled". The solution to that issue is on its way - and is one part of the meaning of a "developing nation". This is "development" in action. And it's particularly visible to me, since they've begun teaching classes at our house - which is the home of The Bridge.

While this growth in a developing nation is going on, we American expatriates arrive from a "highly developed nation", looking for the kind of skills and experience we've been used to "back there". It's pretty easy to get vocal - "there aren't any good _____ (fill in the blank) here", or "anyone says they can do the job just so they can have the job". From an appearances standpoint, that's true.

Then there are the new arrivals who just start asking other expats who also just got here. That can be frustrating. We've chosen instead to get out into the community. Meet the neighbors, and the business owners. Find out who's good from people who have been here, in this environment, at this level of "development".

I found an attorney that way... she is so good that some people in this area refuse to sell a piece of property unless she's handling BOTH ends of the deal, since she's the only one they've found who seems to be able to keep things straight. Her heart is in the right place – she serves us in a number of ways at The Bridge. Her husband, also an attorney, has been to Kenya to build housing for the homeless. Without thinking, I began to hand her name out as a reference. Now she's so busy that it's hard to get in touch with her. She only half-jokingly is grumpy with me for "sending her so much business that now she and her family have to go to Mexico for a few days just to be able to spend some time together." Now I call her first, explain a potential referral, and see if she wants to take it on.

The same kind of thing happens here in all the professions and trades, and will continue to happen until the skills issue is resolved, and enough time has elapsed to allow more "good guys" to grow into the roles of having good skills, good experience and good track records. In the meantime, this "developing nation" is what it is. We all have chosen to move here and build our lives. We will be able to build those lives with the people, resources, and materials that are here now, as they are now. Anything else will produce a great deal of frustration in ALL people involved.

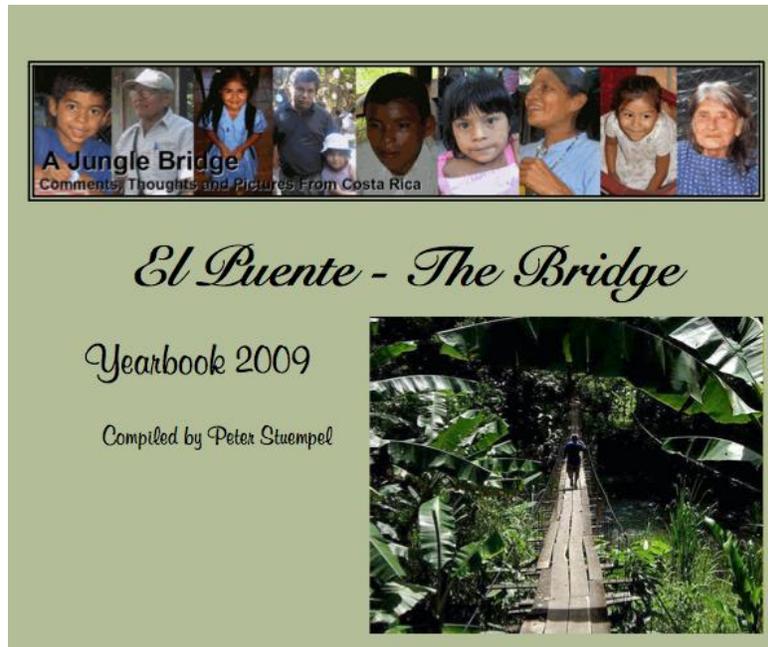
In one case, I trained a man in basic carpentry because I needed to get some work done around here while still working on The Bridge and continuing to write a book. Others who live here may end up having to do similar things.

How long will it take for the growth of a "developing nation" to produce enough skilled and experienced tradespeople to meet the demands of the incoming flow of expats from a "highly developed nation?" I'm sure INA has some kind of projection - that's why they're out teaching classes "in the field"... I'm sure The Bridge isn't the only location. Next time I see the Manager of the Bribri facility, I'll ask him.

In the meantime, and with your help, The Bridge will continue to do what it can to help this process along, and help people who are moving through the process.

A GREAT NEW BOOK FOR THE COFFEE TABLE!

While visiting the Correo this morning, I found a big box waiting for me. When I opened it up, I found an absolute masterpiece of a book titled "El Puente – The Bridge: Yearbook 2009"



This book would sit proudly on your coffee table, right next to a National Geographic foto book on the Grand Canyon. Quality four-color printing, quality cover, quality paper and binding, it's just gorgeous!

Peter Stuempel prepared the work, using our own online archived files of the El Puente newsletter, and assembled, month-by-month, the top stories from the goings-on here. What a great job, Peter! Thank you!

Having self-published three books myself, I know that four-color printing all interior pages on quality paper is very costly – this is not a cheap paperback book. Looking at the result, I gotta tell you – it's really worth the price!

Peter's pledged \$5 of the profit from each book as a donation to El Puente!

Find out more about this amazing book by visiting its own page on the self-publishing website: <http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/1255451> where you can preview and purchase it for a place of honor on your own coffee table! You can proudly show your friends and neighbors what you're involved in supporting!

Thank you again, Peter!

SO WHAT IS A "TEST GRANT", EXACTLY?

"So," said a man-I-hadn't-met-yet named Ken, "if you give us your banking information, we can give you a test grant, so we can see how you spend your money." Or something like that.

Ken is from the Children's Hunger Relief Fund. On looking them up, I found they are responsible for \$48 million a year as donations to programs that help alleviate poverty through "food, education, and microloans". (Does that combination sound familiar?) Their hope was that by providing us with a small grant that would take the pressure off the Food Program temporarily, I could spend more time developing and restarting the Microloan Program.

I sent him the information they requested, and they sent a check for a "test grant" of \$7,294 to our account in California. I'll be sending along a separate detailed report on the grant and expenses against it for those of you who may be interested. The intent of the grant was to pick up the \$1,000-a-month shortfall in the Food Program budget, allowing us time to work on the Microloan Program.

One of the first things we did with the money was to replace the refrigerator on our porch used to store the weekly supply of vegetables and fruit juice. It was already falling apart, with holes rusting in the exterior, and frequent repairs to the interior and the electric control system.



Here's a shot of the old refrigerator... notice the rust along the bottom? And this was the good side!

It needed defrosting every three days, and failure to do it would lose a week's supply of food. When we bought it six years ago, we were on an "economy binge", buying what's cheapest. This time, we bought a brand name that is very well respected for quality here in Costa Rica. There's more room inside, and it needs no defrosting! The plastic and electrical parts on the inside are tougher, requiring less repairs. And, if I read the stick-on papers correctly, it should use less energy than the old one, making it cheaper to run!

One thing that comes to mind – the sooner we can permanently reduce that \$1,000-a-month shortfall in our operating budget, the more cash will be left over from the Test Grant to begin working on the Microloan Program even before applying for additional funding!

Further – there's breaking news! We may have found the Microloan Manager! He brought up the idea himself, and he's an experienced professional in the area. When and if the time is right, we'll introduce him to you.

This would be a great opportunity and a wonderful time for you to make a Monthly Pledge! With the shortfall taken care of, we can indeed focus our energies – and what's left from the Test Grant – on the Microloan Program.

You'll see more about this opportunity in the **Donor Notes** section below.

SEE THE BEAUTY – KNOW THE BEST

The Gulf oil spill threw the world for a loop. Millions of people saw the potential for disaster. News fotos circulated showing the extent of the damage. Watching all those nasty news fotos and envisioning the worst is not in the best interest of this planet and all its inhabitants. It's quite fascinating to predict the end of the world, and with the power of our collective intent, make no mistake – we can bring it about.

From the viewpoint of our Science of Mind community, it was time to begin visualization of the perfect result. In several global conference calls which had thousands of participants, the call's leaders envisioned a successfully plugged well, clean beaches, clean happy wildlife playing along the shore and in the water. Jubilant workers celebrating the successful sealing of the well. We know from personal experience that what you focus on is what you get.

We'd like to support that different course, envisioned in those conference calls – know the best. See the preservation of the beautiful world we live in. Focus on those images.

One of you subscribers sent us a link to a web page called, simply enough, "Magnificent". Taken from a PBS program in 2007, I think, a songwriter set it to a beautiful piece of music. The visuals and the music together show creation – the Beauty which surrounds us on this planet. I offer this piece as another set of images we can focus on.

Watch the video – enjoy the beauty of the images and the music. Focus on that beauty – the flowers, birds, fish, wildlife, the sun, the "amber fields of grain". And just enjoy.

Are there things to be done? Actions to take? Messes to clean up? Of COURSE there are. But focus on the beauty while you're cleaning up the mess. Whatever you focus on, you get more of. Focus on the beautiful result, not on the mess.

Curious? Go here, relax, listen, and watch. <http://www.andiesisle.com/creation/magnificent.html>

VOLUNTEER CORNER

We have been blessed with two more volunteers. Say hello to...



Claudia Michelberger and Barbara Faltynek

Claudia comes to us from Germany, while Barbara hails from Austria. They have been jumping in with both feet, doing everything from serving soup, juice, and coffee, to washing dishes, to getting the place decorated for Mother's Day.

Their help is very much appreciated!

Thank you, ladies!

DONOR NOTES

Now is a PERFECT time for you to jump in with a monthly pledge. We already have 14 Monthly Pledgers with \$400 a month committed. All we need now is another \$600 a month!

To make a monthly pledge, [CLICK HERE](#)

The sooner we get that done, the sooner we can really get into building the Microloan Program, preserving some of the cash in the Test Grant to help it along!

DO IT NOW!
[CLICK HERE](#)

RANDOM BITS

Remember Nicki Gohs Skydiving? A volunteer from England, Nicki Goh, went back home to England and jumped out of a "perfectly good airplane" as a fund-raiser for El Puente. In the newsletter dated September 16, 2008, I reported the event, and noted that the video of the jump appeared to have been taken off YouTube. Yesterday, I clicked on the URL for that video, and it appears to have been made available again! So - to see the video of Nicki Goh jumping out of a perfectly good airplane, [CLICK HERE](#) – And Thank You again Nicki!

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 relevant web sites or discussion boards.**

- Look at our list of critically needed supplies – [click on this link to get to the “What Can I Bring?” page on our website.](#)

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Thank You for the continuing support we have been getting.
You all are allowing us to continue to serve!

NOW's a GREAT time to contribute.

Make a **Monthly Pledge** by [clicking here.](#)

Make an **Immediate Donation** by [clicking here](#),
and donate online using PayPal, or mail a check.

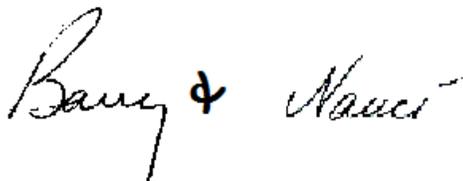
Do it NOW! You'll be glad you did!

Thank you for your support!

Well,

...djmiache

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry & Nancy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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 Blog** -"Angels With Their Skins On" by [CLICKING HERE](#)

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

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

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

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

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