

Celebrating
50
 Years



THE **TICO** TIMES

EDITORIAL

This is the TICO TIMES.
 It's out.
 We hope that it will come out again next week and each Friday, thereafter. Since this newspaper has no subsidies, expenses must be met from subscriptions and advertising.
 At the same time, it is a non-profit organization. There are no salaried employees. It was begun in order that young people interested in journalism could receive practical, on-the-job training, and, in so doing, to provide the English-speaking public of Costa Rica with a newspaper of special interest to the American and British colonies and our Costa Rican friends who know, or who are learning, English.
 Thus, all profits (if any) will be used to expand the paper, to bring our readers more news, more pictures and more features.
 Staff positions are open. Any young person who knows English and who is interested in learning reporting, news writing, news photography, makeup or advertising, is invited to come aboard.
 From our readers, we shall welcome criticisms, suggestions, news, letters, recipes and original contributions.
 We hope that you find The TICO TIMES "good reading"

How It Began: As a Way to Learn Journalism

The Tico Times began after a group of Lincoln School seniors approached veteran U.S. newswoman Elisabeth (Betty) Dyer and asked her to teach them something about journalism. She told them, "The best way to learn about journalism is to put out a paper." So on May 18, 1956, The Tico Times was born.

The newsstand price was ₡1, and would remain the same until the '80s. The first staffers were Isabel Moncy, Eleanor Hamer, Sidney Newcomb, Kenneth McCormack, James Cook and Gretchen Horn. The first advertisers included Schmidt's Bakery (which was to become the longest-running advertiser in the history of the paper), the Gran Hotel Costa Rica, La Gran Vía grocery store, La Casa Dinamarca gift shop, Holtermann & Pechtel paint distributors, Chez Marcel restaurant and Pan American World Airways, which boasted "Fastest service to Miami" in its DC-6 planes.

The first edition of the all-volunteer, non-profit effort was only 8 pages, but it had stories about plans to turn Costa Rica into an oil exporter and the Mediterranean Fruit Fly threatening local crops, congratulatory statements from the U.S. and British envoys, community news, sports and photos.

Printed on letterpress at Imprenta Borrásé, The Tico Times was eagerly welcomed by the expat community, at that time composed mostly of pioneer settlers, diplomats and employees of the Compañía Bananera (United Fruit Co.) and subsidiaries of foreign oil companies and airlines.

It Was a Hit

Within a month, the paper was up to 12 pages and had increased its volunteer staff by two talented community members, Shirley Harris (who was a TT mainstay until her death in 2002) and Florence Lloyd.

"Your overwhelming acceptance of THE TICO TIMES is the most encouraging thing that ever happened to a new paper," reads the Editorial on June 15, 1956. "Frankly, we are awed by the number of unsolicited subscriptions we are receiving.

"We should like to reciprocate by publishing a bigger paper with more news, more pictures and more features. And we can do it with your cooperation.

"Since we do not have a large enough staff to cover news and also solicit advertising, you, our readers, can help by patronizing our advertisers and, especially, by telling



Solanov | Tico Times

First Staff at Work: Betty (at right), Eleanor Hamer (left) and Shirley Harris read proof at Imprenta Borrásé, while unidentified printshop worker waits.

them that you are interested in reading their advertisements. Considering that, as a brand-new enterprise we are something like a talking dog, they have been most generous and cooperative.

"Meanwhile, we've acquired a new office. It's in the new Costa Rica Press Club building, 25 varas east of the National Theater. What's more, we have our own Apartado. It's No. 4632. Just the place for subscriptions, classified ads, suggestions, criticisms and contributions.

"It's always 'open house' in the office. Drop in and see us.

"We'll even be happy to put you to work."

Off and Running

The community responded enthusiastically, and the TT was off and running. Rex Benson, a retired U.S. Navy man, writer and naturalist, joined the staff, spinning colorful yarns in his popular column, "Of Tropic Trails and Jungle Tales" under his magazine pen name of Ben Burnett and writing human-interest stories. Also known as the "Old Timer" and the "Trail Hitter," Ben also helped

The Tico Times become the first newspaper in Costa Rica – and one of the few in the world – to call attention to the environment, writing about the rainforest and endangered sea turtles years before such topics became popular. Another early environmentalist was plant expert Harry Haines, who wrote a long-running column on local flora.

During its first year, The Tico Times covered the construction of El Coco International Airport (later to be re-named Juan Santamaría); the demolition of the old Casa Presidencial, built between 1815 and 1825, near San Jose's Central Park; and the arrival of Costa Rica's millionth citizen, Elver Núñez Artavia.

A new law protecting the local shoe industry sparked panic among expats and tourists when it was announced that foreign-made shoes would be confiscated by Customs. The Tourism Institute later clarified that "Tourists can bring as many pairs of shoes into Costa Rica as they like." Added the TT: "At the present time about 1500 tourists a month enter Costa Rica. Principally they are from the U.S.A. and the Canal Zone, though

Nicaraguans are frequent visitors and there are a steady few from Curacao."

Another story, titled "TV May Be Here Soon," reported that "a government station here plans to start two hours of evening telecasts sometime this year", and an ad for La Gran Vía on the same page assured readers that "You Don't Need Television... To Enjoy Our Frozen TV DINNERS!"

Community news was a vital part of the TT since the beginning. In 1956 The Little Theatre Group, the Women's Club of Costa Rica and the Costa Rican-North American Cultural Center ("Centro Cultural") were well covered, along with the American Bowling League. That year too, Great Britain's Legation in Costa Rica was upgraded to Embassy.

By the end of the first year, The Tico Times was running 16 pages. A box on Page 1 of the last edition of the year said:

"CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY
Because

The Linotype shop will be closed
The Print shop will be closed
The editors need a vacation."

A Community Paper In the World

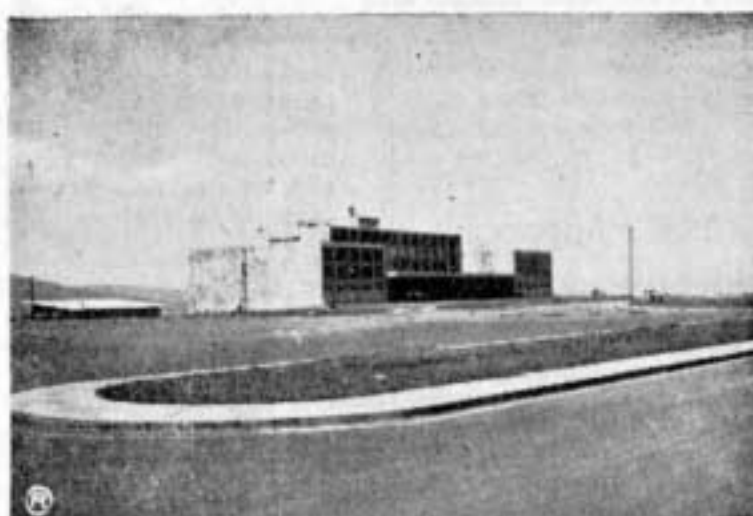
Because world news in English was hard to come by here in the '50s, the TT tried to help fill the gap by reprinting small funny news items collected from foreign papers and magazines, as well as enlisting the help of old newspaper friends in other countries. They were delighted to oblige, and The Tico Times ran periodic dispatches from, among many others, New York Times Latin America correspondent Paul Kennedy, George Chaplin, editor of The New Orleans Item, and New York Latin America expert Sally Sheppard.

Richard Dyer wrote an unsigned weekly column, "Latin American Roundup", on political developments in the hemisphere, and also contributed regular reports on U.S. sports, gleaned mostly from Armed Forces Radio. Columns such as "Strictly Feminine," which covered fashion trends in the Big World, were also popular.

Car Wars

Other well-read columns and features
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El Coco to be Among Best in Latin America



**El Coco
International
Airport goes up
near Alajuela;
now it's the
Juan Santamaría
International
Airport.**



MONTEVERDE HOME! — John and Doris Campbell and their three children in front of their temporary house at Quaker Colony. (Tico Times Photo).



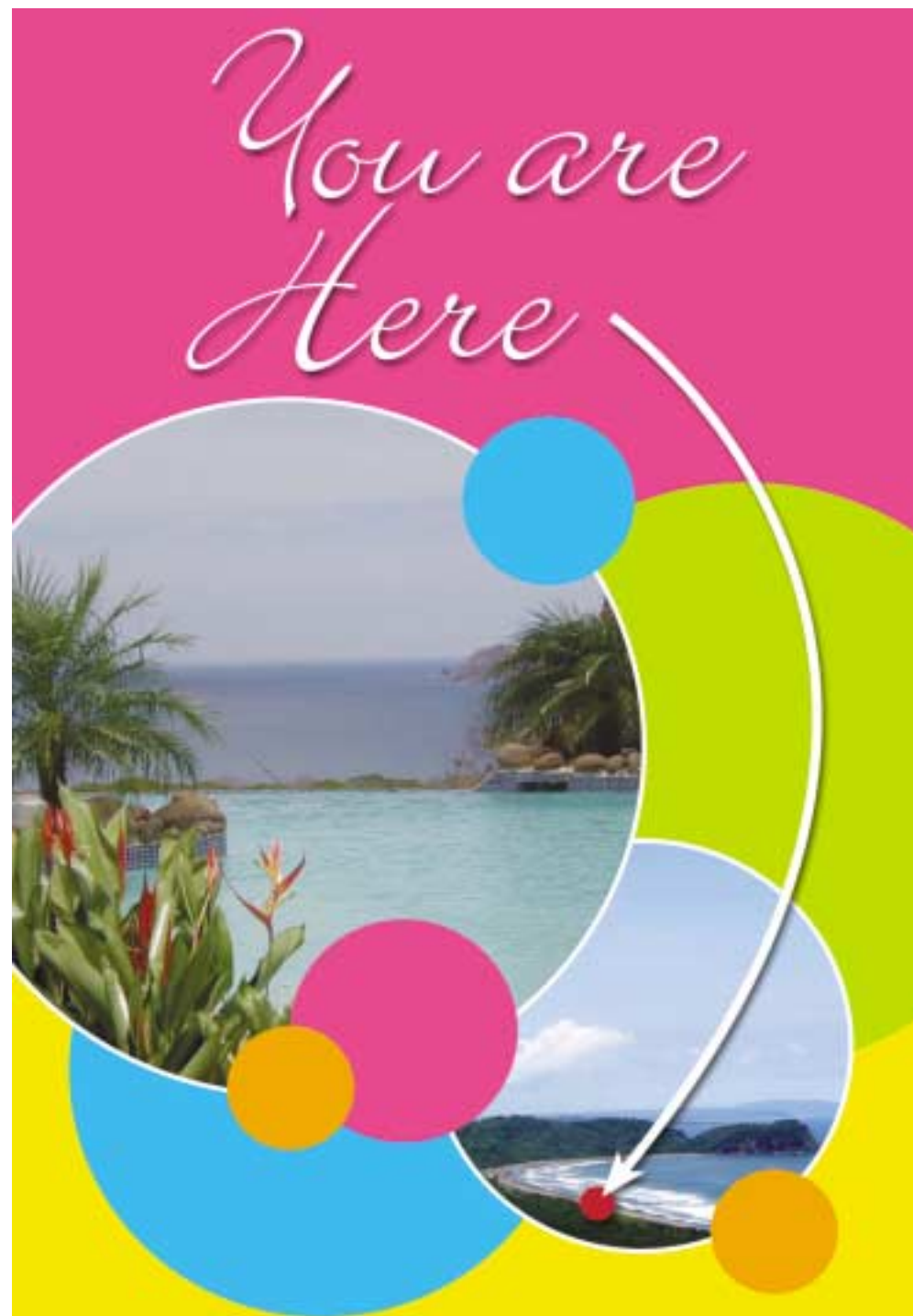
Tico Times Photo

Oxcarts met planes in rural Costa Rica in the '50s.

THE TICO TIMES

Nº 65 SAN JOSE — COSTA RICA FRIDAY, SEPT. 27, 1957

SUBLEMINAL PHOTOGRAPH... What Do YOU See In It?
(Story on page 2)



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LES



MERCEDES



Costa Rica's best-loved bus, La Cazadora signals for a turn on Cartago-San José highway.—(Tico Times Photo by Burneo)
(Story on page 2)



LAST OF THE OAKS! Giants of Costa Rica's cloud forests which are being destroyed to make way for crops "of doubtful value".

Volunteer Effort Drew Talent from All Over

◀ Page S2

included "Lady Talk", which offered recipes and entertainment tips in English and Spanish, "Your Child's Health," by local pediatrician Miguel Ortiz, and a column on cars by auto enthusiasts Gerry Waller of Union Oil Co. and Al Wallace of the U.S. Embassy.

Their column led to a hilarious dispute over the relative merits of the Hillman Minx and the Volkswagen Beetle which dominated the headlines and "Letters" column for several weeks, culminating in a challenge by the local VW rep, Roderick Naumann, to a race to the top of Irazú Volcano, "Winner to take both cars, \$10,000 in cash and five cases of Scotch." To the disappointment of all, the challenge was turned down by Hillman-Minx rep Clem Lacle, who said the Minx was "not a racing car, but a comfortable family car."

Highway Reports

Travelogues were popular TT fare, and the paper ran frequent reports from travelers on the latest conditions on the still-unfinished Pan American Highway (known today as the Inter-American Highway). The best-read and longest-running travel story was "Two Wheels and a Shoestring," a two-year account by U.S. bicyclists Inez and Freddy Boler of their adventures biking from California to Tierra del Fuego.

In 1960, The Tico Times explored "the vibrant new world that has opened up in the mountains of southern Costa Rica during the last decade... now reachable by ordinary land transportation from San José for the first time in history." The story noted that south of San Isidro de El General, 39 rivers still needed to be forded - some by raft.

Pioneers, Vanishing Oaks And Culture Shock

In 1957, The Tico Times interviewed some of the 65 Hungarian refugees who had fled their country following the aborted uprising there. The paper also ran a series on the U.S. Quaker pioneers who were seeking peace in the cloud forests of Monteverde and a story on homesteaders Darrell and Maria Cole, living

in the jungle of Southern Costa Rica.

It also reported that "The famous steam engines of the Northern Railway, which have huffed for half a century on the rough haul up from (the Atlantic port city) Limón to San José, are scheduled to disappear within a month, victims of the less glamorous but more practical diesels." And it urged readers to visit the giant oaks "that compare in stature to the Redwoods... four, five, six, seven and eight feet in diameter, towering into the heavens" in the cloud forests south of the old capital, Cartago, "now or never... because they are being wasted, destroyed, burned up" for charcoal.

Health concerns covered in the '50s included polio, rabies and "gastro," a dysentery disease responsible for the deaths of many children.

A series on culture shock by Brazilian anthropologist Dr. Kalervo Oberg introduced the then-novel concept to many foreigners suffering from it.

Costa Rican officials protested a story that appeared in the U.S. magazine "Male", purportedly describing the harrowing experiences of a Pan American Highway construction crew in the Costa Rican jungles. The article described "screaming howling" Indian tribes who attacked the crew, which then retaliated, invading a village of 400 natives and killing the chief and a large number of tribesmen. "Both Costa Rican authorities and Inter-American Highway officials declared that the account was fictitious," the TT reported, adding that the photo accompanying the story had been taken in South Africa.

A Happy Bus, a Subliminal Photo and Sputnik

The Tico Times ran its first interview with "Cazadora", Costa Rica's best-loved bus. The human vehicle, whose real name was Cristobal Garro, was famous throughout Costa Rica for making the round trip between San José and Cartago - 44 kilometers - on bare feet every day, "except when it is laid up for repairs or makes a charter trip to Irazú." Equipped with license plate, tail light, rear-view mirror, ashtray, horn and gear shift, Cazadora plied the highways with unfailing cheer, always ready to aid a fellow vehicle in

distress. (The TT revisited the happy bus twice more, once in the '70s and once in the '90s, a few months before his death, and found him paunchier but still smiling and planning to expand his service.)

On Sept. 27, 1957, The Tico Times became the first newspaper in Costa Rica and very likely the world to publish a "subliminal photograph" on its front page, asking readers what they saw in it. And radio enthusiast Ted Westlake wrote a personal report on tuning in to the "beeps" from Sputnik as the world's first space satellite passed over Costa Rica.

A Paper with Heart

From the very beginning, the TT found it impossible to resist the chance to publicize worthy causes. Stories urged readers to lend a hand to a variety of programs, including the "March of Homes", an initiative by local businessmen to provide decent homes for families living in shacks; a drive to supply toys and visitors for poor children stricken by polio who were languishing in local hospitals; and a campaign to build a playground for the children of parents suffering from leprosy. As they have ever since, readers came through

with generous help.

How It Began Again

The Tico Times suspended publication in March, 1960 when the Dyer family moved to Santiago, Chile, where Dick had taken a two-year job as public relations director for Braden Copper Co., a subsidiary of the U.S. copper giant Kennecott. When they returned to Costa Rica, Dick realized a lifelong dream of founding his own print shop, building Artes Gráficas de Centroamérica into a thriving operation that imported the country's first web offset newspaper press. The plan was to resume publication of The Tico Times, but Betty's health didn't permit it.

Following Betty's death in 1971 and daughter Dery's return to Costa Rica after graduating from college in the U.S., The Tico Times finally was reborn on Feb. 4, 1972. This time it hoped to become a profit-making enterprise (although it took years for this dream to come true). But it was essentially the same Tico Times, with many of its original collaborators, some of its original advertisers and many of its original loyal readers. Even its Apartado was the same.

And once again, it was a hit. ■



Last of the Steam Engines: Train to Limón.

The  '50s

Paper Covered Whole Country – and Beyond



Tico Times Photo



Tico Times Photo

Travel Stories Were Popular: Above, the biking Bolers; at left, a common sight in the countryside.

Patronize our advertisers. They are friendly and cooperative.



Tico Times Photo



View of the former Casa Presidencial, near Central Park.

Tico Times Photo

EDITORIAL
Next week, 12 pages.

The Tico Times is your paper —published by volunteers as a community service, on a non-profit basis. If you would like to play newspaper, call 7044. (We need an advertising director, business manager, society editor, reporters, and geniuses in any field. Part-time. (You still can play Bridge).

Good Works: 'March of Homes' drive demolished slums, replaced them with decent housing.

Tico Times is Proof: No Such Thing as an 'Ex-Journalist'

By Dery Dyer
Tico Times Staff

Richard and Elisabeth Dyer were living proof that there is no such thing as an ex-newspaperman (or woman).

For that matter, The Tico Times is, too. The paper was founded, and later revived, by "former" journalists who simply couldn't stay away from the business they loved.

When students from Lincoln School approached Betty (as she was known to her friends) about teaching them something about journalism, she had been on the sidelines for a number of years. She had left a flourishing career in New York to marry Richard (Dick) and accompany him to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he was bureau chief for International News Service (INS) and King Features syndicate. Daughter Dery was born there, and by the time the family moved to Costa Rica in 1951, Betty had become a full-time mom and hostess, helping Dick in his new job as the United Fruit Company's public relations director for Central America.

Because of Dick's job, the Dyers hosted a steady stream of correspondents from all the major U.S. and Latin American papers, most of whom were friends from their journalism days, and they stayed in close contact with the news world. But they missed the day-to-day excitement of the "news biz".

So when an excuse to start a paper presented itself, both thought it was a great idea. Betty loved being back in the saddle, and when not traveling around the isthmus and the country for the *Bananera*, Dick contributed articles on sports, Latin American politics and travel.

Curiously enough, both got into journalism by chance. Betty was born in Carson City, Nevada and grew up in San Francisco, California. As a freshman English major at the University of California at Berkeley, she got in the wrong line (she thought she was signing up for the drama club) and ended up trying out for the *Daily Californian*. She got hooked on newspapering, eventually becoming the paper's Women's Editor.

After graduation, under the byline of Elisabeth Townsend, she worked on the *Berkeley Gazette* and the *Oakland Post-*



The Beginning of How it Began: Betty, Dick as young journalists in the United States.

Enquirer, where Dick was a colleague. Both were early organizers of the American Newspaper Guild, and her union work took Betty across the United States.

She ended up in New York, where she became the city's "first woman rewrite man" for *The New York Post* and assistant city editor of the newspaper *PM*. She also authored a children's book, "Johnny and His Wonderful Bed", which was published by Stephen Daye and opens (of course) with Johnny trying to tell his story to reporters.

At a time when women journalists tended to cover society events and "soft news", Betty made a name for herself as a gutsy reporter, covering such traditionally male beats as crime, labor and politics. Among her big success stories was her coverage for *The Post* of

the mysterious murder of U.S.-born British multimillionaire baronet Sir Harry Oakes in his palatial villa in the Bahamas in 1943. Her dispatches were so well-read that she was asked to stay in Nassau for weeks and cover the story for many other publications, including *Time* magazine.

Dick, a native of San Francisco, spent part of his childhood in Mexico, where he fell in love with Latin America. He graduated from Stanford University with a degree in mechanical engineering, did graduate work in Latin American history at the University of California at Berkeley, and got into journalism after the diesel engine company that had offered him a job when he graduated fell on hard times during the Depression.

After jobs on various Bay Area papers,

Dick worked his way up to news editor of the *Oakland Post-Enquirer*. Then he signed on as assistant navigator and photographer with a Uruguayan crew that was sailing an old San Francisco Bay ferryboat to Montevideo. He covered this adventure for *Life* magazine, after which he traveled and freelanced in Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru and Chile before joining the Associated Press in Buenos Aires. He was later sent to Rio as AP's assistant bureau chief.

When World War II started, Dick became a navigation instructor in the U.S. Army, later serving on the Inter-American Defense Board in Washington, D.C. as Brazilian liaison officer. During a trip to New York, he reconnected with Betty and they were married in 1944. ■



TODAY'S THREE FIRST CITIZENS. ...Doña Karen, First Lady of the Land and Don Pepe, President of Costa Rica, welcome Elver Nuñez Artavia, born in Guanacaste last month, as the Millionth Citizen of the Republic

Tico Times Photo

From Millionth Tico to Millionth Tourist



Fernando Vindas | Tico Times

President Miguel Angel Rodriguez toasts Fay Kruffff, who became Costa Rica's millionth visitor in 2000; at left, the arrival of the millionth Tico was reported in the *TT* in 1956.

The  '70s

The Times They Were A-Changing in C.R.

When The Tico Times resumed publication on Feb. 4, 1972 after a 12-year hiatus, its mission was the same, but its scope was suddenly much bigger. Costa Rica had begun inviting the world in, then wondered whether it was ready for the world.

The tumultuous decade was marked by growing pains as the country grappled with change, most of it imported. From the "invasion" of North American pensionados and U.S. fugitive financier Robert Vesco in the early '70s to the fallout from Nicaragua's Sandinista revolution in 1978-79, Costa Rica found itself at the center of dramas created elsewhere but played out here.

Changes Huge & Tiny

For longtime expat residents as well as Ticos, the times they were a-changin' in ways big and small: the U.S. Embassy announced the end of its mail-holding service for visitors, and the ambassador's residence moved from the Monticello-style mansion it had occupied for decades in the western suburb of Escazú to modern new digs down the road, leaving behind lots of termites and at least one ghost.

The '70s brought the Inter-American Human Rights Court; the University for Peace; the nation's first private university; the National Youth Symphony; the American Chamber of Commerce of Costa Rica (AmCham); the National Stock Market; the "pista" linking San José and the western suburb of Escazú; river rafting (introduced by Costa Rica Expeditions' Michael Kaye); the Río Azul Landfill; Lake Arenal; the country's first home-grown grapes (harvested by the Vidor family from Italy) and apples (grown by self-made U.S. farmer Edward Owen, aka "apple Eddie"); La Sabana Park; the Museum of Costa Rican Art; direct-dial phone service outside the country; the first jumbo jet, welcomed to Juan Santamaría International Airport by ecstatic mobs; English muffins (concocted by retired U.S. product designer Jim Watson) and bagels (created by longtime U.S. resident Angie Theologos); the Braulio Carrillo Highway to the Caribbean port of Limón; the first hotel for the Quaker mountain town of Monteverde; Costa Rica's first video club, for Betamax owners (started by longtime U.S. resident Jim Fendell); the pedestrian walkway on San José's Ave. Central (after a few false starts); and the Culture Plaza (which started out life as the Culture Hole and then the Culture Pool, when it filled with rainwater).

There were losses, some mourned, some not: a \$2 billion project to mine bauxite and refine aluminum in southern Costa Rica was called off following violent protests by student and political groups, and ALCOA's announcement that falling aluminum prices made the project – which was to have included a hydroelectric dam, new highways and a new port – unfeasible. La Gloria, the nation's oldest department store and a generations-old landmark in San José, burned down, but



Jorge Valenciano | Tico Times

Old Ways, New Ways: The world was coming, whether Costa Rica was ready for it or not.

later rebuilt; the Chorotega Tower Hotel, another capital landmark, closed; and the historic Tala Inn became a parking lot. Poás Volcano lost its claim to fame as the world's largest crater after a TT reader disputed the fondly held – and widely repeated – local belief. (The title rightfully belongs to Hawaii's Kilauea Volcano. You read it here first.)

Good PEN, Bad PEN

The influx of foreign retirees eager to take advantage of the incentives offered by Costa Rica's 1968 Pensionado Law brought an unexpected downside: fugitives, scamsters and other "bad apples." Caught in the decade-long backlash against the "Ugly Gringos" were well-meaning pensionados who wanted only to live here in peace and felt unfairly targeted and unwelcome.

A Tico Times investigation in 1972 revealed abuses by Canadian developer George Howarth, who had been trying to turn Playa Flamingo in the northern province of Guanacaste into an exclusive enclave for the rich and famous by prohibiting access to the beach and terrorizing his neighbors in nearby small fishing villages. The TT story was picked up by the daily La Nación, sparking national outrage and eventually, passage of the Maritime Zone Law.

Concern that Costa Rica was losing its land to foreigners prompted Tilarán Bishop Msgr. Román Arrieta – later Archbishop of

San José – and President Daniel Oduber to call for restrictions on the sale of agricultural land in Guanacaste of foreigners. Official overreactions against the foreign "invasion" included an attack on English-language publications by the Tourism Institute, accusing them of "denigrating" Costa Rica; the jailing overnight of bewildered tourists by overzealous cops because the visitors weren't carrying their passports; and a move – greeted with hilarity by Ticos and foreigners alike – requiring all company names to be in Spanish. "Los Tiempos Ticos" reported these stories and more.

Not a Dull Decade!

The '70s saw the nation gripped by power rationing during the worst drought in recent history. The killer quake that destroyed Managua on Dec. 23, 1972 cast a pall over Christmas here; a quake in northern Costa Rica claimed 22 lives in Tilarán, and three years later, Ticos rallied to aid Guatemala, where a devastating quake left 22,000 dead.

In 1975, Steve Stout, a 17-year-old U.S. adventurer, set out to hike 400 miles across the Talamanca mountains from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts, but was bitten by a coral snake his first day out and made it back to civilization just in time. Two years later, U.S. furniture-maker J. Morrison and three fellow explorers followed an ancient Indian trail and made it across.

New Decade, New Paper

From the start, the reborn TT reflected Costa Rica's expanding panorama. Columns such as "Women's Lib and You" and "Women Here and Now" replaced the "Lady Talk" of the '50s; a series on investments by banker and entrepreneur Jack Harris warned newcomers to proceed with caution and beware of con men – advice that would continue to hold true 30 years later; "Why We Did It" interviewed foreign retirees who had settled here, while Edwin Retana's "Understanding the Aduana" tried to help them cope; Yehudi Monestel's "Costa Rica: Odds & Ends" featured fascinating tidbits about Tico culture, geography, nature and lore; "What Is It?" introduced Costa Rica's fruits and vegetables; and articles on pollution and endangered wildlife marked a growing concern over environmental issues.

The "coffee bonanza" of '76-'77 offered welcome respite from the economic woes of the previous three years.

A petroglyph in Guayabo, the pre-Columbian ceremonial center being excavated outside Turrialba on the Atlantic slope, became the subject of controversy when U.S. artist Michael O'Reilly suggested that it might be an ancient star map. Some experts agreed, others scoffed. Meanwhile, a spectacular carved piece of jade unearthed at a construction site in the northern San José suburb of Tibás provided evidence that early Costa Ricans had contact with both the Mayas and the Olmecs.

An experiment to introduce Daylight Savings Time to Costa Rica failed – much to the disgust of former President José (Pepe) Figueres, its principal proponent, and The Tico Times – because Ticos didn't like getting up in the dark.

The Tico Times investigated the drastic rabies-control method used by Ministry of Health since the epidemic of the '50s, which involved poisoning stray dogs – and pets unfortunate enough to be caught in the poisoners' path – with strychnine. With the help of the World Society for Protection of Animals (WSPA) and concerned local vets the practice finally was phased out. The paper also looked at Costa Rica's "other drug problem" – the unregulated sale of potentially dangerous medicines without prescriptions or warnings.

Visitors of Note Were Noted

VIP visitors included Britain's Prince Philip, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, U.S. First Lady Rosalynn Carter, West German President Walter Scheel, Israeli President Efraim Ketzir, Spain's King Juan Carlos and a priceless collection of 44 Old Master paintings on loan from museums and private collections in the U.S.

Frequent visitors all decade long were Unidentified Flying Objects (OVNIS, in Spanish.)

The Weird & The Wonderful

Readers were warned to beware (or not) the Machaca or "Love Bug", whose bite was said to require the victim to make love within hours or die. In 1973, a young U.S. heiress spent two weeks on then-uninhabited Cocos Island, Costa Rica's legendary "Treasure

'Papa Polaco' – Only in Costa Rica

The election of Polish Pope John Paul II caused no end of mirth in Costa Rica, where "polaco" (Pole) is another word for "Jew," since most of the country's Jewish community are descendants of Polish immigrants. The afternoon La Prensa Libre, caught up in the confusion, published a photo of the new "Papa Polaco" with a caption identifying him as "the first non-Christian Pontiff in 455 years."

Ticos Welcomed Foreigners, Then Had Doubts

◀ Page S7

Island” in the Pacific, before her worried family coaxed her home. Soon after that, a group calling itself “The People of Cocos Island” issued a handwritten proclamation in English declaring Cocos an independent nation. By the time police got to investigate, the “People” had gone. Incidents such as these, plus unauthorized visits to the remote possession by treasure hunters, fishing pirates and drug smugglers, finally prompted Costa Rica to declare Cocos a national park in 1978.

A brazen gang bulldozed a trail into a United Fruit Company banana plantation in the southern Pacific zone and stole two of Costa Rica’s famous pre-Columbian stone spheres, each weighing an estimated 10 tons, from the spots where they had rested for centuries. The thieves were caught when the overloaded tractor-trailer hauling the booty to San José broke down on the Inter-American Highway.

In 1975, a statue of Christ in San José’s Santa Teresita Church started bleeding, causing near-riots as crowds converged on the small church to touch the statue. Two weeks later, the already-jittery nation tried unsuccessfully to laugh off a wild prediction from an unknown source that a huge earthquake would hit the country at exactly 3 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 17, causing it to sink into the bowels of the earth. The only shaking felt was Ticos’ knees.

Both wonderful and weird was the story of a “Mystery Hero” captured in a series of dramatic photos on Page 1 of the TT Nov. 29, 1974, as he rescued a young Guatemalan woman from drowning at Manuel Antonio beach. He disappeared from the scene before anyone could get his name.

The following week, after seeing the photos in the paper, the hero came to The Tico Times. In a heartwarming followup story, 33-year-old Daniel Weiner said he was a student of pre-Columbian art history touring Latin America on a grant from Sacramento State University. Four years later, Weiner was back in the news — charged in California with smuggling pre-Columbian artifacts from Costa Rica. According to authorities, he had been on the lam from an auto theft charge in the U.S. when he became a hero here.

Perhaps the weirdest story of the decade (apart from almost every story involving Vesco) was the Mystery of the Man Who



Jorge Valenciano | Tico Times

Big Changes: ‘Culture Pool’ behind National Theater eventually became Culture Plaza (above); Cocos Island (below) became a National Park.

Wasn’t. A local law firm discovered that a pensionado from St. Louis, Mo. named John Edward Dempsey, who had been living a lavish lifestyle here with his wife Reine and their three young children, had been dead for the last seven years. Another man, identity unknown, was using his name (and wife, and family). The bogus Dempsey vanished and Reine returned to the U.S., saying only that “the U.S. government” had assigned her dead hubby’s identity to the mystery man.

Wonderful: TT readers helped make life much happier for the inhabitants of Costa Rica’s Parque Bolívar Zoo by donating to The Tico Times Zoo Fund; sent dozens of needy kids to Camp Roblealto through the Camp Fund; helped Santa Claus with gifts to Yehudi Monestel’s annual drive to bring Christmas to hundreds of needy children in remote areas of the country; and even gave their blood, donating generously to The Tico Times blood drive. ■



Tico Times Photo



Jorge Valenciano | Tico Times

Bienvenida! Rosalynn Carter made a hit with Ticos.

Celebrated Scandals of the '70s

Swiss Trust Ban Corporation — Investors lost \$295,000 invested with a local company operated illegally as a bank by North Carolina native Robert Brown. His wife Dawn, who ran Dawn Secretarial Services in downtown San José, helpfully referred clients to him.

Latin American Bank/Grupo Proin — Cayman-based bank collapsed after loaning heavily to companies belonging to a local consortium operated by Costa Rican Arnoldo Rodríguez, who later was convicted in the U.S. of fraud in another offshore bank scheme. He staged a spectacular escape from a U.S. minimum-security prison, boarded a waiting plane and fled back to Costa Rica.

Aguacate Consolidated Mines Co. was accused by U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) of fraudulently selling stock to U.S. investors.

Josef Slyomovics, a Czech-born Canadian living here as a tourist, faced a score of lawsuits stemming from Playa del Sol development he was promoting on Atlantic coast and a large sugar project. After The Tico Times reported his activities, he sued the paper for libel. In a landmark decision, Costa Rica’s Supreme Court absolved TT, ruling that the press has not only the right, but the duty to publish stories of public interest.

International Trade Development of Costa Rica, S.A., run by U.S. citizens Robert Winston Slocum and Donald L. Gordon, was sued by SEC for selling unregistered stock to several thousand investors in U.S.

Girofinance S.A. — Flashy investment firm listed on Costa Rica’s Stock Exchange went belly-up when its principal officers, Christian Grzonka, a German of Czech origin, and Jo Schweitzer, a native of Luxembourg, disappeared with \$1.6 million in investors’ funds.

The  '70s

Robert Vesco: 'The Whale in the Puddle'

By Dery Dyer
Tico Times Staff

From the day Robert Vesco arrived in Costa Rica in 1972 until his departure five years later, hardly a week went by that his name wasn't in the headlines. The fugitive U.S. financier, accused in the U.S. of looting Investors Overseas Services (IOS) of \$224 million, and his six associates moved his troubled financial empire here from his earlier haven in the Bahamas on invitation of then-President José (Pepe) Figueres, hoping to set up a "financial district" with its own set of laws – a "country within a country" to serve as a refuge for international funds of dubious origin.

Don Pepe's determination to champion Vesco disillusioned many admirers of the visionary leader who led Costa Rica's 1948 revolution, instituted the country's modern democracy and abolished its army. But the feisty three-time President defiantly shrugged off all criticism, saying Costa Rica needed investments and shouldn't question their source.

Vesco wasted no time repaying his hosts. Shortly after arriving with his yacht and lavishly-appointed Boeing 707, he moved his wife Pat and children Danny, Tony, Dawn and Bobby (son Patrick was born here) into a luxurious, heavily guarded walled home-office compound in the eastern suburb of Curridabat and invested in numerous Figueres family operations. He bought bars, restaurants and casinos, invested in radio and TV stations through bearer-share cor-



Tico Times Photo



María Elena Esquivel | Tico Times



Tico Times Photo

Fugitive Financier (left) Turned Country on Its Ear: Don Pepe (center) championed him, Oduber (right) inherited him, Carazo (below) booted him.

porations, acquired a large spread, complete with airport, in the northern province of Guanacaste, and even bought Country Day School from its founders, Robert and Marian Baker, to set up a center for children with learning disabilities so Bobby would receive specialized instruction.

He also financed Excelsior, a daily newspaper created as a voice for Figueres' National Liberation Party to compete with the leading daily La Nación. In one of the decade's biggest scandals, the controversial paper folded after racking up mountainous debts; its owners were never identified and government funds earmarked for poverty programs were used to pay off its employees.

Legendary Largesse

The financier's largesse quickly became legendary – his name was linked (accurately or not) to almost every new venture, and communities throughout the country proclaimed themselves pro-Vesco because he had bankrolled local projects. At one point his investments here were believed to total between \$25 million and \$60 million.

In 1974 The Tico Times published an exclusive interview with "The Man Behind the Myth," which revealed him as articulate, wily, cocky and wryly humorous. Already he was making a career of battling what he termed "political persecution" here and in the U.S., and would grow increasingly bitter as pressure against him mounted.

The U.S. had requested his extradition based on an allegedly illegal \$200,000 contribution to the campaign of U.S. President Richard Nixon, but at the end of Figueres' term, the so-called "Vesco Law" was hastily pushed through Costa Rica's Congress, giving the presidency final say over extradition matters. New President Daniel Oduber, from Figueres' Liberation Party, informed Vesco publicly that he could stay in Costa Rica as long as he respected local laws.

Costa Vesco

But Ticos were not happy about what the famous fugitive was doing to their country's international image. One U.S. cartoon, widely reprinted here, showed a tourist arriving in "Costa Vesco". Calling him "a whale in a puddle," veteran local journalist Julio Suñol detailed the Vesco "takeover" in his book, "Robert Vesco Compra Una República" ("Robert Vesco Buys a Republic"). Both Guido Fernández, director of La

Nación, and Rodrigo Madrigal, director of the daily La República, issued repeated calls for his ouster, alleging that he had tried to intervene in local politics and had ties to the Mafia. In the U.S. he was accused of negotiations to import 2000 submachine guns to Costa Rica and finance an arms factor with Figueres' son, José Martí.

In 1976, The Tico Times published an exclusive interview with Vesco's former pilot, Al ("Ike") Eisenhower, who had "hijacked" the financier's Boeing in Panama and flown it to the U.S. at the request of U.S. officials, then wrote a book about his adventures with Vesco titled "The Flying Carpetbagger." In the interview, Eisenhower recounted many of Vesco's shenanigans with the Figueres family, and described his former boss as "just a Detroit row-house kid."

"I love that guy," he said. "He's the perfect bullshit artist – a genius."

Meanwhile, elderly local architect Carlos Rechnittzer, who claimed he lost \$250,000 in IOS, sued Vesco in local court, in a "Mouse that Roared" drama that dogged Vesco throughout his stay. In separate manifestos, 216 respected leaders and 5,000 citizens urged President Oduber to expel the financier as "harmful to the country," and Congress began debating his ouster as an undesirable alien. Vesco spent his 39th birthday defending himself on national radio and TV.

From Bad to Tragicomic

A careless remark by Don Pepe during an interview with The New Republic magazine finally brought the curtain down on the Vesco Era, when he said Vesco had financed a "major part" of Oduber's 1974 campaign. President and financier were summoned to testify before a legislative commission. La Nación and La República reported that companies connected to Vesco had received the lion's share of profits from the 1975 nationalization of local gas distributors, and the clamor for his expulsion grew.

The situation went from bad to tragicomic when perennial maverick presidential candidate G.W. Villalobos wrapped himself in the Costa Rican flag and fired 60 shots into the wall of Vesco's compound before being arrested.

In a futile effort to keep Vesco from becoming a campaign issue, Oduber went on national radio and TV to say he'd asked him to leave as soon as the lawsuit against him here was resolved. Vesco, however, applied for Costa Rican citizenship and said he hoped to



M.E. Esquivel | Tico Times

stay. President-elect Rodrigo Carazo vowed to keep his campaign promise and expel him.

The local court hearing the Rechnittzer case made it easy one everybody (except Rechnittzer) by throwing out the lawsuit, freeing Vesco to leave, which he did three days before Carazo took office. The new President ordered Costa Rica's borders closed to him, and his citizenship bid was rejected.

The "whale" eventually headed for a new haven in Cuba, but for years afterwards, "Vesco sightings" here were as common as Elvis sightings in the U.S. as the financier made several attempts to return to Costa Rica. ■

Quit Quelching With My Mind

It could only happen at The Tico Times.

EDITOR (To Writer No. 1): "You don't squash a rumor. You quash a rumor."

WRITER No. 1 (authoritatively): "I didn't mean to say squash. I was going to say quelch."

EDITOR: "Quelch??"

WRITER No. 1 "But then I thought I better say quelch. But that's what you do to a CB radio."

EDITOR: "It's not squelch or quelch! It's quash!"

WRITER No. 1 (disbelieving): "Quash? No! C'mon, really?"

WRITER No. 2: "How about squish?"

WRITER No. 1: "I think it's quelch. Or quell. How about quell?"

EDITOR: "There is no such word as quelch."

WRITER No. 1: "I bet there is! (To Writer No. 2): "Look it up."

WRITER No. 2 (thoughtfully): "What is it you do to your thirst?"

EDITOR: "QUENCH! QUENCH!"

WRITER No. 1: "Look up quelch.""

WRITER No. 2: "How do you spell it?"

EDITOR: "It doesn't exist!"

WRITER No. 2: "Here's squelch, and it means SQUASH!"

WRITER No. 1: "Ha! So there! See? I was right!"

EDITOR: "Huh? What about quelch??"

WRITER No. 1 (coyly): "I decided not to use quelch."

The rest of the above conversation has been quelled for the sake of our readers' sensibilities.

–TT, May 5, 1978

Tico Times Firsts

- First newspaper in Costa Rica (along with Eco Católico) to be printed on offset
- First newspaper in Costa Rica to run color on its front page
- First newspaper in Costa Rica to do investigative reporting
- First newspaper in Costa Rica to call attention to the environment, and the first to cover the environment as a regular beat
- First newspaper in Costa Rica (along with La Nación) to have an Online Edition
- First (and only) newspaper in Costa Rica to have a public blood drive
- First (and only) newspaper in Costa Rica to raise funds for the zoo and animal welfare
- First newspaper in Costa Rica (and probably the world) to run a subliminal photo on its front page
- First (and only) newspaper anywhere to refrain from publishing anything about the O.J. Simpson case.

The  '70s

Ticos Cheered, Aided Sandinista Revolution

When The Tico Times interviewed a Sandinista guerrilla-turned-shark fisherman in the Costa Rican Atlantic-coast fishing village of Barra del Colorado in 1976, nobody suspected that when next seen, the man who asked to be identified only as "Pedro" would have a new name, "Comandante Cero", and would be leading the daring attack on Managua's National Palace in August, 1978 that sparked the end of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua.

Like many of his countrymen, Edén Pastora lived quietly here while plotting the overthrow of the 43-year-old Somoza dictatorship. Most Ticos shared the Sandinistas' disgust with the Somozas, who held Nicaragua in an iron grip with the help of the U.S.-trained and equipped National Guard, known as "gorillas" because of their reputation for brutality and corruption. Both Anastasio ("Tachito") Somoza, 52, and his father, "Old Tacho", had proclaimed themselves loyal friends of the U.S. (prompting U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt to say of the senior Somoza, "I know he's an SOB, but he's our SOB.") and had managed to stay in power by insisting their regime was "a bulwark against communism in Central America."

Cracks in the Bulwark

That bulwark began crumbling when it was discovered that Guardsmen had stolen much of the international aid that poured into the country for victims of the quake that destroyed Managua in 1972. Rebels with the leftwing Sandinista Front for National Liberation, whom Somoza charged were being trained and supplied by Cuba's Fidel Castro, had been harassing the government for years and, mostly because of abuses by the Guard, had been gaining popular support. Moderate Nicaraguans, fearing another Cuba, had been trying to convince Somoza to step down and allow a coalition government to be formed.

Among them was Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, well-loved publisher of the daily La Prensa, who was gunned down in 1978 on his way to work, apparently by rightwing elements in the Guard who didn't want Somoza to quit.

Chamorro's assassination marked the beginning of the end for the Somoza regime,



LaVerne Coleman | Tico Times

igniting a wave of popular outrage and revealing that the ailing strongman was losing control over his own Guard.

Worries about War

Meanwhile, the growing conflict had spilled across the border into Costa Rica. As 100,000 refugees fled the fighting, filling camps to overflowing in the northern province of Guanacaste, attacks by Nicaraguan warplanes pursuing rebels into Costa Rica, killing two Tico Civil Guardsmen and wounding several civilians, prompted repeated urgent inspection visits by Organization of American States (OAS) teams and Venezuela and Panama to rush to Costa Rica's defense by sending warplanes to San José.

Somoza accused Costa Rica of harboring the Sandinistas. The government of President Rodrigo Carazo insisted it was doing everything it could to locate and clean out rebel camps in the dense jungle along the border and reiterated its adherence to unarmed neutrality in the conflict.

As the war heated up, the drama of the



LaVerne Coleman | Tico Times

"Comandante Cero" (left) went from shark fisherman to rebel hero, as Sandinistas seized power.

valiant "muchachos" battling the despised "gorillas" captured the hearts of more and more Ticos. The TT ran several stories on the young, idealistic rebels, recounting their hardships and bravery. Despite their aversion to all things military, many Costa Ricans openly proclaimed themselves Sandinistas, or at least sympathizers. "Comandante Bigote," one of the TT's "Deep Throat" sources, was a Tico businessman during the week and a rebel pilot on weekends.

A Conspiracy of Silence

Costa Rica's "unofficial" involvement in the conflict was becoming increasingly evident, but the government warned the local press

that to even hint at the Sandinistas' use of Costa Rican territory would threaten national security by inviting an attack by Nicaragua. The resulting conspiracy of silence was finally broken by the international press – and by The Tico Times, the first local paper to report what was really going on in the border area.

Meanwhile, Nicaragua's future government was organizing in exile here. Though the Sandinistas' military leadership was Marxist and closely aligned with Cuba and the Soviets, pressure from moderates inside and outside Nicaragua had raised hopes for shared power, and the first government junta included Chamorro's widow, Violeta, and businessman Alfonso Robelo. Even the U.S. finally had to admit that Somoza's rule had ended. The strongman headed for exile in Paraguay, where he was later assassinated by Sandinista agents.

With jubilant Ticos cheering them on, the Sandinistas finally marched into Managua in July, 1979. Later it was reported that the more moderate "Southern Front" – whose leaders had lulled Ticos into believing the Sandinistas had democratic leanings – was late in reaching Managua, which had already fallen to the hardline Marxists who had been fighting in the north.

The Casualties

The war left some 30,000 dead and 300,000 homeless. It also left Costa Rica's credibility as a neutral, defenseless nation in tatters, as it was revealed that Costa Rica had been part of an air bridge to ferry arms from Cuba to the rebels.

Costa Rica's honeymoon with the Sandinista government would prove to be short-lived, and as the '80s began, so did the next bloody chapter in the tortured history of Costa Rica's northern neighbor. ■



LaVerne Coleman | Tico Times



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March on Managua: Grateful citizens turned out to cheer, celebrate and thank the "muchachos" for freeing Nicaragua of Somoza and his hated Guard.

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AP Story on TT Circled the Globe

(In 1979, Associated Press Special Correspondent Tad Bartimus wrote the following story about *The Tico Times*. It ran in dozens of papers throughout the world.)

By Tad Bartimus

San José, Costa Rica (AP) — The Tico Times is a pushover for a cause.

The English-language weekly newspaper has crusaded for everything from saving endangered turtles to exporting fugitive financier Robert Vesco. It usually wins.

It was the first business in this sunny Central American democracy to have its own blood drive.

"People would come in the office to place a classified ad and we'd grab 'em and say: 'Your money or your blood,'" says editor Dery Dyer, the 30-year-old daughter of publisher Richard Dyer. "We had a great time, served cookies and beer, had people fainting all over the place. But we got a lot of donors."

Its readers happily contribute to the country's zoo, an annual Christmas party for poor children, and the fledgling Animal Protection Society.

The Tico Times — Costa Ricans call themselves Ticos — is feisty and irreverent. Its 6,500 readers — half of them in 52 other countries and all 50 American states — devour its tabloid pages, and flood the office with letters.

The newspaper, headquartered in a cheerful, cluttered old frame house in the heart of this Latin capital, also "safeguards the public welfare."

Landmark Ruling

That's a high-falutin' phrase for a publication that staff members jokingly call "A rinky-dink rag." It is a valid one, coined by the Supreme Court of Costa Rica when it vindicated *The Tico Times* in a libel action brought by a land developer.

The lawsuit by Czech-born naturalized Canadian Josef Slyomovics stemmed from a series of 1977 articles about his alleged debts and a coastal tourist development.

Costa Rica has no press censorship, but does have a 1902 statute making conviction for libel or slander punishable by a jail term and a fine.

Slyomovics asked the court to sentence reporter Stephen Schmidt and publisher Dyer to 120 days in jail, and sought hefty damages.

All cases involving the country's press are heard by the Supreme Court, in one trial with no appeal. The *Tico Times'* day in court was January 25, 1978.

Defense attorney Joaquín Vargas Gené, himself a local newspaper publisher, argued before the three magistrates that "What will be decided here is whether or not the national press can report without fear on dubious business activities. . ."

In less than 24 hours the judges ruled: "The press has the duty to inform the public on all matters of general interest. . . It is its obligation to make these facts known. . ."

Not only did it find Dyer and Schmidt innocent, it charged Costa Rica's press with the obligation — and guaranteed it the right — to print the news. In Latin America, such journalistic liberty is rare.

"The decision," said Guido Fernández, publisher of the nation's largest circulation daily, *La Nación*, and president of the Freedom of the Press Committee of the Inter-American Press Association, "establishes a



very important legal precedent in that it presumes the good faith of a professional news report, and at the same time it stimulates investigative reporting, a field in which *The Tico Times* sets an excellent example."

For the Dyers, the ruling crowned their years of shoe-string effort with a nationally recognized legitimacy. The *Tico Times* had come of age.

The Business

It began in 1956, when Dyer's wife Elisabeth was approached by five high school students who wanted to learn journalism. A former writer for the old *New York Post* and an experienced member of the Hearst stable, Mrs. Dyer had given up her career when she was married in 1944. Her husband, a veteran Associated Press newsman, became the Rio de Janeiro correspondent for the now-defunct International News Service. Later they moved to Costa Rica and he went into public relations.

For 12 years, Mrs. Dyer was a housewife, hostess and mother, but she missed "the business." When the youngsters appeared, she told them the only way to learn was to put out a newspaper.

The *Tico Times* was born May 18, 1956. Its first editorial described it as non-profit with no salaried employees, but "any young person who knows English and is interested in learning. . . come aboard."

It was the first English-language newspaper in Central America, and dozens of kids flocked to it. In 1960, the paper suspended publication when the Dyers moved to Chile, but after the death of Mrs. Dyer in 1971, Dery and her father decided to resurrect it. Back in Costa Rica for good, Dyer had a flourishing commercial printing business and had imported the country's first off-set press.

World Readership

The *Tico Times* reappeared February 4, 1972, and has been growing ever since, although no one can say exactly how it came to have such a large overseas readership.

"We've got subscribers in Andorra, Afghanistan, Alaska and Saudi Arabia," says Judie Faerron, 28, the Dyers' right-

hand woman who's been with the paper for seven years. "We send it to the U.S. State Department, libraries around the world, and universities in the States and Europe, all at their request. Every week the Costa Rican Foreign Ministry mails out several hundred copies to its consulates."

The first born-again issue was 12 pages — the average now is 28. The *Tico Times* also became the first Costa Rican paper to regularly use color photographs on its front page.

"One of the first times we used color was for the 1974 inauguration of President Daniel Oduber," Dery says. "Oduber's hair and the national flag came out a vivid green. We stopped the press and made adjustments. This time it was day-glow blue. We had to distribute them because we didn't have any black and white pictures."

"He never said a word."

13 Staffers

The paper now has 13 full-time staffers and 13 contributing columnists and part-time employees, and an office cat, Beanbag, who lives in the bathtub.

"The *Tico Times* has grown into a force that's taken into account by Costa Rica's policy makers," says Stephen Schmidt, the reporter in the libel suit who now freelances. "People realize it is the vehicle by which Costa Rica's face is shown to the world. Influential newspaper editors read it, and it has great impact in Latin American press circles."

Fernández says the *Tico Times* "introduced professionalism into Costa Rican journalism. It led the way in investigative reporting, and quite frequently we read it to get ideas for our own stories."

"Basically we are putting out a paper in two languages, because we have to collect all the news in Spanish, then translate it into English," says Ms. Faerron. "We cover an entire country (19,833 square miles) and our pet causes are pollution, rape of the land, protection of wildlife, injustice to average people and exposing shysters."

"I think what makes the *Tico Times* special is that it has heart," says Dery. "We're a little paper trying to do the best we can for the community and the country. We also have a good time." ■

On the Front Lines of the Fight for Press Freedom

By Dery Dyer
Tico Times Staff

**PERSONAL
REPORT**

It was Kafkaesque, Orwellian... and it was happening right here in Costa Rica, one of the hemisphere's oldest and proudest democracies. Incredibly enough,

despite Constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and freedom of expression, a journalist in Costa Rica could be sent to jail for reporting the news without a license.

The license in question was issued by a government-sanctioned organization, the *Colegio de Periodistas*, formed in 1969 to "raise the standards of journalism" in Costa Rica by making journalism a "profession" like law or medicine and restricting its practice to graduates of the University of Costa Rica Journalism School.

The Tico Times ran afoul of the Colegio law almost immediately after resuming publication in 1972, sparking a battle that would last 23 years, turn into a second full-time job for my father, TT Publisher Richard Dyer, and cost the newspaper untold thousands of dollars and man-hours. We quickly realized that had obligatory licensing been in place when The Tico Times was founded, the paper wouldn't exist. And there were many times during the long struggle that we wondered whether the TT would survive.

The Tico Times needed people who could write in English, and the Colegio didn't have any. Even our staffers who had journalism degrees from foreign universities had no way to get legal. The Colegio law required foreign journalists to complete five years' residency in Costa Rica before applying for Colegio membership. And in the ultimate Catch-22, you had to be a member of the Colegio before you could apply for residency!

Grotesque Contradictions

The organization was a grotesque mass of contradictions from the start. Founded by self-made journalists who had grandfathered



Tico Times Photo

Taking Aim at UNESCO: IAPA officials, including Rodrigo Madrigal of Costa Rica's daily La República (left) and George Beebe of The Miami Herald (third from left) challenge 'New World Information Order.'

themselves in before the law was passed, the Colegio was a strange mix of outstanding newsmen (who belied the need for any degrees...or a Colegio) and incompetents (who saw licensing as a way to protect their jobs - many of them in government press offices - from future competition.)

The Colegio quickly fell into the grip of a small group who lost sight of the organization's lofty ideals. Far from "raising the standards" of journalism, they used the law to insure that mediocrity - or worse, unethical journalism - would prevail, now with official blessings.

Many critics compared the licensing of journalists to the licensing of artists, novelists or musicians. As the TT had proved repeatedly, brilliant newsmen came from everywhere, not just journalism schools. We believed, and most of our colleagues in the local media came to agree, that we - and our readers - were the best judges of our staffers' competence. But Colegio backers saw nothing ominous about a group sanctioned and subsidized by the gov-

ernment having the power to determine who could or could not be a journalist.

They also were undismayed by the obvious curbs on freedom of expression that obligatory licensing would - and did - impose. No longer could José Q. Citizen interview someone or report on a community event or start a community newspaper. Those privileges belonged exclusively to an elite class of Colegio-anointed "professional journalists."

UNESCO and a Usurped Union

The licensing threat was not unique to Costa Rica. In the early '70s, the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA), which represents some 1200 member newspapers throughout the hemisphere, met here to call attention to the Soviet-inspired "New World Information Order", being pushed by UNESCO ostensibly to "democratize" news coverage in the developing world by promoting state news agencies that would compete

with the "oligarchical" privately run media. Press freedom groups around the world saw it as a thinly disguised way for would-be totalitarians to legitimize government control of the press, using (what else?) compulsory licensing as the first step.

The ideological clash also revealed itself in the Colegio backers' insistence that those who opposed obligatory licensing for journalists were against fair wages and other benefits for working newspeople. This was particularly laughable in our case, since both my parents, Elisabeth and Richard Dyer, had been organizers of the American Newspaper Guild in the United States, and had warned colleagues here long before the Colegio was created that journalists in Costa Rica needed a labor union to fight for their rights, not a licensing body that would restrict their freedom. Although the country now had a *Sindicato de Periodistas*, it was toothless; the Colegio had usurped its role.

The Nightmare Begins

Unlike the Spanish-language reporters who had no "excuse" for not complying with the law, we had no possibility of becoming legal. So we found ourselves on the front lines in the battle against the Colegio, cheered on and tacitly supported by those who had to play the game even though they knew it was wrong. The Tico Times became a textbook case on the dangers - and absurdities - of licensing.

Several times we made a good-faith effort to seek an amicable solution to our predicament: perhaps, we suggested, the Colegio could reform its law, or even give our staffers an exam of some kind to see whether they met UCR standards?

No. Instead, the Colegio faithful routinely harassed our reporters, doing everything they could to keep them from covering press conferences or getting credentials for official events.

The only reason we were able to keep going at all was Dad. This being Costa Rica, where "patas" (connections) are paramount, the fact that Dad had many good friends in journalism and government dating back to his

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The Battle Heated Up, 'Schmidt Saga' Unfolded

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years with the *Bananera* helped immensely.

Plus, he had been a founding member of Costa Rica's original Press Association, all of whose members had been grandfathered into the Colegio. Not only didn't they want to mess with don Richard, they didn't know what to do about him.

In the late '70s, I asked then-Colegio president Carlos Mora point-blank what The Tico Times could do about our situation. After reviewing all the usual unworkable options (such as hire Colegio members to cover the news and translators to put it into English), Mora came up with a novel idea: we could enroll in the private Autonomous University of Central America (UACA), which had just opened a new postgraduate *licenciatura* program in journalism.

We were so sick of being outlaws – of having to warn new staffers that they risked going to jail if they came to work for The Tico Times – that we decided to pursue this possible opening. Stephen Schmidt, a brilliant and *simpático* former math teacher from New York who had become the TT's star reporter, and I became the designated guinea pigs and went back to school.

It Gets Uglier

During our 2 1/2 years at the UACA, the Colegio left The Tico Times alone; it even sent Steve and me a nice letter saying it looked forward to welcoming us when we graduated.

Along with two Tico classmates, Steve and I became the UACA's first graduates, with honors (Steve graduated *summa cum laude*.) A representative of the Colegio was on our examining board.

Degree in hand, our fellow grad Gerardo Enrique Fonseca applied to the Colegio for membership.

He was turned down.

The only explanation he was given was that the Colegio law specified only graduates of the University of Costa Rica, the only university in the country at the time the law was passed.

We were back to being outlaws.

Gerardo sued the Colegio. Five years later, the Supreme Court ordered the group to admit graduates of other universities.

And Uglier

In 1980, the IAPA sponsored a debate here on obligatory licensing. After listening



María Elena Esquivel | Tico Times

to Mora's successor, Carlos Morales, assure the audience that licensing as practiced in Costa Rica didn't interfere at all with freedom of the press, Steve stood up and angrily demanded to know what the Colegio intended to do about him and all the other "illegals". Morales responded: "We are going to sue you for the illegal practice of journalism."

Thus began one of the ugliest – and most revealing – chapters in the Colegio's career. Venomous local news stories referred to Steve as "*el extranjero*" (the foreigner), describing him as a criminal, an enemy of Costa Rica and a stooge for rich foreign media owners. One stunning dispatch quoted a "court source" as saying that Steve, who was out of the country at the time, had been declared a "*reo fugitivo*" (fugitive from justice). It was a complete fabrication.

We were amused, in a bitter sort of way, to note that such attacks simply confirmed why good journalism can't be legislated. Not once did the Colegio-approved "professionals" who wrote them make a single attempt to talk to Steve to get his side of the story. Even more tragicomic, they spelled his name differently each time – sometimes several different ways in the same story – but they never once got it right.

The Schmidt Saga

The Colegio's first victim was another foreigner – U.S. newsman Joe Phillips, editor of the English-language San Jose News, founded in 1973. In his defense, Joe sought



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Colegio's Morales (left), Guier, Schmidt at Trial: Stephen won first round, but victory was short-lived.

only to show that he hadn't been working as a journalist. He was convicted of "illegal practice of the profession" in 1978 and given a three-month suspended sentence, on condition that he never commit the "crime" again. He left Costa Rica, and The News went out of business in 1979.

Until Stephen Schmidt's case, nobody had challenged the obligatory licensing law itself on the grounds that it violated human rights – specifically, the guarantees of press freedom and freedom of expression contained in the American Convention on Human Rights, of which Costa Rica had been the first signatory. Veteran Costa Rican press attorney Fernando Guier was convinced that was the way to go, and he passionately threw himself into preparing Steve's defense.

By the time his case went to trial in 1983, Steve was editing a magazine in the U.S. He could easily have chosen to stay away. But he had grown deeply attached to Costa Rica during his 10 years here, firmly believed that licensing was a threat to freedom, and was determined to see the battle through.

He had plenty of friends rooting for him. Stories and editorials about his case had appeared in dozens of newspapers and magazines around the world, and supporters included former Costa Rican Foreign Minister and veteran human-rights expert Fernando Volio, the daily *La Nación*, the UACA, the IAPA, the World Press Freedom Committee and Freedom House.

In a verdict hailed throughout the world, Judge Jeannette Sánchez absolved Steve on the grounds that, unlike law or medicine, the practice of journalism "bears directly on a primordial right of the human being: the freedom of opinion and expression, which necessarily requires the possibility of exercising that freedom."

But everyone's jubilation was short-lived. The Colegio appealed to the Supreme Court, which five months later overturned Sánchez's verdict, condemning Steve to three months in prison and suspending the sentence on condition he not repeat the "crime".

An End Run by the IAPA

We had nowhere to go but up. Stephen, Guier and Dad appealed Steve's conviction to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission in Washington, D.C., asking the Commission to refer the case to the Inter-

American Human Rights Court, based in San José, for review.

Meanwhile, uneasiness over the Colegio's increasingly undemocratic stance was growing. In September 1984, more than two dozen of Costa Rica's top political, diplomatic and educational leaders, including former President José Joaquín Trejos, the signer of the original Colegio law, sent a memorandum to the Rights Commission declaring that "freedom of expression, of thought and information cannot and must not be monopolized in the benefit of any special group, nor can this right be limited to specific individuals, but must be regarded as belonging to all human beings, without restriction by direct or indirect measures of any kind."

As the battle continued, Stephen's case turned into a *cause célèbre* for press freedom groups around the world. The IAPA awarded Steve its 1983 Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Award for Freedom of the Press, and interviews, articles and editorials about his case appeared in *The Miami Herald*, *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The San Francisco Examiner*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Seattle Times*, *The International Herald Tribune* and dozens of other publications. Interest was so intense that *The Tico Times* printed a booklet about the case to hand out to the steady stream of reporters, editors, scholars and professors who called, wrote or came to the office requesting information.

In November, 1984 the Human Rights Commission ruled 5-1 to reject Steve's appeal on the grounds that his conviction "did not constitute a violation of human rights." U.S. delegate Bruce McCollm issued a blistering 39-page dissenting opinion, and press freedom experts noted bitterly that the representatives of Latin American nations on the Commission had been under heavy pressure from colegio supporters in their countries.

It was the end of the line for the Schmidt case, but press freedom defenders were determined to carry on the struggle. Horacio Aguirre, publisher of the Miami-based *Diario de Las Américas* and a veteran IAPA official, flew to San José to ask then-President Luis Alberto Monge, an old school friend, if Costa Rica would consider asking the Human Rights Court for an advisory opinion to clarify the entire licensing issue.

Monge agreed to help. Colegio backers were furious over what they charged was an end run by licensing foes to – one way or

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María Elena Esquivel | Tico Times

Rights Court finally heard licensing case, but Costa Rica ignored advisory opinion.



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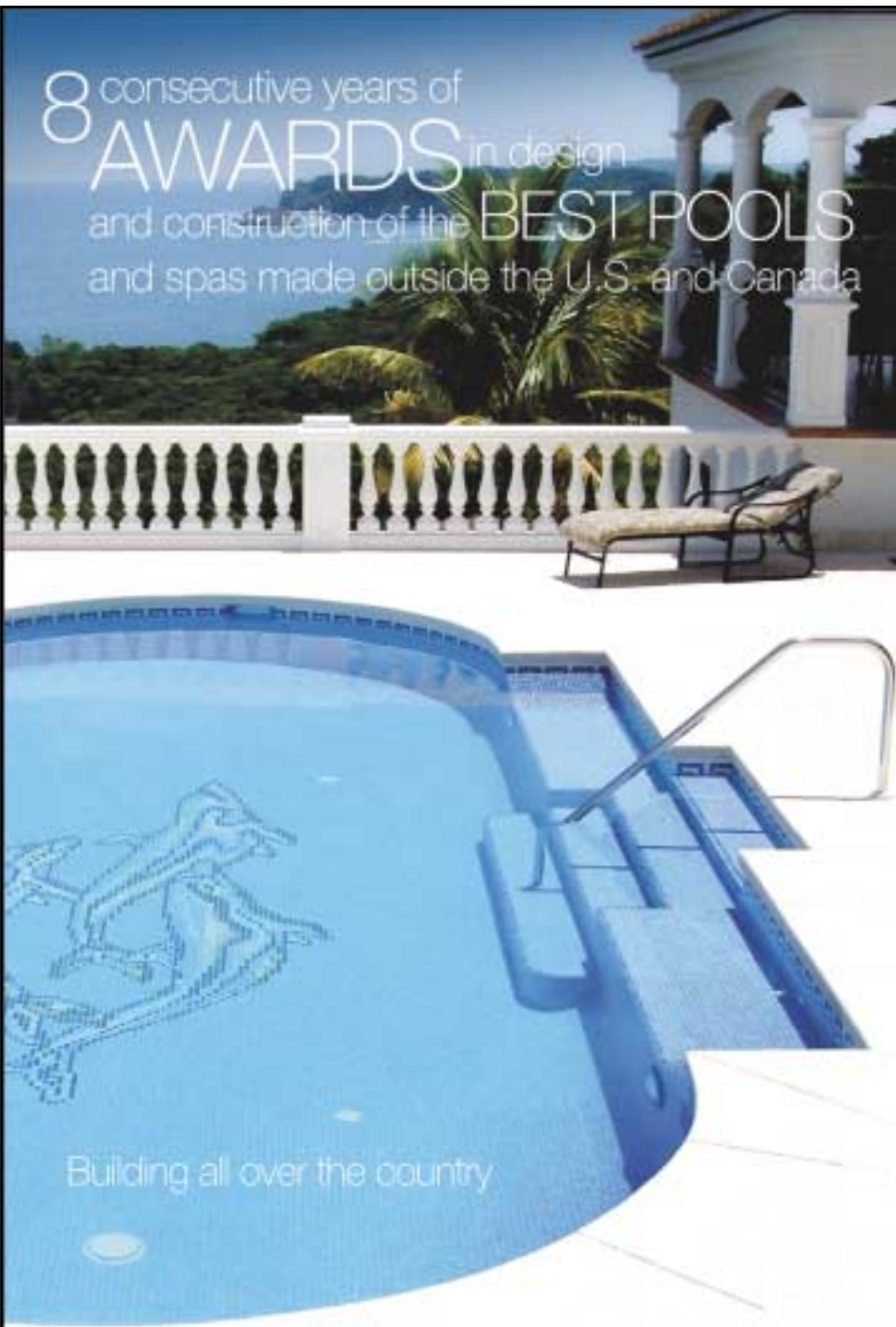


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After 23 Years, Press Licensing Ended in C.R.

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The Heart of the Matter

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression. This right includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, in print, in the form of art, or through any other medium of one's choice."

Article 13, American Convention on Human Rights

Colegio had tried several times to gain control over these jobs, they fortunately remained outside its domain. So by misrepresenting ourselves, we were able to cover the news.

It was so idiotic, it became a joke: everyone from the President on down knew who The Tico Times' reporters were – and of course, so did the Colegio – and everyone knew why their badges said "Fotógrafo" or "Miami Herald".

The Ticos' Turn

No such farcical solutions were available to Costa Rican journalists, who increasingly were running afoul of the licensing law as the Colegio worked to consolidate its power. The cases of four Ticos accused of "illegal practice" – TV sports commentator Flavio Vargas, editor Daniel Apú, radio sports commentator Roger Ajún and reporter Ronald Moya – were wending their way through the courts, when Lorena Villalobos, a Costa Rican lawyer-turned-journalist, became living proof of the truth of U.S. attorney Leonard Marks' warning before the Rights Court in 1985 that "A licensed journalist is not free. The hand that gave him the license is the same hand that can take it away."

Villalobos was working as a reporter for the daily La Nación while pursuing her licenciatura degree in journalism at the UACA. After she broke a story about a questionable business deal involving the head of a local cooperative movement, she discovered that the Colegio had failed to renew her student's license.

The renewal, which was routine for all journalism students and should have been immediate, was delayed precisely when the man she had named in her story was in the process of suing her for "illegal practice of the profession." Villalobos said she first learned she was "illegal" when she called the Colegio about another case and an official told her, scoldingly:

"I can't talk to you, you're not a member of the Colegio. You're in trouble. You're accused of illegal practice. The Colegio doesn't authorize students who write stories against people, who don't write positive things."

Her case was eventually shelved. But the whole episode had accomplished its apparent chilling aim.

"It acted as a muzzle," she said. "I never wrote another word about the cooperative, and the newspaper never assigned anyone else to follow up on it."

Sala IV to the Rescue

Obligatory licensing's long and winding road in Costa Rica ended on May 9, 1995, when the seven justices on the Supreme Court's Constitutional Chamber (Sala IV) annulled the Colegio law for violating guarantees of freedom of expression contained in the American Human Rights Convention. The justices also chided Costa

back on track after its perilous experiment – existed when the battle against licensing in Costa Rica began.

"The Sala IV ruling gave the power to decide who can or cannot be a journalist back to its rightful owners: the people who read newspapers, listen to radio or watch TV," we wrote. "And Costa Rica's press can only win as a result. The local news media are now free to hire only the best and the brightest, no matter where they come from or how they got that way. And journalists will have to prove their worth; waving a Colegio card will no longer suffice."

A Job Well Done

In October 1995, Tico Times Publisher Richard Dyer, Costa Rican attorney Fernando Guier, Diario de Las Américas publisher Horacio Aguirre, World Press Freedom Committee attorney Leonard Marks and Germán Ornes, publisher of the Dominican Republic's El Caribe and a lifelong licensing foe, were awarded the IAPA's Grand Prize for Press Freedom for their "untiring efforts in the fight against the obligatory licensing of newsmen" in this hemisphere.

* * *

Postscript: Membership in Costa Rica's Colegio de Periodistas is now voluntary and the group promotes journalists' continuing education, speaks out on press freedom issues, works to reform Costa Rica's antiquated press legislation, and champions alternative and rural publications. ■



María Elena Esquivel | Tico Times

Victory at Last: Battle had become a second full-time job for Tico Times Publisher Dyer.

Rica's Executive Branch for allowing the law to remain on the books – and be used against journalists – for 10 years after the Rights Court had declared it incompatible with the treaty. The ruling came in response to complaints filed by three Costa Rican journalists who had been sued by the Colegio for "illegal practice of the profession," and nullified all earlier convictions under the law, including Stephen's.

Neither the Human Rights Court nor the Sala IV – the two institutional heroes that got Costa Rica's democratic traditions

another – get the issue before the Rights Court, and they were right.

Rights Court: Licensing Violates Human Rights

Thirteen press freedom and human-rights groups filed briefs with the Rights Court opposing licensing. They included the IAPA, the World Press Freedom Committee, the International Press Institute, the Newspaper Guild, the International Association of Broadcasting, the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Associated Press, the International League for Human Rights, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, the Americas Watch Committee and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

In a unanimous advisory opinion issued on Nov. 13, 1985, Court President Thomas Buergenthal and Justices Rafael Nieto, Huntley Munroe, Máximo Cisneros, Rodolfo Piza and Pedro Nikken found that "the compulsory licensing of journalists is incompatible with Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights if it denies any person access to the full use of the news media as a means of expressing themselves or imparting information," and that Costa Rica's Colegio law "is incompatible with Article 13 ...in that it prevents certain persons from joining the Association of Journalists and, consequently, denies them the full use of the mass media as a means of expressing themselves or imparting information."

The Court had issued an opinion, not a ruling, so Costa Rica was not obligated to correct its offending legislation. But since the country was the first signatory of the Human Rights Convention (known as the "Pact of San José" because it was signed here) and because it had requested the opinion, everyone expected Costa Rica would move immediately to reform the Colegio law.

But to its everlasting shame, it did nothing.

Even Nobel Laureates Fear the Colegio

Costa Rican President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias stood up to the mighty United States over its policies in Central America. But his own country's Colegio de Periodistas so cowed him that, at a conference organized by the group in 1988, Arias declared the compulsory licensing of journalists "healthy". Such was the Colegio's power over politicians – which was why the Colegio law remained on the books.

In the 10 years that followed the Rights Court opinion, the Colegio sought to avoid another embarrassing Stephen Schmidt case, so it limited itself to bullying, threatening and calling Tico Times reporters names – "unqualified illegal drybacks" was a favorite – and trying to keep them from covering the news. The group actually posted watchdogs in government press offices with orders to do nothing but review all requests for credentials and keep out dangers to society like us.

After clashing loudly with the Colegio several times over the credentials issue, we found we could elude the long arm of the licensing law by applying for credentials not as reporters, but as photographers, cameramen, "support personnel" or stringers for the various foreign publications TT staffers wrote for. Though the

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The Struggle for Peace: The Biggest Story

By John McPhaul

Special to The Tico Times

The 1980s began with Costa Rica facing one of the worst financial crises in its history. The oil shocks of the late 1970s combined with prolific borrowing from international banks to place Costa Rica in a deep financial hole.

The presence of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States prompted an unprecedented interest by Washington in the affairs of Central American countries, as the Cold War headed for its final days.

As a consequence, the United States poured more than \$1 billion into Costa Rica over the course of the decade, which, combined with "structural adjustment" loans from the Inter-American Development Bank tied to a series of free-market reforms, placed the country back on the economic development track. Later in the decade, after Costa Rican President Oscar Arias won the Nobel Peace Prize, tourism exploded, providing what would eventually be the country's number-one source of foreign-exchange earnings.

But the biggest story in Costa Rica in the 1980s was the struggle for peace in Central America.

On the Rim of the Cauldron

As the decade began, Central America was a seething cauldron of conflict and intrigue. Costa Rica, which tried to remain on the sidelines of the violence, found itself inevitably in the middle of conflicts from around the region. San José became home to numerous exile groups from both sides, and several episodes of Cold War violence were played out on Tico soil.

Salvadoran guerrillas kidnapped a Japanese businessman in Costa Rica and also Kaveh Yazdani, the son of a wealthy Iranian exile living in Costa Rica, and authorities found an underground dungeon built by



María Elena Esquivel | Tico Times

In a Bind: Return of "Cero" (right) – this time as an anti-Sandinista – made life difficult for President Monge.



Joe Frazier | Tico Times

Salvadoran leftists to be used in future kidnappings.

Sandinista operatives kidnapped, in broad daylight in San José, Argentine military officer and Contra rebel trainer Hector Francés, spiriting him off to Nicaragua, where he was later reportedly executed. In 1982, authorities uncovered an arms-smuggling ring that took weapons to Farabundo Martí National Liberation Party guerrillas in El Salvador.

In 1983, a former Sandinista government official blew himself up with his own bomb in downtown San José while on his way to a meeting with guerrilla leader Edén Pastora.

Homegrown terrorism struck Costa Rica

in March 1981, when two bombs exploded: one aimed at the Honduran Embassy and one that injured two U.S. Marines riding in a van. A group calling itself the Comando Carlos Aguero Echeverría, after a young Costa Rican who died fighting with the Sandinistas against Somoza, claimed responsibility.

Then the evening of June 12, when Civil Guardsmen approached two people changing the license plate of a Datsun in the San José suburb of Guadalupe, the two men opened fire on the guardsmen, killing three. Another guardsman gave chase in a taxi, which the assailants fired on, killing the taxi driver.

Patrolmen found the Datsun parked by

the Torres River and caught Viviana Gallardo, a 19-year-old University of Costa Rica student, daughter of a middle-class Costa Rican family, trying to dump the body of her wounded comrade, Carlos Enrique Enríquez, into a ditch. Enríquez died of his wounds.

Gallardo was arrested and subsequently killed in her jail cell by one of her prison guards, José Manuel Bolaños, 23, who sought revenge for the murder of his fellow guardsmen. Police then broke Gallardo's ring of more than a dozen guerrillas in the making, which the press dubbed "La Familia." They later were given lengthy prison sentences on conspiracy charges.

"Cero" Returns

At the beginning of the decade, relations between the Costa Rican and Sandinista governments began to sour as the Sandinistas started pressuring moderates in the country to toe an increasingly radical line, something that developed along with the creation in Honduras of a U.S.-backed Contra rebel army from a core of former members of the National Guard of deposed dictator Anastasio Somoza.

Meanwhile, a number of former moderate Sandinistas sought exile in Costa Rica, eventually taking up arms. Principal among them was Edén "Comandante Cero" Pastora, the hero of the seizure of Somoza's National Assembly in 1978, widely seen as the beginning of the end of the Somoza dynasty.

Pastora began operating from camps inside Costa Rica, briefly taking San Juan del Sur in 1984. Eventually the Sandinistas abandoned the entire southern part of Nicaragua, allowing Contras to control the densely jungled and strategically unimportant area rather than engage in a two-front war.

A President in a Bind

Pastora's presence in Costa Rica put President Luis Alberto Monge in an embarrassing predicament.

On the one hand, Monge denounced Marxist Leninism as the main threat to Central America, music to the ears of the Reagan administration. On the other hand, in an effort to keep Costa Rica on the sidelines of the war, Monge declared perpetual and disarmed neutrality, a policy that obliged him to pressure Pastora and other groups to restrict their activities to Nicaragua.

But Monge's tightrope act did not go over well with Contra opponents in the U.S. and Europe, who denounced the presence of Contras in Costa Rica or with members of Monge's own National Liberation Party, deeply divided over the Contra issue.

To keep the internal forces in balance, Monge placed the Ministry of Public Security in the hands of party members opposing the Contras, and the Ministry of Interior in the hands of those supporting the Contras. Reports were rampant of Ministry of Public Security personnel breaking up Contra camps and seizing weapons, and Ministry of Interior personnel assisting the Contras to transport arms supplies.

In 1984, amid strange unsubstantiated rumors of a possible coup attempt in Costa Rica, Monge reshuffled his cabinet, placing pro-Contra businessman Benjamin Piza as Minister of Public Security and lawyer Enrique Obregón, more faithful to Monge's

A Field Day for Mercs

In March 1985, U.S. citrus farmer Bruce Jones was photographed for Life magazine in full olive drab mercenary regalia, carrying an M-16 training rifle with Nicaragua contra rebels somewhere in Costa Rica. Jones fled the country before he could be kicked out by the Monge administration, embarrassed by casual unmasking of Costa Rica's neutrality policy Jones was only one U.S. citizen known to have helped the Contras from Costa Rica, the most famous being rancher John Hull, who reputedly regularly hosted meetings of Contras at his farm in Muelle de San Carlos.

In 1985, the Ministry of Interior arrested a group of Contras, including four foreign soldiers of fortune, British-born Peter Glibbery and Peter Davies, Frenchman Claude Chaffard and U.S. citizens Steven Carr and Robert Thompson, along with nine Nicaraguans. In 1986, Glibbery and Chaffard and the Nicaraguans were convicted of hostile acts against Costa Rica, while Carr, Thompson and Davies slipped out of the country while free on bail. In December, Carr died in California of an apparent cocaine overdose.

In 1987, another U.S. farmer, Jim Denby, was forced down in his small airplane while flying along the Atlantic side of Nicaragua on his way to northern Costa Rica. A report surfaced that Denby had filed a flight plan in Tegucigalpa, Honduras stating that he would fly down the Pacific side, raising suspicions that the known Contra sympathizer was on a Contra-related mission in Atlantic Nicaragua. Costa Rican police authorities confirmed that



María Elena Esquivel | Tico Times

Denby had filed the flight plan, which they received by telex. But an irritated Costa Rican Civil Aviation official noted that the telexed flight plans were part of a system established by the Central American militaries and had no basis in civil law, which required only that pilots fly by line of sight.

In 1989, The Tico Times ran a story on U.S. merce-

nary "Steven Dupar," who claimed to be part of a Contra military unit that operated in Nicaragua's Nueva Guinea Province. Dupar, not his real name, professed fawning allegiance to Contra commander "Ganso" during a rest and relaxation visit to San José, a common practice among Contra guerrillas who infiltrated back and forth across the San Juan River throughout the Contra war.

Mercenaries
(from left)
Chappard,
Davies, Glibbery,
Carr and
Thompson
after their arrest:
soldiers of fortune
were frequent
visitors.



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The  '80s

Costa Rica in the Middle of Cold War Intrigue

◀ Page S19

neutrality policy, as Minister of the Interior.

Piza proved to be a strong defender of the Reagan policy in Central America, overseeing military training for Costa Rican police officers by U.S. Green Berets at a Civil Guard camp in the northern province of Guanacaste and eventually helping U.S. National Security Council advisor Oliver North establish a secret airstrip on the Santa Elena Peninsula to illegally run arms to the Contras in Nicaragua. Also instrumental in this effort was U.S. Ambassador Lewis Tambs, who eventually told congressional Iran-Contra investigators that he understood his main mission in Costa Rica was to help establish a so-called "Southern Front" for the Contras under U.S. leadership, aiming to unseat the Sandinistas.

The effort was a difficult one, mainly because of the resistance of Pastora to accepting CIA direction. Such was the enmity between the CIA and Pastora, who said he would not be a party to installing another Somoza regime in Nicaragua, that when a terrorist posing as a Danish journalist exploded a bomb at a Pastora press conference on May 30, 1984 at the guerrilla encampment of La Penca, the CIA came under immediate suspicion (see separate story).

Contras and Drugs

Contra supporters also came under suspicion for drug trafficking in order to pay for the Contra effort at a time when U.S. aid to the contras had been cut off by Congress.

Much of the information on drug-trafficking came to light in the investigation by Massachusetts Senator John Kerry and the Congressional investigation into the Iran-Contra controversy. The record shows that U.S. officials, including CIA director William Casey and Oliver North, set up a private network to assist the Contras that was used by drug traffickers as cover to ferry drugs into the United States.

North himself met with Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega to recruit the known drug trafficker into the Contra effort. Among a group of pilots eventually arrested in Costa Rica for drug trafficking, who also ran guns for the Contras, was eventually Noriega's personal pilot, Floyd Carlton Cáceres.

Several other drug-running operations tied to the Contras were also uncovered, including the fishing operations Frigoríficos de Puntarenas and a ring headed by Nicaraguan exile Horacio Pereira, who was sentenced to 12 years in a Costa Rican prison but fled the country before he could serve his term, and was eventually murdered in Guatemala. In the late 1990s, the CIA's own Inspector General found that Contra-related drug trafficking occurred in at least 51 cases.

Ticos and Drugs

Independent of the Contras, Costa Rica had a serious drug-trafficking problem of its own, made manifest in March of 1985 when notorious Mexican drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, wanted for the murder of U.S. Drug Enforcement Agent Enrique Camarena, found refuge in Costa Rica, entering the country in a small plane without having to pass through Immigration or Customs.

Caro Quintero was discovered and arrested by Tico and U.S. authorities in a mansion near the airport in Alajuela and returned to Mexico for prosecution. But the



Secret Airstrip: Part of Reagan Administration's effort to supply Contras; roles of North, Ambassador Tambs, rancher Hull (bottom) came to light.

Julio Laínez | Tico Times



Arcadio Esquivel | Tico Times

incident prompted the Legislative Assembly to investigate the penetration of the drug mafia into Costa Rica.

A special investigative commission led by Congressman Alberto Fait found that a "superior political authority" had been responsible for Caro's brief stay in Costa Rica, without naming any individual.

The commission also recommended that Ambassador Tambs, Oliver North, former U.S., Maj. Gen. Richard Secord, U.S. National Security Advisor John Poindexter and former CIA station chief Joe Fernández be banned from Costa Rica for creating circumstances in their support for the Contras for drug trafficking in Costa Rican territory. The recommendation was acted on by President Oscar Arias.

The congressional commission also investigated the connection between U.S. drug trafficker James Lionel Casey, arrested in Costa Rica in the possession of an Irish passport, and former Costa Rican President



Julio Laínez | Tico Times

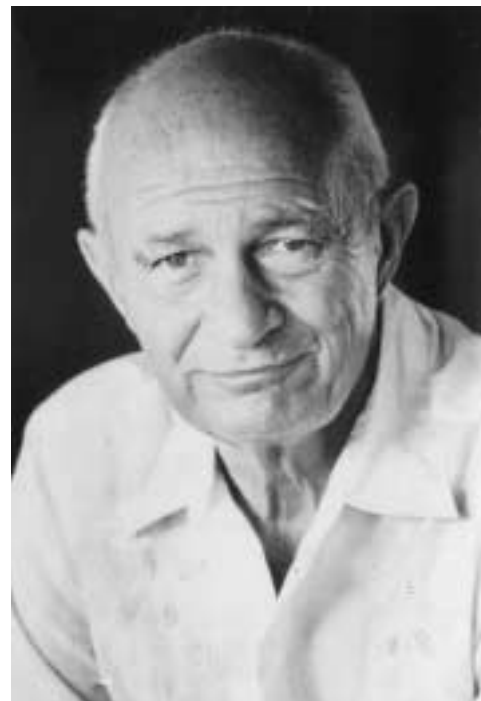
Daniel Oduber, to whom Casey had made a \$2,000 campaign contribution. Oduber denied any knowledge of Casey's drug-running past.

The commission also cast suspicion on National Liberation Party congressman Leonel Villalobos, who was eventually arrested in possession of a large quantity of cocaine. Another celebrated case of politics mixing with drug trafficking was that of Ricardo Alem, a National Liberation Party member, convicted of cocaine smuggling.

Arias Gets Tough

Costa Ricans were deeply divided over the activities of the Contras in their national territory. Polls showed, however, that a clear majority of Ticos were concerned about the possibility of being dragged into Nicaragua's Contra war. Amid this uncertainty, National Liberation Party presidential candidate Oscar Arias won the 1986 election on a peace platform, promising to keep Costa

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Julio Laínez | Tico Times



Central America's Presidents signed historic accord; Arias (center) earned Nobel Peace Prize.

Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Arias' C.A. Peace Efforts Finally Bore Fruit

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Rica out of the war. Arias let it be known immediately that he would seek disarmament of all guerrilla groups, including the Contras, as the backbone of his peace efforts.

Before his inauguration, Arias told U.S. journalist John McLaughlin that he would advise the Reagan Administration to give economic aid to Central American countries rather than aid to the Contras. In his inauguration address, Arias announced his intention to promote agreement on the so-called Contadora peace process led by Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela.

The Reagan Administration had drawn a line in the sand against communism in Central America in El Salvador, and had put the full weight of U.S. might and prestige on the side of the Salvadorean government, despite the horrible human-rights record of the Salvadorean military and associated death squads.

The formation of the Contras in Honduras was initially justified as a necessary (covert) operation to interdict arms from the Sandinista government to the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation guerrillas in El Salvador.

But opposition to the Contras in the U.S. and suspicion over the conduct of the war led the U.S. Congress to impose restrictions on Contra aid, first granting the assistance, then cutting it off, then renewing only

humanitarian aid, all in knock-down, drag-out budget battles.

Arias's steadfast opposition to Contra aid in a face-to-face meeting with Reagan was used in the halls of Congress to defeat the aid, earning Arias the enmity of the Reagan Administration and U.S. hawks in general. But the restriction of aid to the Contras did not deter the Reagan Administration, which the Iran-Contra record shows helped mount an effort by "private benefactors" to arm and supply the Contras.

It was in this context that North, along with Secord, built the secret airstrip on the Santa Elena Peninsula, from which "private benefactor" airplanes flew arms and supplies to the Contras inside Nicaragua.

The Secret Airstrip

The airstrip, which The Tico Times and several international correspondents uncovered, had been built in a remote valley called Portero Grande. Residents in the area had reported seeing large aircraft coming and going, and Iran-Contra investigations eventually determined that on one occasion one of the aircraft had gotten stuck in the mud.

The airstrip's ownership was traced to a company called the Santa Elena Development Corporation, which in turn was traced to a phantom company in Panama called Udall Resources. The principal of Udall was one Robert Olmstead, the

pseudonym for a Vietnam buddy of Oliver North named William Haskell.

Udall Resources turned out to be just one of a bewildering number of shadow companies set up to cover the network providing assistance illegally to the Contras. The land the airstrip was on had been expropriated by the administration of Daniel Oduber, but the government could not take possession because the owners had not been paid. Following revelations of the use of the airstrip to rearm the Contras, Arias made the expropriation final.

The expropriation became an irritant to U.S.-Costa Rican relations, and one occasion the U.S. used its influence to block an international to Costa Rica because of lack of progress in settling. Costa Rica eventually agreed to take the issue to World Bank arbitration, which resulted in Costa Rica paying the owners of the land \$13 million.

Later, President Monge was to tell The Tico Times that "men with maps" whom he believed to be from the U.S. government had gained his permission to build the airstrip, against the possibility of a possible Sandinista invasion of Costa Rica.

Upon taking office, Arias told Ambassador Tambs to close the airstrip. Meanwhile, the Costa Rican President worked to bring together Central American presidents in a peace plan that called for disarmament of all regional guerrilla groups as a prelude to free elections.

Two weeks after the discovery of the airstrip, the Sandinistas shot down a cargo plane operated by the "private benefactors" in southern Nicaragua, capturing one of the occupants, Eugene Hasenfus. Recovered from the plane was a telephone book containing some numbers from Costa Rica. Reporters determined that the Costa Rican phone numbers belonged to the Special Operations Office of the U.S. Embassy and the home of Tomás Castillo, which turned out to be the pseudonym of C.I.A. station chief Joe Fernández, linking the U.S. government to the "private benefactors."

Iran-Contra Uncovered

The Reagan Administration, with Reagan himself steadfastly vowing to support the Contras to the end, vehemently opposed the Arias plan. But in November 1986, when U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese announced that U.S. officials had traded arms for

hostages in Iran and used proceeds from the arms deal to arm Contras in violation of a congressional ban, the lid was blown on the Iran-Contra scandal.

As a result, the Reagan Administration's Central American policy, which had relied heavily on an obsession with the contra effort against the Sandinistas, fell apart. The fitting epitaph for the shenanigans that went on in Costa Rica during the contra era was provided by local farmer and self-described CIA operative John Hull, who told the UPI, "We never knew when things were going from overt to covert to pervert."

In the resulting policy disarray in Washington, the Central American presidents were able to come to agreement on the historic Esquipulas peace accords signed on Aug. 7, 1987. The effort earned Arias the Nobel Peace Prize in October, 1987.

For the rest of the decade, tough negotiations to disarm guerrilla groups in both Nicaragua and El Salvador led to elections in both countries, won by La Prensa publisher Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua in 1990 and businessman Armando Calderón, of the rightwing National Republican Alliance in El Salvador, in 1994. ■

Columns Enlightened, Entertained

Tico Times columnists kept readers enlightened and entertained throughout the '80s. June Carolyn Erlick wrote about life in Sandinista Nicaragua; Bert Williams became official TT historian in the "The Way it Was"; and Fernando Quiros wrote "Economic Analysis," later taken over by María Elena Carvajal. In "La Macha," Henrietta Boggs gave readers an exciting (and often, hilarious) look at her life as the first wife of legendary three-time President José (Pepe) Figueres, before, during and after the historic revolution he led in 1948. Sharon Beinert and Lotti Tobler shared Costa Rican cooking secrets in "Now, Let's Cook It"; Ed Bernhardt gave gardening tips in "Home Gardening in Costa Rica" and is still helping gardeners today; and Gypsy Cole kept everybody enthralled with her jungle adventures in "Practically Paradise." Jerry Ruhlow penned "Fishing in Costa Rica," which after a hiatus was later rechristened "Free Spooling," and remains a favorite; and Rod Hughes gave readers a taste of local restaurant fare in "Out on the Town."

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Pope and Reagan Visited, Colón Collapsed

By John McPhaul

Special to The Tico Times

The year 1983 was the year Pope John Paul II visited Costa Rica as part of his historic eight-day odyssey to Central America and Haiti.

The first-ever visit by a pope to Costa Rica was marked by a visit to the National Children's Hospital, a call on President Luis Alberto Monge, a meeting with 40,000 delirious young people in the National Stadium, a meeting with justices of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and an open-air mass in La Sabana Park, with the participation of around one million people.

Costa Rica was also the Pope's hub, where he returned after visits to other Central American countries immersed in civil war. In Nicaragua, the pontiff was greeted by a reception line including Minister of Culture Francisco Cardenal, a Catholic priest whose position in the church was in question because of his participation in the left-wing government.

When the Pope approached Cardenal, the priest fell to one knee as the Pope shook his finger at him, demanding that he put his position with the church in order. During an open-air mass in Managua, the Pope was heckled by a group of pro-Sandinista demonstrators who demanded he express concern for Nicaraguans killed by anti-Sandinista "Contra" rebels.

When the Pope made a return trip to San José, Ticos surrounded the Papal Nuncio residence where the pontiff was staying to show their indignation. Meanwhile, anti-Sandinista rebel leader Edén Pastora stood nearby, calling for a "holy war" against the Sandinistas.

The next day the Pope traveled to El Salvador, where he visited the grave of martyred Archbishop Arnulfo Romero, who had been gunned down by a rightwing assassin after speaking out against Salvadorean army death squads.

The Pope's visit was also marred by news that the regime of then-Guatemalan strongman Efraín Ríos Montt, defying a papal plea for clemency, had executed six suspected guerrillas just four days before John Paul was due to arrive in Guatemala.

Costa Ricans reluctantly bid their visitor farewell with a final display of love: as the Pope's flight took off in the morning sunshine, the Central Valley sparkled with flashes of sunlight reflected off thousands of mirrors in a Tico-style "hasta luego."

A Visit from Reagan

In December 1983, with Costa Rica facing one of the most difficult economic crises in its history, U.S. President Ronald



Will Wilson | Tico Times

Memorable Salute to Ticos: Uruguayan President Sanguinetti.

Reagan came to visit on a tour of Latin America. With the United States beginning a campaign against communism in Central America and the Sandinista government firmly entrenched in neighboring Nicaragua, Reagan's visit had particular significance.

The U.S. Secret Service virtually shut down San José for the event, which was carefully orchestrated, leaving nothing to chance. The main event was a ceremony at San José's National Theater, in which Reagan and Monge were to sign an extradition treaty.

The ceremony provided the only occasion for spontaneity, when Communist Party congressman Eric Ardón stood up in the gallery to deliver an address denouncing U.S. policy toward Central America.

Reagan looked baffled for a moment, before reaching for an earpiece for a translation. When he was apparently unable to get a satisfactory answer from the earpiece, an aide scuttled out from the wings of the stage and whispered something in his ear, while a forlorn President Monge sat ashen nearby.

As Ardón continued his diatribe, the audience began stamping their feet to drown him out. Secret Service and Civil Guards closed in on the congressman, but Ardón's fellow congressmen insisted he should be allowed to finish.

Reagan then made his way to the podium, where he said, "Of course, I couldn't understand what he was saying without an interpreter. But I'm told he was expressing the communist viewpoint. It's a tribute to democracy that he is allowed to do so in a democracy. We wouldn't be allowed to do so in a communist country."

The audience broke into cheers and gave Reagan a standing ovation, scoring a clear victory for the U.S. chief.

Sanguinetti Lauds Ticos

In October 1989, 16 heads of state from all over the hemisphere gathered in Costa Rica in a celebration of freedom and democracy, at the invitation of President Oscar Arias. Among other things, the event was notable for the face-off between then-President Bush and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

But for Ticos, the highlight of the summit had to be the dinner held in the National Theater Oct. 28, when Uruguayan President



Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Ticos welcomed Pope (above); Reagan, Monge signed treaty.



Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Julio María Sanguinetti made an extemporaneous speech lauding the democratic progress made in the Americas, and which included a line that could be found on billboards around Costa Rica for months thereafter: "And I say today that where there is a Costa Rican, wherever he may be, there is freedom."

Earth to Chang

On Jan. 15, 1986, Costa Rican President Luis Alberto Monge held extra-terrestrial talks with Costa Rica's astronaut Franklin Chang, the first Latin ever to orbit earth. Chang, who chatted with the President from the cabin of the U.S. Space Shuttle Columbia, also appeared twice in two days on Costa Rica TV from this heavenly loft.

Colón Collapses

Costa Rica's economy hit the skids in

1981 with the collapse of the colón. The national currency was officially devalued in December 1981 from ₡8.60 to the dollar to ₡20 to the dollar, a drop of 130 percent.

But the true collapse was more like 400 percent, as the dollar soared to ₡40 in street trading. As a result of the greater than expected decline, many local enterprises which had restructured their operations on an estimation of a devaluation to ₡20 found themselves on the verge of bankruptcy as they faced payment of their dollar debts at the doubled rate.

The collapse of the currency, plus an inflation officially rated at 64 percent and more realistically estimated at almost 100 percent, posed enormous problems for the new government of Luis Alberto Monge, who faced a negative dollar reserve estimated as high - or low - as \$300 million, internation-

Juan's Bones

A presage of bad feelings to come between Costa Rica and Nicaragua occurred in 1980, when the Sandinista government declared that they had found the bones of Costa Rica's national hero, Juan Santamaría, in the town of Rivas, where Santamaría had performed his heroic act of burying the *casona* in which arch-fiend William Walker had been holed up in 1856.

In an act of apparent good will, the Sandinistas returned the bones to Costa Rica, which received them in a solemn ceremony on the Costa Rican - Nicaraguan border, attended by top officials from both countries.

Tico forensic scientists who insisted on examining the bones determined that they actually belonged to a cow.

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Fugitives Busted, Noriega Fell, Chang Called

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al credit cut off, negotiations stalled on refunding a foreign debt of more than \$2.5 billion and inflation running at more than 50 percent annually.

Noriega Falls

Trouble began to stir in Panama in September 1985, when the tortured, decapitated body of guerrilla leader and former Panamanian Defense Minister Hugo Spadafora was found floating in a river on the Costa Rican side of the border with Panama.

Reports that Spadafora, who had joined Nicaraguan rebels in the effort to unseat the Sandinista government, was on his way back to Panama to denounce drug trafficking by U.S.-backed Panamanian dictator Gen. Manuel Noriega, led to the widely held belief that the strongman was behind the murder. The crime galvanized opposition to Noriega, which increased when the United States indicted him for drug trafficking in 1989.

In the same year, reports began to filter in from western Panama that guerrilla groups were gathering to launch a bid to unseat Noriega.

Noriega responded to the growing dissent over his authoritarian rule and reports that he had been linked to drug trafficking by annulling elections and suspending his country's constitution to remain in power.

In October, military officers staged a coup attempt that was thwarted. After months of demonstrations against the strongman that resulted in tense street battles between demonstrators and Panamanian Defense Forces, the United States stepped in with the invasion of Panama.

The strongman finally turned himself in, to be extradited back to the United States for trial.

To this day, he continues to languish in federal prison in Florida.

Accused Nazi Digs In

In 1985, the protracted effort to expel accused Nazi war criminal Bohdan Koziy

began. The alleged Nazi past of the former Ukrainian policeman finally caught up with him when he was tracked down by Nazi-hunters at the Jerusalem-based Simon Weisenthal Center.

Koziy was accused of killing eight people, including four-year-old Jewish girl, while working for a Ukrainian police unit linked to the Nazi SS in Poland.

He eluded capture by hiding out until his lawyers could intercede. Eventually, the Soviet Union sought Koziy's extradition, but the only attempt to detain him was thwarted when Koziy put a gun to his head on his front porch and refused to be taken alive. The Ukrainian claimed he was a victim of mistaken identity and enjoyed the controversial support of former San José Archbishop Román Arrieta during his years here.

Poland sought Koziy's extradition in 2003, only to see him die in the hospital just days before he would have been arrested.

Life on the Lam

In the early 1980s Costa Rica became a magnet for fugitives escaping U.S. justice. Costa Rica had an antiquated and porous extradition treaty with the United States, which brought those on the lam to the country in droves.

In August 1982, 11 fugitives wanted on drug-trafficking charges were arrested. The same month, The Tico Times broke a bizarre story of a U.S. fugitive and con-man, an evangelical preacher named Randolph Rudd who had set up shop in a mansion in the San José suburb of Santa Ana. Rudd was wanted for having bilked dozens of sick, elderly people who had sought a miracle cure at Murrieta hot springs in California.

In the Santa Ana mansion Rudd, in the company of another U.S. fugitive named Vincent Carrano, entertained U.S. citizens who were attracted to Costa Rica by a combination of Rudd's promises of salvation and the prospect of investing in a gold-mining operation in Puntarenas.

Investors were impressed by a table-size map of the world, which purported to show political events leading the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world. Rudd



Tico Times Photo

Beloved Visitors: Astronaut Chang, Mother Teresa.

bragged of his friendship with former Costa Rican President José (Pepe) Figueres, who even posed for photos with two prospective investors.

For his part, Carrano managed to interest Figueres in a set of bonds issued by the German Weimar Republic in the 1920s. Figueres contended that Costa Rica could negotiate the bonds, at a discounted rate, with the then-government of West Germany.

Things came to a head in November when Rudd was finally arrested and became the first fugitive extradited from Costa Rica to the United States. Carrano had fled before he could be nabbed.

After Rudd's extradition, the floodgates opened and Costa Rican authorities began extraditing dozens of fugitives to the U.S., something made easier in 1983, when then-President Luis Alberto Monge signed an extradition treaty with visiting U.S. President Ronald Reagan.



Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Foreigners Lost and Found

1989 was the year of foreigners lost... and found.

The headlines in April were dominated by searches for three hikers lost in the jungle near Barva Volcano in the Central Valley, a U.S. tourist who vanished on a hike through the dense forest on Cocos Island, and a Canadian visitor who disappeared in Cahuita National Park. A happier ending was in store for Bill and Simone Butler, a Miami couple rescued by the Costa Rican Coast Guard in August, 65 days after their 38-foot sailboat was sunk by killer whales in the Pacific Ocean. Simone, 52, and Bill, 60, credited Costa Rica's Patron Saint, the Virgin of Los Angeles, with their dramatic rescue, after picking up news of the annual pilgrimage to honor the beloved Black Virgin on the radio in their five-foot rubber life raft, and praying to her.

Though both had lost 50 pounds and were suffering from dehydration and sores, the grateful couple went directly from the Golfito Hospital to the Basilica in Cartago on their own pilgrimage of thanksgiving to "La Negrita," accompanied by hundreds of Tico well-wishers. ■



Eric Amorde | Tico Times

Tico Times Photo

Fugitive Rudd (left) was first to be extradited; Noriega headed for U.S. prison.



Maria Elena Esquivel | Tico Times



Maria Elena Esquivel | Tico Times

Victims: Linda Frazier (above, left, with husband Joe and son Chris) died of her injuries; at right, Martha Honey greeted her husband, Tony Avirgan, on his arrival at hospital.

La Penca: The Tico Times' Darkest Hour

By John McPhaul
Tico Times Staff

On May 30, 1984, The Tico Times lived its darkest hour. Nicaraguan rebel leader Edén Pastora had called a press conference to air complaints that he was being pressured by the United States to join Nicaraguan contra rebels based out of Honduras. A group of more than 20 journalists traveled to Boca Tapada in the northern part of the country to make the canoe ride to Pastora's jungle encampment of La Penca, on the Nicaraguan side of the San Juan River.

On one of the canoes was Per Anker Hansen, a Danish photojournalist, who was conspicuous for a large aluminum camera case which he cared for meticulously, covering it with plastic to avoid getting it wet.

When the journalists arrived at La Penca in the early evening, Pastora welcomed them in a shack built on stilts, where, despite the guerrilla leader's protestation that he wanted to hold the press conference in the morning, reporters began to pepper him with questions.

Some reporters in the back of the press scrum noticed that Hansen seemed to be having trouble with his camera, and he left the room.

Moments later, an earsplitting explosion rocked the scene.

Two Costa Ricans journalists, Channel 6 cameraman Jorge Quirós and soundman Evelio Sequeira, died at the scene, as did several of Pastora's guerrillas. Tico Times reporter Linda Frazier, wife of AP Correspondent Joe Frazier, who was covering the contras in Nicaragua at the time, and mother of a son, 10-year-old Chris, bled to death before reaching the hospital at Ciudad Quesada. Guerrillas handling the evacuation gave preference to those they felt had a chance of surviving; Linda was loaded onto the last boat, almost at dawn on the following day.

At least a dozen other journalists were seriously wounded. Pastora, one of the first evacuated, escaped with minor injuries.

Help Never Came

It took all night to evacuate the victims by canoe and transfer them to ambulances for the long, bumpy ride to Ciudad Quesada. Throughout the night, The Tico Times was assured by U.S. Embassy officials that help — requested by the first victims to reach the hospital — was on its way, in the form of rescue helicopters to ferry the wounded to the hospital. It later turned out the helicopters had never left Panama.



La República

The Bomber: "Per Anker Hansen" turned out to be Vital Roberto Gaguine.

At the hospital, Per Anker Hansen, with superficial wounds on his arms, calmly answered reporters' questions from a wheelchair. He was last seen checking out of a downtown San José hotel, disappearing thereafter without a trace.

Almost a day passed before suspicion fell on the "Dane." A manhunt ensued as reports began circulating about his true identity. One report, attributed to sources in the U.S. government, had the suspected bomber as a member of the Basque terrorist group ETA. Various other speculative reports followed, including one that held that the bomber belonged to a Uruguayan guerrilla group.

The local investigation into the bombing was hampered by the fact that the blast took place in Nicaraguan territory, and by the time investigators reached the scene, evidence had been removed. Several Tico Times requests that the FBI aid in the investigation were rebuffed.

Honey and Avirgan Start Investigating

One of the victims of the bombing, ABC cameraman Tony Avirgan, and his journalist wife Martha Honey began their own investigation into the bombing.

Based on the testimony of Carlos Rojas, a carpenter who acted as a go-between between the couple and alleged members of the terrorist group that carried out the bombing, Avirgan and Honey reported that bombing was the work anti-Sandinista rebels under the leadership of U.S. farmer John Hull, depicted as a key liaison between Nicaraguan contra groups in northern Costa Rica and the CIA.

Hull sued the couple in Costa Rican courts. It was dismissed and the couple counter-sued in U.S. federal court in conjunction with the public-interest law firm the Christic Institute, alleging that Hull and 29 others, many later implicated in the Iran-Contra scandal, were part of a broad-ranging conspiracy to undermine the U.S. Constitution. The suit was dismissed.

Finally, A Break

Years passed with no conclusive evidence showing the true identity of the bomber, until a reporter for The Miami Herald, Juan Tamayo, caught a break. While in Paris in 1994, he met the member of Argentine People's Army, who said he recognized the bomber as a fellow member of the leftist group, Vital Roberto Gaguine.

Meanwhile, Doug Vaughn, an investigator for the Christic Institute, had found a thumbprint "Per Anker Hansen" had given to the Panamanian Department of Motor Vehicles for a driver's license application. Investigators, who knew "Hansen" had spent time in Panama, had failed to find the

thumbprint because it was filed under "A" for Anker instead of "H" for Hansen.

Vaughn compared notes with Tamayo, who sent the print to Argentine journalists, who gave it to police, who confirmed it belonged to Gaguine, who, they said, had died in a 1989 attack by leftist guerrillas on the Argentine barracks of La Tarbaca.

Further confirmation came when Costa Rican congresswoman Sonia Rodríguez, head of a legislative commission investigating La Penca, traveled to Buenos Aires to confer with Argentine authorities. They provided a previously undisclosed photo of Gaguine that left little doubt that he was the author of La Penca.

Subsequent investigations by journalists revealed that Gaguine had worked with Sandinista militia under Nicaragua's Minister of Interior Tomás Borge, training militia members. However, many in and out of Costa Rica still insist the CIA was somehow involved. Many, including some of the victims and their families, maintain that the tangled web of interests in the region at the time of the bombing could have made for a marriage of convenience in the interest of eliminating Pastora. ■



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Déjà Vu – and Overspending Bill Came Due

Costa Ricans moved into the 1990s with a growing hopefulness for regional peace and an understandable sense of déjà vu. For the second time this century, and in the same order of succession, they had another President Calderón and another President Figueres. Rafael Angel Calderón and José María Figueres, the sons of legendary rivals Rafael Calderón Guardia and José ("Pepe") Figueres, took their turns at the helm in 1990 and 1995, squiring their small nation through another decade of economic challenges exacerbated by the usual torments, both natural and man-made.

Calderón's first weeks in office were all but eclipsed by the first-ever World Cup appearance of Costa Rica's national soccer team, which scored a Central American first by advancing to the second round. The country ground to a halt at game times as feverish Ticos, including their new president, tuned in to watch.

"If I'm not going to be answering calls during those two hours, there's no reason anybody else should have to," Calderón told reporters.

Economic Woes, Cont'd

Though peace was on its way to Central America, the staggering economic consequences of regional conflict and overspending continued to rage in Costa Rica. Pressure from the International Monetary Fund to reduce the size of the state and open borders



Julio Laínez | Tico Times

Hold My Calls: President Calderón joins fans with 'Mundial' fever.

to trade would mark the entire decade.

Both presidents' efforts to reduce benefits for state employees and eliminate thousands of public-sector jobs sparked massive strikes and protest. An array of government programs met with the budgetary ax, including special tax breaks for the country's pensionados or foreign pensioners. Prices on basic goods went up, as did the retirement age, and the sales tax from 10 percent to 13 percent. Ticos moaned and endured.

A decade of commercial protectionism also began to crumble, as the country opened its borders to more imported goods, renewed its focus on exports, and massaged its cumbersome bureaucracy to become more attractive to foreign investors. Mini-devaluations kept the colón on equal footing with the dollar. The state banks' historic monopoly on offering savings and checking accounts ended in 1995.

Talk of privatizing behemoth state insti-

Not A Word!

The Tico Times made journalistic history by stoically refraining – for more than a year – from publishing a single word about the O.J. Simpson case, which was making sensational headlines and inspiring endless commentary worldwide. Our commendable restraint earned the paper a salute from San Francisco (Calif.) Chronicle columnist Herb Caen, who suggested a new motto for the TT masthead: "The Only Newspaper the Simpson Jury Can Read."

tutions began early in the decade and grew under Figueres and his successor in 1998, Miguel Angel Rodríguez. Powerful public-sector unions seethed at the notion.

Costa Rica held true to its reputation for paying its foreign debt, but overspending and indebtedness continued. Its successes, however, lured many multinationals, including microprocessor giant Intel in 1996, which set positive new standards here for labor and community relations. In a series on "Labor Pains," The Tico Times looked at abuses by some "drawback" firms.

Tourism, Environment in the Spotlight

Costa Rica welcomed its millionth visitor

Page S29 ▶



Dr. José G. Jiménez M.
FACE
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The  '90s

Forests Fell, but Nature Awareness Soared

◀ Page S28

in 1999, and tourism grew steadily, becoming the country's top dollar earner. Hotels and resorts popped up throughout the country, causing repeated clashes with environmentalists as wilderness areas were bulldozed and the country started learning about the importance of sustainable development and the fragility of its natural wonders.

Unlawful logging threatened habitat nationwide, leading to a clamor for a total ban on logging in the Osa Peninsula and discovery of a road being pushed through the jungle in Tortuguero on the northern Caribbean coast. The TT published investigative series on pesticide abuse, water pollution and captive wildlife. The country began exploring debt-for-nature swaps and the sale of "carbon bonds" to offset pollution in developed countries.

For the first time, biologists couldn't find any Golden Toads during their yearly species inventory at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. A new species of dolphin was identified on the Caribbean coast.

The Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE) announced controversial plans to dam a canyon on the Pacuare River. Environmentalists with the Sea Shepherd group sounded the alarm on dolphins dying in tuna nets. Scientists trying to protect sea turtles on the northern Pacific coast clashed with villagers. And the "Iguana Mama", German scientist Dagmar Werner, launched an unsuccessful effort to teach local farmer to raise iguanas for meat.

All Costa Rica's fuels became unleaded, and the *ecomarchamo*, or annual emissions test, became mandatory for license plate renewal. A Texas court accepted a class-action suit filed by banana workers who claimed they had been left sterile and suffered a host of other health problems following exposure to toxic herbicides banned in developed countries. And long-criticized banana companies started cleaning up their act: Standard Fruit Co. became the first food-producing company in the world to win the "Green Seal" of the prestigious



Julio Láinez | Tico Times

International Standards Organization (ISO).

Peace Arrives

Peace finally came to the isthmus in 1996, when the Guatemalan Peace Accord ended the first and last of the Cold War-era conflict. Panama eliminated its army and, in 1999, became owner and operator of its Canal. Honduras shifted its police from a military to a civilian force. And thousands of impoverished Central Americans continued to flee poverty and institutional chaos at home, streaming into Costa Rica, filling low-paying jobs in agriculture, construction and housekeeping. In a poignant series on the "Nowhere People," TT writer Mauricio Espinoza spent time with migrant farm workers in northern and southern Costa Rica, chronicling their lives, hopes and heartbreaks.

Milestones

The decade saw its share of milestones. The Free Port of Golfito opened in 1990

Loggers wreaked havoc throughout Costa Rica: at right, former forests float on Tortuguero Canal.



Julio Láinez | Tico Times

with the country's best deals on imported appliances. The notoriously brutal San Lucas Island prison Costa Rica's notorious "Devil's Island" closed, and renovations began to transform San José's long-abandoned National Penitentiary into a museum for children.

The brand-new Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court made its first rulings early in the decade, including the decision to eliminate duty-free privileges

for deputies. And Ticos got their first Ombudsman, Rodrigo Carazo, whose office was bombarded with citizen complaints about everything from health care to police torture and pollution.

Pan Am made its last flight from Costa Rica and folded its wings in 1991, 64 years after its birth and 62 years after it opened

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María Elena Esquivel | Tico Times

First Farewell: Pam Am's Ronald Alpízar said 'hasta luego' to history-making airline when it stopped flights here in '81: a decade later, it resumed flights to C.R., then folded its wings for good.

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With Peace Came Tourism, Immigrants, Scandals

◀ Page S29

this country to commercial aviation. The Tico Times recalled the airline's glory years in a series of articles.

The country's phone numbers changed from six to seven digits. A second brief attempt to institute daylight savings time ended in catastrophe after some Ticos stubbornly refused to reset their clocks, and plans became mired in "new time or old time?" confusion.

Tico-born astronaut and national hero Franklin Chang, after being stripped of his Costa Rica citizenship by an overzealous bureaucracy, ended up paving the way for Ticos to be legal dual nationals - and regaining his own Tico citizenship. Swimmer Claudia Poll brought home the country's first Olympic gold medal.

Health Worries and Breakthroughs

For the first time in nearly half a century, dengue fever returned to Costa Rica on the wings of its carrier, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. Potentially fatal cholera also returned after a long absence, causing nationwide hysteria and hasty public education efforts, but infected only a few dozen victims before fading away.

A Tico Times series looked at Costa Rica's alcoholism problem and the resources available to battle it.

Doctors performed the nation's first heart and liver transplants and delivered Costa Rica's first test-tube baby. In one of the country's most tragic accidents, patients received overdoses of cobalt radiation from a poorly adjusted machine at San José's San Juan de Dios Hospital. And a health official's sick joke that a Chinese restaurant had served mice to its customers caused an outcry from the Chinese community that ended with President Miguel Ángel Rodríguez showing solidarity by

A Great Decade for Columns, Features

The pages of the TT were enriched all decade long with a wealth of columns and features, some of which are still running. Perennial mainstays Mitzi Stark ("Report from the Campo") and Jack O'Brien ("Someone Said") made their debuts, along with "Exploring Costa Rica" and "Central America Update." Mike Garrett started "Insurance in Costa Rica", continued today by brother David. Susan Liang converted the TT's annual "Exploring Costa Rica" guide into a user-friendly bestselling book. Oscar Chavarría's incomparable poems were promoted from the Letters column, where they had appeared often, into "The Poet Cornered". Shawn Larkin introduced readers to the incredible underwater world off Costa Rica's coasts; Kate Galante started explaining language and culture in "So to Speak". Fran Vaughan-Watson educated readers about nutrition, Harvey Haber shared his life as a B&B owner, Jim Corven offered consumer tips, the Via Holística group wrote about alternative health, and comic strips both educated and entertained: Oscar Sierra's "Myths and Legends of Costa Rica", David Norman and Chris Montero's "Natura" and "Tropical Trivia", and Omar Valenzuela's "Tour Guide Show".



Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Bienvenido! Irina and Alexander Kopper welcomed son Esteban, Costa Rica's first test-tube baby.

attending with his Cabinet a televised dinner at a local Chinese restaurant. The author of the hoax was fired.

Land disputes turned bloody. A squatter-related shootout in 1997 in the south Pacific beach town of Pavones claimed the lives of longtime U.S. resident Max Dalton and a Costa Rican farmer. The tragedy sparked a bitter international controversy that lasted three years.

No Lack of Scandals

Scandals dominated the headlines all decade, beginning with the "Chemise Case", which became an issue in the presidential campaign and continued to haunt President José María Figueres. Brothers José and David Romero published a book, *El Caso Chemise*, linking Figueres to the murder of a marijuana dealer known as "Chemise" in 1973, when Figueres was an 18-year-old lieutenant in the Civil Guard during the administration of his famous father, José ("Pepe") Figueres. The younger Figueres sued the Romeros for libel, but the celebrated trial failed to clarify the case.

In 1994, the Banco Anglo Costarricense, the country's oldest bank and a pillar of the national banking system, closed following losses of more than \$100 million. A dozen of the bank's top executives were charged with suspected corruption responsible for the demise. Also biting the dust amid scandal and leaving investors stripped was the private Banco Germano.

Eight presidential aides were convicted and former President Luis Alberto Monge was cleared following the longest trial in Costa Rica's history and a 10-year scandal involving the looting of the National Emergency Fund of \$125 million. Later in the decade, the Family Assistance Fund was looted of some \$70 million.

Canadian Leonard Zrnic was convicted of investment fraud after four years in prison without a trial, based on a boiler-room operation he ran here in the '80s known as Swiss Investments Corp. Tico

Times writer Ronald Bailey unraveled the complex web of companies operated by U.S. financial consultant Edwin Lowery, who enticed investors with unregistered mutual funds and farms through his Investment Shop in the '80s. He was later sued for some \$4 million by disgruntled investors, and slipped out of Costa Rica in 2002. And TT writer Peter Brennan looked at the claims of controversial teak company Bosque Puerto Carrillo, which came under fire for selling millions of dollars in unregistered stocks, mostly to U.S. and Canadian tourists.

Toward decade's end, investors were trying to recoup their money from wunderkind Marc Harris of the Harris Organization, and the band played on. . .

A Disastrous Decade

The '90s started shakily, with a "seismic swarm" of near-continuous small quakes unleashed by local faults wreaking havoc in

Beware the 'E-Word'

Tour companies and publications here and abroad were warned not to use the word "ecotourism" because it was a registered trademark belonging to local tourism operator Bary Roberts. His efforts to cash in on the e-word were short-lived, but Canadian Darren Hreniuk persisted well into the next decade in trying to claim exclusive rights to "canopy tours," which he said were his patented invention.

the western Central Valley area of Puriscal, as buildings slowly cracked, floors split and roads sank. In 1991, a 7.4 monster quake left dozens dead, leveled homes and crumbled bridges in the Caribbean province of Limón. The temblor lifted the coastline, peeled acres of virgin jungle off steep slopes in the Talamanca mountains and caused irreparable damage to railway tracks, marking the definitive end of "Jungle Train" from San José to the Caribbean. Officials had hoped to revive the historic Atlantic Railway - formerly the Northern Railway - which had stopped service due to economic woes the year before, on the eve of its 100th birthday. Other victims of the Limón quake were San José's National Theater and National Library, which suffered structural damage and were closed for years for repairs.

Hurricane Mitch lingered off Central America's Caribbean coast for days, killing 7,000 in Honduras and pelting Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. In Costa Rica, Hurricane Cesar did more damage two years earlier in 1996, flooding the Southern Zone and wiping out rice crops.

Drugs, Kidnappings

Years of record cocaine busts resulted in a treaty between Costa Rica and the U.S. to jointly patrol national waters and airspace for drug shipments.

Kidnappings and takeovers took top headlines. In 1992 Public Security Minister Luis Fishman was kidnapped by a reputed member of the Honduran death squads. He

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Julio Lainez | Tico Times

All that Glitters: President José María Figueres and wife Josette Altmann welcomed Olympic gold medalist Claudia Poll and her trainer, Francisco Rivas.

Disastrous Decade (Century?) (Millennium?) Ended

◀ Page S31

was released after the family paid a ransom. The following year, the Nicaraguan Embassy and the Supreme Court fell victim to assailants in bloodless incidents. In 1996 a German tourist and her Swiss tour guide were held in the Nicaraguan jungle for 71 days, and later that year a Dutch couple met a similar fate. All victims were released uninjured.

Police coined the term “chapulines” or “grasshoppers” for the young street thugs responsible for a rash of snatch-and-dash street crime in the country’s urban areas.

Police Training Scrutinized

In 1994, a police anti-narcotics unit raided a house in Desamparados south of San José, shooting off the lock on the door. Behind the door, 12-year-old Wagner Alfonso Segura took the shotgun blast, dying before medical help arrived. The resulting press scrutiny of the police unit revealed that the squad had received abundant military training from the U.S., Guatemala and El Salvador. This came as a shock to most Ticos, who had been unaware that their demilitarized “police” had been subject to so much military training, something that had begun in earnest during the 1980s in response to tensions with Nicaragua during the Contra war. National Liberation Congressman Walter Muñoz led an investigation which determined that Costa Rica had, in Muñoz’s words, “lost political control of the police.” The result was the drafting of a police statute, which more precisely defined police functions and provided for more professional police training. It was still recognized, however, that some police units, such as anti-narcotics units, would require specialized training.

The Weird, The Wonderful

The Lost and The Clueless: A travel agent in Germany didn’t know the way to THIS San José, sending a bewildered woman to San Jose, California while her daughter waited for her here. The makers of “Jurassic Park” (and the dinosaur book’s author) were no less disoriented, placing Costa Rica’s capital on the coast and giving the country an air force. And President Rafael Angel Calderón, Jr. immortalized himself by telling reporters during a visit to Spain that Costa Rica had no indigenous populations when the Spanish arrived. (He later said he’d been misquoted.)

For an instant, day became night in 1991 during the first solar eclipse since 1787. UFOs were rumored to be responsible for at least two nationwide blackouts during the decade.

A U.S. cook adapted a recipe for Tres Leches, the Nicaraguan confection that took Costa Rica by storm in the ‘80s, christened it “Costa Rican Cream Cake”, and entered it in the 34th Pillsbury Bake-Off, becoming one of 100 national finalists in the contest. She and



Julio Laínez | Tico Times

Collapsed bridges, buildings were just part of quakes’ toll all decade.

her husband had fallen in love with the dessert during a visit here and asked the TT for the recipe.

The Costa Rica family told The Tico Times how they came by their patriotic surname – an ancestor who migrated here from an unknown country changed his name to that of his adopted homeland.

Two U.S. tourists, dazzled by a self-described “Bri-Bri princess” in a souvenir shop, spent over \$1,000 on assorted “pre-Columbian artifacts” which turned out to be fakes. And the Nigerian scam letter made its first appearance in Costa Rica, cleaning out the bank account of at least one local businessman.

Someone stole the red carpet that welcomed visitors to Costa Rica’s Foreign Ministry building, the Casa Amarilla.

David Hellyer, whose photo appeared in The Tico Times in 1957 when he was adopted by his U.S. Embassy parents, returned to Costa Rica in 1993 for a joyous reunion with

his large Tico family.

In 1992, Salvation Army Capts. Michael and Louise Sharpe launched the Angel Tree in The Tico Times to bring Christmas to hundreds of needy children, starting a tradition that continues today.

A 15-year-old campesino in the Northern Zone area of Sarapiquí claimed he was visited by the Virgin Mary, sparking a stampede of pilgrims to the rural area, which now boasts a chapel and is still visited by the faithful.

Costa Rican artist Rosibel Pereira, who paints with her foot, became the first Latin American to receive the Victory Award from the U.S. National Rehabilitation Hospital. And Costa Rican entertainer Ricky Campbell was awarded Canada’s Medal of Bravery for rescuing 24 people from a burning airliner, despite his own serious injuries.

The “Chupacabras”, or “goatsucker”, a supernatural or extraterrestrial being said to gobble up livestock in Mexico and Puerto

Rico, “arrived” in Costa Rica. And cell phones became such a status symbol here that at an odontologists’ conference in San José, organizers reported that more than half the phones checked at the door were toys.

The New Millennium... Or Not?

Debate over whether the millennium was ending in 1999 or 2000 started raging as early as 1996, along with disagreement over whether the country was ready for the Y2K bug. Both arguments turned out to be much ado about *nada*. As the decade (or century, or millennium) neared its end, the TT published a series on “Ticos of the World” – Costa Ricans such as astronaut Franklin Chang, Nobel Peace Laureate Oscar Arias and army abolitionist José (Pepe) Figueres, who had made a difference not only in their tiny country, but in the world. ■

Hurricanes Wreaked Havoc: Right, U.S. rescue workers overwhelmed by tragedy left by Hurricane Mitch in Honduras.



Will Wilson | Tico Times

The TT – A Training Ground

The Tico Times started life as a training ground for aspiring journalists, and it has played that role ever since. Countless young newspeople got their start at the TT, going on to make names for themselves in the Big World, and the paper’s flourishing internship program continues to draw bright beginners (as well as experienced journalists in search of a sabbatical), giving them the chance to cover a whole country – and often, other countries in the region – in a fascinating part of the world.

The  '00s

New Decade, New Century, New Issues for C.R.

New decade, new century, new issues for a country that is resting largely on its laurels of the last millennium.

The first decade of the '00s has only just reached the hump year, but much has happened already to shape, and reshape, the country.

Just five years ago, the ambitious reelection crusade of Nobel Peace Laureate Oscar Arias appeared to have come to a screeching halt when the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court (Sala IV) rejected his first two motions to overturn a constitutional ban on reelection.

After suplexing the Constitution with a favorable Sala IV ruling in April '03, Arias wrestled challenger Ottón Solís against the ropes to a twelfth-round decision to come away with slip-decision title last February. This month he returned to the Casa Presidencial, 20 years after his first term started in 1986.

Arias inherits a new country in a world with a new geopolitical reality.

Central America is no longer a Cold War battleground - a situation that defined Arias' first term in office, and benefited Costa Rica's economic development for more than a decade.

Global relations, and specifically relations with the United States, are today defined more by economics rather than political ideologies. While the politics of the Cold War made bedfellows of the two countries in the past, the neoliberal economic

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Fernando Vindas | Tico Times

'Combo No': Citizen protests paralyzed the country, obliged President to backtrack.

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The  '00s

Election Surprises, Presidential Scandal Shocks

◀ Page S33

model of free trade now threatens to be a giant, smelly dog that climbs into bed between the once-cozy couple.

No Snooze Alarm

Costa Rica over the last five years has also experienced a bit of an unpleasant, yet necessary, awakening.

The image of a safe, healthy and peaceful middle-class country has been challenged by an increase of violent crime, citizen insecurity, corruption scandals, the emergence of the child-sex industry, and growing gap between rich and poor.

The collapse of several high-interest rate "loan operations," coupled with several recent scandals involving the ever-increasing number of sportsbook Internet-betting firms and online casinos, raised concerns that Costa Rica has become a haven for off-shore money laundering.

Even the country's green image has been challenged in recent years, as environmental and conservation groups criticize the government for not walking the walk.

The good news is that Ticos' sense of social justice and ownership of country remains alive and well as they put democracy in action, not just on Election Day, but throughout the year in marches, protests and demonstrations for change.

It's not a coincidence that Costa Rica is the last holdout on the U.S.-Central American Free-Trade Agreement (CAFTA). What appears as indecision to some may be due diligence demanded by a democratically savvy Costa Rican public.

Dozens of marches, both for and against CAFTA (mostly against) have flooded the capital streets on numerous occasions over the last few years as government institutions and notable Tico figures continue to weigh in with their opinion on the matter.

At press time, the fate of CAFTA in Costa Rica was still unclear. (For more on CAFTA, read the TT's 100th-Anniversary Supplement, in May 2056.)



Julio Laínez | Tico Times



Fernando Vindas | Tico Times



Mónica Quesada | Tico Times

Man in the Middle: Candidate Ottón Solís made it difficult for his rivals, forcing eventual winner Abel Pacheco (left) to nation's first runoff election in 2002, and obliging a recount before Oscar Arias (right) was declared President in 2006.

ICE Sí, Combo No

Tens of thousands of Costa Ricans took to the streets for 19 days in March and April of 2000 to protest what they viewed as an effort by the government of then-President Miguel Angel Rodríguez to privatize the electricity and telecom services provided by the state monopoly Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE).

In the largest show of public force in recent times here, the citizenry succeeded in shutting down the country and forcing the government to withdraw its "modernization" efforts.

At that time, the country was adamantly opposed to privatizing the state-owned giant, although public sympathies appear to have since shifted, following five more years of often unsatisfactory telecom and Internet service from ICE.

Murders, Crime Shocked Country

A high-profile bank robbery and the murders of two national journalists and



Jeffrey Arguedas | Tico Times



Mónica Quesada | Tico Times

Scandals involving two ex-Presidents, Rafael Angel Calderón Jr. (left) and Miguel Angel Rodríguez, rocked the country.

three U.S. coeds visiting Costa Rica caused national and international outrage – as well as outpourings of solidarity – over the last five years.

In March 2000, the brutal murders of U.S. students Emily Eagen and Emily Howell, both 19, rocked the sleepy southern-Caribbean beach towns of Puerto Viejo and Cahuita, near where the bodies were found executed by the side of the road. The murders led to an international media blitz, a massive manhunt and the eventual arrest and guilty verdicts for two young men who had killed the girls and stolen their rented vehicle.

A year later, a similarly gruesome story unfolded in the southern-Pacific coastal town of Golfito, where the body of Shannon Martin, a 23-year-old University of Kansas student, was found stabbed to death the morning of May 13, 2001.

The victim's mother, Jeanette Stauffer, launched a tireless campaign to bring her daughter's killers to justice. Three years later, two of the three suspects, Golfito natives Kattia Cruz, 29, and Luis Alberto Castro, 33, were found guilty and sentenced to 15-year prison terms. A clear motive was never established.

The murder of two national journalists here also shook the country.

On July 7, 2001, popular radio personality Parmenio Medina was gunned down in front of his house, galvanizing the nation and awakening fears that a new level of organized crime had crept into Costa Rica.

The journalist was executed at point-blank by a hired gun. For several months prior, Medina, on his radio program "La Patada," had been investigating the financial bookkeeping of now-defunct Catholic radio station Radio María, headed by controversial priest Minor Calvo, who was fingered as the suspected intellectual author. The case remains unresolved.

In December '03, magazine journalist Ivannia Mora was shot to death at traffic light. Police arrested and charged her former employer and four accomplices with ordering the killing.

In March '05, it was bucolic Santa Elena de Monteverde's turn to be touched by violence, during a harrowing and grim bank robbery and 28-hour hostage situation that led to nine deaths – four clients, two bank employees, two bank robbers and one policeman.

Presidential Scandals

The year 2004 saw the arrest of two of Costa Rica's former Presidents for corruption-related charges; both scandals involved alleged illegal payments to government officials from foreign companies contracted by the Costa Rican government.

Former President Rafael Angel Calderón Jr. (1990-1994) was arrested and investigated by the Prosecutor's Office for aggravated

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An Award-Winning Paper

Dery and Richard Dyer at Maria Moors Cabot awards ceremony.

The Tico Times has been the proud recipient of the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) Pedro G. Beltrán Award for distinguished service to the community (1981); a Special Citation from Columbia University's Maria Moors Cabot Awards (1985); the National Conservation Prize (1990); the IAPA Grand Prize for Press Freedom (1995) the Salvation Army's Others Award, for launching and supporting the Angel Tree program (1998) and the National Tourism Chamber Media Award (1998).

Wake-Up Calls: More Crime, Investment Losses

◀ Page S34

corruption for allegedly masterminding the distribution of \$9.2 million "commission" on a \$39 million medical equipment purchase by the Social Security System.

The second case involved an alleged multimillion-dollar payout to former President Miguel Angel Rodríguez (1998-2002) and several of his administration officials from international telecom giant Alcatel, which won a \$149 million contract with the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE) in 2001.

The scandal forced Rodríguez to step down from his recently elected post as the first-ever Central American Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS). He was arrested and taken into preventive custody when he returned to Costa Rica in October to face the corruption allegations.

Both former Presidents were placed in nearby cells for six-month preventive sentences in La Reforma prison, and later moved to house arrest for several more months.

Today, the investigations are still under way and no charges have been filed. Calderón and Rodríguez are free with certain limitations; for example, they must check in with the Judicial Branch every two weeks and cannot leave the country.

It Ain't Easy Being Green

When President Abel Pacheco announced shortly after taking office in 2002 that a priority of his administration would be to pass legislation making environmental guarantees a constitutional right, conservationists cheered; the new administration appeared to be green.

Yet four years later, the environmental guarantees have still not been passed by Legislative Assembly and the overall verdict is still out on the Pacheco administration's true colors.

Like dancing the Foxtrot, for every step made forward to protect the environment, there was also a step backwards.

While much of Costa Rica is protected by the government, funding to enforce protection remains insufficient. The Universidad Nacional in 2004 said that levels of animal poaching in protected areas – particularly Corcovado National Park – had reached tipping levels.

A new Fishing and Aquaculture Law passed in 2005 was hailed as a positive step



Mónica Quesada | Tico Times



Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Terrified tourists fled violence in peaceful Monteverde; murder of journalist Medina (right) rocked country.

forward, although loopholes – including a provision that allows shark finning as long as fisherman tie the cut fins onto a shark's body before landing the catch – soon appeared, and even won Pacheco the dubious distinction of being named "International Shark Enemy of the Year" by German group Sharkproject.

The fate of visiting sea turtles is also a concern. The Marine Turtle Restoration Program (PRETOMA) calculates that 90% of the leatherback turtle population has been wiped out over the last two decades.

Also – and always – a concern is the relationship between development and the environment. A Presidential decree in 2004 permits felling of 15% of a coastal property's virgin forest, and 25% of its secondary forest, if done in the name of an "eco-tourism project."

Environmentalists claim the decree will permit further deforestation – the likes of which contributed to a massive mudslide in August 2002 in the Atlantic-slope community of Alto Loaizo de Orosí, burying seven people and a dozen homes under 50 feet of mud.

3-4% Monthly Returns!

The collapse of more than a half-dozen high-interest rate "loan operations" over the last few years has hit many TT readers close to home, and put more than a few members of the expat community into a situation of financial dire straits.

After years of running fast-and-loose



Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Shocked investors faced closed doors at 'The Brothers.'

loan operations and/or tax shelters that promised unlikely monthly interest rates around 3%, the unregulated financial institutions fell like dominoes during an 18-month span in 2002-03.

The first operation to fall was Anderson's Ark, an offshore tax shelter run by charismatic, Bible-paraphrasing, self-taught lawyer Keith Anderson, whom the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) identified as one of their most-wanted men.

Anderson, who insisted the U.S. income tax is an illegal war-time measure, ran what he called "an educational society," and what the IRS called "an abusive tax shelter." Anderson's Santa Ana compound was raided in February 2002, and he was jailed for 10 months before being whisked out of the country by U.S. Marshals during a dubious midnight run following a botched extradition proceeding.

Next to go was the "granddaddy" of the unregulated high-return game: an investment business known locally as "The Villalobos Brothers," which promised monthly returns of 2.8-3% on "personal loans" of \$10,000 or more. The Brothers, which some claim was in business for 20 years, closed July 4, 2002, when prosecutors raided the San Pedro office and froze \$7 million, leaving some 6,000 clients in a lurch totaling an estimated \$800 million. One of the Villalobos brothers, Osvaldo, was arrested, while Bible-quoting Luis Enrique skipped town.

Many investors are still awaiting closure on the issue (and their money).

Next to fall was The Genesis Fund, a high-interest rate offering that once actively sought clients in Costa Rica, before going quietly into the night by mid-2002.

VINIR, the country's oldest currency exchange house, packed it up in September after suffering serious liquidity problems.

Next down, a Villalobos-copycat operation known as Savings Unlimited, run by Cuban-born Luis Milanés, who quickly shut the doors to his San José office on Nov. 23, 2002, taking everything except for the wallpaper. Savings Unlimited once boasted 3-4% monthly returns on deposits starting at \$5,000. Like Enrique Villalobos, Milanés remains at large.

Another Internet-based operation, known as Costa Rica Green, apparently logged off for good in December of '02.

Six months later, in June of '03, the self-proclaimed "last man standing," Roy Taylor, president of The Vault, killed himself during a police raid of his downtown San José office. That raid was the culmination of a six-month investigation and subsequent \$3-million fraud allegation filled by the Vault's minority partners.

One day before the government intervention, the flamboyant Taylor told The Tico Times in an exclusive interview that he was planning to go straight and repay investors

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by liquidating 75% of his company's alleged \$20 million in assets.

Tough Year for Tough Love

2003 was a tough year for “tough-love” facility Dundee Ranch Academy, a controversial behavior-modification facility for wayward youth located on the secluded grounds of a former hotel in Orotina, on the Pacific slope.

The academy, home to 200 students from the United States and part of the Utah-based WorldWide Association of Specialty Programs (WWASP), was closed in May, following a government intervention to investigate allegations of rights abuse and torture. A series of TT investigative articles that started in October 2002 uncovered some questionable disciplinary practices, including allegations of children being forced to kneel for hours in solitary confinement, march in the sun, and physical restraint, among other things.

The articles led to an investigation by national child welfare agencies, non-governmental organizations and even the United Nations Special Committee on Torture.

The government finally intervened on May 23, prompting a chaotic revolt among the students, some of whom attacked the counselors, while others vandalized the facility or escaped into the surrounding fields.

The school was forced to close, as the children were taken back to the United States by their parents.

The owner of the school told The Tico Times he planned to reopen a kinder and gentler version of the academy – a plan the government said it would not allow.

Rebirth of a Nation (sort of)

A 100-year-old surveyor's error that resulted in several border stones being placed too far south into Costa Rican territory resurfaced in 2003, when the Tico government put down another set of border markers, reinforcing the century-old mistake.



Julio Lainez | Tico Times

Oops! Nobody was hurt, but driver of truck had a scare when old bridge in front of La Paz waterfall collapsed.

The government's unwillingness to admit the error prompted the rebirth of a tiny independence movement to form the Republic of Airrecú on the small swath of land misplaced by the borders. Airrecú's two main – and perhaps only – separatist leaders, “President” Augusto Rodríguez and “Vice-President” Omar Jaen (both of whom live in San José) announced that they were giving Costa Rica one last chance to reclaim their rightful land, before they claimed it for Airrecú.

Airrecú, home to some 5,000 campesinos, first attempted independence in 1995, prompting the government of Nicaragua to send troops down to the area (known in Nicaragua as Los Guatuzos nature reserve) to quiet the “rebellion.”

Eight years later, the movement resurfaced in the form of Rodríguez and Jaen, when the Costa Rican government threatened to relocate a village that was living too close to the border (or the mistaken border, as the case may be). The courts eventually ruled to leave the village alone, and Airrecú's nation ambitions again quieted.

Yet not only separatists are claiming the border is wrong. Also in '03 a group of Tico patriots, led by former President Rodrigo Carazo, started a movement to recall all Costa Rican maps for showing the wrong border.

According to the 1856 Cañas-Jerez Treaty with Nicaragua, the border should parallel Lake Nicaragua at a distance of 2 miles. In very simple terms, the triangle part of the border under the Lake is wrong.

'Virtual Country' Gets the Heave-Ho

President Abel Pacheco in August 2002 decided to expel leaders of The Global Country for World Peace, following reports that the spiritual cult had infiltrated the south Atlantic indigenous region of Talamanca and crowned one of its members “king.” Angry Bribri tribal leaders said the bogus monarch had no authority or support from the community.

The “virtual country” was started in The Netherlands by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 2000 and claims to have “domain of consciousness, authority in the invincible power of Natural Law.”

They also have a fictitious currency, which they offered to the Costa Rican natives for the right to turn Talamanca into their kingdom.

Pacheco, after consulting with the Minister of Security, ran the “nation without borders” out of Costa Rica's borders.



Mónica Quesada | Tico Times

Blessings: Dalai Lama conducted fire ceremony during his visit.

Sex Tourism in Spotlight

The growing problem of ‘sex tourism’ and the sexual exploitation of children was spotlighted when five Costa Rican men belonging to a group called the “Anonymous Pedophile Association of Costa Rica” were found guilty of corruption of minors in December 2001 and sentenced to 20-year sentences in Latin America's first-ever trial of an alleged pedophile ring.

The men were found guilty of giving drugs to minors, sexually exploiting minors and producing child pornography. The ring-leader was a 32-year-old former audio/visual technician at the University of Costa Rica.

The group was busted in July 2001 by Casa Alianza and the Ministry of Public Security's Special Sex Crimes Unit, which infiltrated the group using a fake identity on the Internet to set up an orgy party. The key witness in the trial, Casa Alianza investigator Rocío Rodríguez, received numerous death threats during the judicial proceedings, prompting a massive outpouring of international solidarity.

Casa Alianza's boss Bruce Harris, a rabble-rousing advocate for children's rights for years in the region, ended up resigning from his post in 2004 following reports that he paid a former Casa Alianza child – now an adult – in Honduras for sex.

Costa Rica's Answer to the Berlin Wall

It was compared to the Berlin Wall and the Great Wall of China. This is how the

“Great Wall of Costa Rica,” a border wall that was going to close off Nicaragua, was advertised in Managua, where tours were planned to the border to see the “Tico symbol of intolerance.” The TT went to check it out and found a small ditch of water where a small fence was going to be built around the Customs parking lot. Nicaraguans were still crossing the border, no problem. ■

Birth of The Nica Times (in the words of its proud Papa)

The history of print journalism is divided into two categories: The Nica Times; and everything else before and after.

In 2005, The Tico Times, a youthful 49 years old, gave birth – with the alleged help of fertility pills – to a healthy four-page baby boy, and the media gods smiled and said: we shall name it “The Nica Times” (name translated from the original Aramaic).

A weekly supplement to The Tico Times, The Nica Times is based in the colonial city of Granada and covers Nicaraguan politics, tourism, business, environment and human-interest stories.

Despite its modest beginnings, the NT quickly made a name for itself as the go-to English-language news source in the land of lakes and volcanoes, increasing its newsstand sales by more than 300% in the first year alone. The paper is now sold in more than two dozen points of sale around the country, and growing.

The paper too is about to outgrow its baby clothes, and plans to increase in the not-too-distant future.

–Tim Rogers

Ah, Yes, the Gremlins

From the Women's Club Fashion Show to the 15-foot luxury yacht, the TT Gremlins – those mischievous, malevolent, invisible imps – have been with the paper since its first edition, and to date no fumigation method has had any effect on them whatsoever.

God knows, we've tried them all.

The Gremlins take devilish delight in humiliating, embarrassing and mortifying Tico Times staffers by invading copy AFTER it has been carefully written, edited, proofread and corrected. They steal words, garble sentences, distort numbers (numbers are their favorite victims) and even disappear whole paragraphs. They turn photos upside down and switch captions around. They put headlines over the wrong stories. They insert strange names into photo captions. They mess with ads. There's really no end to their havoc, once they get going.

You may think we're kidding. We wish we were. TT staffers nobly accept full responsibility for the usual brain misfires that befall us all, but Gremlin mischief is something else entirely. You know it's Gremlins and not just a human goof when you read something completely incomprehensible – something you suspect didn't start out that way and wasn't supposed to come out like that – or when the *torta* in question is acutely embarrassing to the TT.

So here's to the Gremlins! Since we can't get rid of 'em, we might as well let 'em join the celebration. (Sometimes treating them nicely keeps them quiet for a while.)

Memories, Updates & More

The First Employee Of the New Generation

In the early 70s, Dery decided to revive her Mom's Tico Times. I was the first employee of the new generation. My own Mom had been the last employee of the old generation, and was clearly jealous of my being brought back into the TT fold. I was in high school at Lincoln, and my job description said something about being the school correspondent, but I was really just a gopher whom Dery kept busy doing everything she could think of.

It was my first desk job (much better than changing tires at Super Servicio), and I enjoyed it immensely.

Dery picked me up every day when she went to work (which became later every day), and took me home in the evenings. Everything was new and exciting then. Dery smoked Capri cigarettes continuously, and would have enormous trouble getting the VW to start, into gear, and eased into traffic.

The office was on the second floor of a converted house in front of the original Tin-jo restaurant, where we faithfully went to lunch every day. Dery ordered fried rice with butter



and soy sauce, and I ordered #90 *con mucha mayonesa* (fried shrimp).

The typewriters must have been in the Dyer family for at least 3 generations. We printed over at her father Dick's press shop where we were very proud of the new offset printers. We would painstakingly retouch the negative of every page by hand, and go over the proofs of the typesetters (who didn't speak a word of English) letter by letter. Every edition was pored over in excruciating detail, and the pride of seeing the TT for sale was overwhelming.

Those were my formative years, and it's been downhill ever since! The sight of Dick and Dery moving ahead against all odds, day after day, and succeeding, will remain with me forever as a testament of how to make dreams come true.

-Jonathan Harris

(I am currently spending most of my time in Huntington Beach, California, with my son David, 12, and daughter Laura, 7. I travel to visit my father every 2-3 months; he still lives in our same house in Escazú.)

Since departing the TT, I graduated from Lincoln, Tulane (geology), the University of Arizona (MS), and have lived and worked in Nevada, Montana, Arizona, Durango, Zacatecas, and Sinaloa, in addition to California, where I moved about 25 years ago. I spent five years managing Europe and the Middle East for an Environmental Engineering firm, and am now Director of Western North America for the same company. Of course, I'm on airplanes quite a bit during the week, but I do my best to spend my weekends with my children. My email is jon.harris@ch2m.com, and my phone is 714/435-6323.)

Early Days and Brave Beginnings

Thirty-seven years ago my early days in C.R. coincided with the trend-setting return to publication of the TT after a period of

reorganization.

I was privileged, and slightly bewildered, to receive an invitation to cooperate in the modest fields of publicity and distribution, as this forward-looking paper was rolling off the first offset presses to operate in C.R. Modern indeed!

Well I remember a kindly Dick Dyer explaining to me the interesting procedures in the print shop, whilst preparing, as he put it, "all the news print to fit."

Also I have in memory an already formidable Dery Dyer early showing her talent for the exacting task of Editor, whilst commanding the respect of all, even from this awkward person twenty-plus years her senior. May Heaven send her many more years at the helm.

In those early days of brave beginnings, in no small measure were forged the bases of



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Memories, Updates & More

A Debt of Gratitude

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what we have become, and I personally owe a debt of gratitude to the TT for the opportunity of making friends and contacts during the launching of my life in C.R., and so, thanks again TT, and forward for 50 years or more!

—Patrick Oxenham

(Glad to say I'm still alive and kicking, continuing my life's work of more than 57 years of practice in the field of Physiotherapy. Something I must be doing right because I'm seeing new patients every week, although, thank goodness, I have more time now to enjoy the pleasure of just living and working from my home in San Rafael in Montes de Oca. Have no intention to retire whilst I am able to continue to achieve good results. It appears that everybody else is more stressed out than me, so, long may it continue, and don't forget to invite me to the next celebration when y'all make it to 75 years of publishing the TT).



The TT Created Community

I worked at the TT twice... in the late 1970s and then again at the end of the 1980s. History was being made in the region with the Sandinista challenge to Somoza, their victory and the counter-revolution, plus turmoil in El Salvador and Guatemala.

On my first day at the TT, I worked until 4 a.m. cutting up minuscule letters to paste corrections onto the boards. I was then locked into a closet with strong chemicals to print headlines. I came out in shock... but the following Thursday was the same, and the Thursday after that. In fact, it's nearly that late now as I write this. Thanks to Dery and RD, I became a night owl.

One day for a story on Operation Drake, I took a taxi at 5 a.m. to catch a bus to the airport, took a small plane to Golfito, was helicoptered to a landing on the coast for a motorboat ride to board a schooner for a half-hour interview. The return trip included a run-in with an ornery billy goat on the airstrip while sitting out a downpour.

As a journalist, I had hits and misses. An article of mine in which a top adviser to Oscar Arias denounced U.S. policy in Costa Rica resulted in his being hounded out of the country. As a team, we uncovered clandestine landing strips along the Nicaraguan border, the illegal kidnap of fugitives by U.S. marshals and the takeover of public beaches by commercial land developers.

We also covered the arts, adventure tourism and news of daily life, including water shortages and price surveys. As reporters, we had an unspoken rule that you could turn any fun personal activity or interest into a story as long as you did your share of news briefs and rewrites first.

Human Interest And the 'Real' C.R.

Fifty years, it feels like I must have been around for most of them, but when I do the math, I realize I entered the scene a mere 35 years ago. In 1971 I arrived in Costa Rica from Mexico as an amateur who thought it would be fun to write for a newspaper. I had studied creative writing, and was at the time teaching a creative writing class at the Universidad Nacional in Heredia; however I had little or no sense of what it was like to be a reporter. However I liked people, had the ability to draw them out, and I loved to travel, so off I went.

My articles, as you may have guessed, were human interest ones, as well as the best-kept secrets for finding the "real" Costa Rica in far-off corners of the country. Back then it wasn't very hard to find a place that nobody

had written about; now I suppose it is more of a challenge. I had lots of fun learning to be a reporter.

My main problem was that I could never find a title for my articles. I could write an article fairly quickly, but then agonize for hours over a 3-to 4-word title. Soon I realized that the best thing to do was to hand the article over to Dery, and let her come up with a clever title.

She did every time, and in minutes! Dery was always ready with a positive word and direction; although mostly she threw you out there and let you figure it out for yourself!



I have not lived in Costa Rica for many years, but it continues to hold a special place in my heart. Whenever I am in Costa Rica I visit with Dery and sometimes write the odd article for the newspaper, and sometimes I do trainings for the staff. It is one of my delights to receive The Tico Times in my mailbox, read it and share it with friends.

May The Tico Times with its faithful reporting, and its ability to connect those of us who are far away, continue for many years!

—Linda Moller

(For many years I have made my living teaching Accelerated Learning Language classes, as well as corporate trainings such as Conflict Resolution, Multicultural Understanding, Communication, and Emotional Intelligence.

I have recently been invited to be part of a group of women who will be facilitating a grass-roots type program at the University of Nairobi. The goal is to provide training for women faculty of Universities of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania that will enable them to become high-level administrators.

My son Mar was an intern at the TT one summer and is now in his first year at University.

I am still in love with the sea, and am now living in my beach house in Mexico which has a spectacular view, and the sounds are wonderful.)

The Tico Times Twins



Historic! Isaac and Julisa Arguedas Fletes, 3, are the first twins ever to join the TT Family. They belong to Roy Arguedas of the Production Dept. and wife Erlinda.

What I most valued about my time at the TT was the way it created community. (When I moved to Chile in the mid-1980s, I hooked up with a gang of expats and bilingual Chileans to launch an English-language newspaper there. But with censorship and without tourists, it failed utterly.) I also picked up a bias against daily news in favor of weeklies, magazines and news sources that provide context and perspective.

On a more personal level, I learned how to be the kind of foreigner who makes a positive contribution to his/her host society.

So long live the TT ...may it continue to launch young journalists, foster local community and present Costa Rica to the English-speaking world for years to come!

—Lezak Shallat

(Lezak Shallat is a freelance reporter and journalist, based in Santiago, Chile)

Remembering Lovely Times

I am honored to congratulate you for your 50th anniversary. I remember the lovely times we shared together, I save those great memories in my heart.

Keep up the excellent work.

Best wishes.

—Trudy Watson

(Trudy Watson currently is working in the Ministry of Education of the Bahamas.)



I Celebrated The Paper's 25th

I fondly remember celebrating The Tico Times' 25th anniversary with Dery. I also recall the special, tender tribute she paid to her mother for her initiative in breathing life into the first edition of The Tico Times.

It was a time when the newspaper was coming of age, serious investigative journalism was emerging from the ever-eager staff, lawsuits, accreditation and licensing issues bubbled to the surface.

The move from the old Artes Gráficas plant to the new offices in the court district took place; the competition, albeit short-lived, that arose from a rival, free-distribu-

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Memories, Updates & More

Remembering the 25th

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tion English newspaper.

Don Richard, who had ink running in his veins, could not extricate himself from the printing business, and soon saw that The Tico Times had all of the necessary equipment to run a newspaper except for the press itself. Before long we were setting our own type, had a graphic-arts camera and were doing the color separations.

Although I was not part of the editorial staff (Judie and her lightening speed one-finger typing), the things I looked forward to the most were the late-night rush to get out the next edition, setting heads, pasting up the stories, printing labels, making the run to the Post Office to get the paper into the overseas mail. How much simpler things must be now with the computer.

The growth in the expatriate community over the last 25 years must have helped considerably circulation and with opportu-

nities to sell ad space. Trying to get commitments from local and international companies to run continuous ads in the paper was a weekly struggle; I can only hope that that pressure has diminished somewhat.

I left Costa Rica in 1983 to live in the Dominican Republic and eventually returned to the United States, married and started a family in Richmond, Virginia. After a career in international sales and marketing and international banking, my family and I relocated to Haifa, Israel, where I have been the Director of Finance at the Baha'i World Centre for the past 14 years. My daughters have grown up and are now attending university in the States.

I hope that The Tico Times has a wonderful celebration and that the next 50 years will continue to be ones of excitement and commitment to excellence in journalism. You are to be congratulated on all you have done.

—Gary Hogenson

At the Tico I Learned!

It has been so many years since I left my dear Tico Times, but I still remember everything as if it were yesterday. . .

So many beautiful memories fill my eyes with tears.

Although I had started out as a press photographer with other national media, it wasn't until I joined The Tico Times that I officially became one of Costa Rica's first women press photographers. It was where I took my first firm steps to learn this arduous job, which after many long years I left in 1989 to travel to Washington, D.C. in search of new challenges.

At the Tico I learned! I learned to respect my profession and be respected by my colleagues, all men. My dear "Gringo" friends taught me well everything I needed to know to defend myself in a world, back in 1979, surrounded by machismo and jealousy, when it was extremely rare to see a camera-carrying skirt in a sea of pants. . . and getting into a world where only the strongest had ventured.

I think Dery's tenacity as a journalist and editor always gave me the shove I sometimes needed, as well as that confidence of an "American liberated woman" that we Ticos don't have culturally. In addition, under the always true direction of our "Daddy", beloved Mr. Dyer, may he rest in peace, with his infinite patience, my professional development blossomed, and in a few years I had begun to hone my photographic skills – with plenty of hard knocks (literally) and developer stains on my clothes from long hours in the laboratory battling in the dark with my chemical enemies.

Around 1984 I was contracted by the Associated Press to be its exclusive correspondent in Costa Rica, and soon I would be managing AP's first office in San José, capturing the news on Fuji film and sending it to the world on an old transmitter out of Barrio Aranjuez. How did I do it without digital technology? Only my grey hairs know!

At The Tico Times I lived many adventures, some beautiful, others terrible. One of the latter that marked my life forever was the death of my colleague Linda Frazier, an exceptional, sweet and generous woman who went to Heaven one dark and horrible night during one of those press conferences we used to cover together in Nicaragua's no-man's land. I should have been at her side as usual but wasn't, due to a mysteri-



ous act of God.

On that small paper I had professional opportunities that a beginning photographer can only dream of, such as photographing world-famous people and seeing my photos published on the front pages of prestigious newspapers and magazines in the U.S. such as the New York Times, Miami Herald and many others.

Now I have the chance to give dear Dery infinite thanks from the bottom of my heart for giving me all her unconditional support, her knowledge as a journalist and most important: her love and friendship of so many years. . . You know what hurts the most? Not having had the privilege of knowing her mother, who 50 years ago initiated the small giant that is now The Tico Times. ¡FELICIDADES!

—Maria Elena Esquivel

(I have my own photo studio named PHOTO HISPANA Studio & School in the center of Washington, D.C. only 12 minutes from the White House, where I do photos of everything from elegant weddings to food to pampered pets. But what I enjoy most is giving photography classes to low-income Latinos, from Peruvian nannies and Mexican housekeepers to psychologists or engineers from Argentina or Bolivia who have no papers and have to work in construction, all of them in search of the American Dream through photography. This year I hope to open a branch in Maryland and publish a small free Spanish-language magazine on photography.)

I've Had a Great Ride on All Fronts

After all these years, my memories are all a tangled blur but a happy tangled blur. It was the early 1980s, all of Central America was a mess and there was so much spillover in Costa Rica for us to report on. And there were all the usual shady characters and their scams and scandals...

And there was of course us – most of the time it was Dery, me, Jean and Lezak and our old battered Underwoods. And of course Mr. Dyer. I loved hearing his stories; the one I remember best was of him trying to do a live radio report on an eclipse – in the pouring rain – on a rooftop in Argentina.

I've stayed in journalism. My last year at the Tico I was dividing my time between the TT and a SIP (IAPA) *beca*. I did a project on the Inter-American Human Rights Court, and also did a lot of freelancing that year and began work on my book, *The Costa Rica Reader*.

I came back to the States in late 1983 and ended up working for Reuters in New York. I handled a lot of Latin America copy, and periodically went to Mexico to help out during various Central American crises... After five or six years, I moved to Miami, where I covered Florida and the Caribbean, including Haiti and at times Cuba. (Once I briefly met Fidel).



In 1992, I helped cover the Clinton presidential campaign and two years later went to Washington... where I ended up living around the corner from Tico Times alum and dear friend Stephen Schmidt. I got married two years later – to Ken Cohen, a widowed rabbi with a five-year-old (My shower cake said "Oy!") We later had a second son.

My days of traipsing around Latin America, (or North America for that matter) are over for now – I still work, but closer to home. Zach is 15 now, Ilan is 5. Both are joys. We live in Bethesda and I still work for Reuters covering Congress, usually just three days a week now, leaving me time to be with my family.

In my "spare" time, I write for magazines ranging from "Parenting" to the "Washingtonian." I also co-authored a second book, this one on childhood sleep: "Good Night Sleep Tight: The Sleep Lady's Gentle Guide to Helping Your Child Go to Sleep, Stay Asleep, and Wake Up Happy." I met my co-author, a social worker, after I consulted her when Ilan, at age two, was still up eight zillion times a night.

I've had a great ride, personally and professionally. I've been very lucky. I've covered everything from presidential campaigns to Voodoo festivals in a Haitian waterfall. I have a wonderful family.

But some of the best times I had were in that funny little pink house near the *Corte Suprema*, with the banana tree in the back yard and a perpetual crisis in the shop... I think of you – Jean, Dery, Lezak, Lyle, Katherine, John, Rod, Shirley, Trudy, Rodolfo, and of course Mr. Dyer. And Dery, sometime in the next 50 years, please learn how to use email!!!

—Joanne Kenen



Tico Toddlers Now Talented Grownups

I left Costa Rica to move back to the United States in 1991, and after a brief time in New York City, I ended up in Takoma Park, Maryland, living on the same street as former TT photographer Katherine Lambert. For six years I worked as an editor at a monthly nature magazine for kids (Ranger Rick magazine), and then for six years as a bilingual communications officer at a large international development organization.

For the last three years, I have been working as a freelance translator/interpreter, using both the Spanish I learned in Costa Rica and the Portuguese I learned in a language program at the international organization where I worked from 1998-2003.

My oldest child, Gabo (who as a two-year-old used to like to play with the little wind-up toy of a marching bear that Dery kept on her desk), is now 25! Gabo is a handsome young entrepreneur working in the music industry in Miami Beach, where he

uses his Spanish every day!

Camila, my youngest, will turn 20 in June and is finishing her second year at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. An art/design major, she takes after her father in her artistic talents. Camila is going to participate in a summer internship program in Costa Rica (ICADS) from June to August of this year.

—Lyle Prescott

Working at the Tico A Remarkable Experience

It was the summer of 1980 when I boarded a plane from Wisconsin and landed in San José about midnight. I was worried about how my new editor, Dery Dyer, would feel about picking me up at this hour.

As I walked into the airport, a petite young woman walked up to me and asked with a smile, "Are you Jean?" And with a wel-

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The Tico Times Was A Place of Much Laughter

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coming *abrazo*, she launched me on a life-changing journey.

I immediately knew I hadn't stumbled onto some ordinary reporting job with ordinary editors. After we arrived at Dery's house, in the dead of the night, dinner was being prepared. I assumed it was because of my late arrival. It wasn't. Dery and her dad Richard – I later learned – gave new meaning to the word “night owls”.

Working at The Tico Times was a remarkable experience during the 1980s. Central America was President Reagan's front on the war on communism. Journalists got a crash course in U.S. foreign policy, CIA operations, refugee resettlement, counter-revolution. Salvadoran refugees were cramped in camps along the northern border. Nicaraguan contras were setting up bases. And businessmen were being kidnapped in San José. The Tico Times walked a fine line during this era – an ominous cloud that hung over an otherwise upbeat TT.

But The Tico Times was also a place of much laughter. I gleefully recall a sales-

man for penile implants showing up at the door, and Dery “reluctantly” printing an article on this Costa Rica first. In fact, I recall all sorts of odd and interesting people showing up at that little pink house that served as the newsroom – foreign journalists, real-estate scam artists, peace activists, and the wayward children of some of America's most rich and famous.

My most disgusting memory: Walking several miles – barefoot – to a remote village on the Atlantic Coast to write a story about the “New Alchemists.” Because there was cow dung in the fields I was walking over, several of my toes became infected and turned green. Thanks to my trusty Swiss Army knife, I was able to save the toes from further decay. Never again...

So thank you, Tico Times, for green toes, excellent coffee, the bathroom “wall of fame” and so many fond memories. Happy anniversary!

–Jean Hopfensperger

(For nearly 20 years (gulp!), I've been a reporter at The Star Tribune in Minneapolis – land of blistering winters, dense snow and until recently, few Latin Americans. I've mainly covered social issues at the state Legislature and in the real world. But, thanks to the explosion of Latino immigrants to Minnesota recently, I now report on immigration and international communities. I love it. Haven't met one Costa Rican yet, but I'm sure they're out there.)

Wonderful Years. . . For Cupid, Too!

Since I first had the dream (nightmare) to be a reporter, the Tico Times acted as a beacon in drawing me to its little house by the railroad tracks. “What a perfect place to put out a newspaper,” I thought.

A few years later, after acquiring some experience writing under the byline Maria Elena Carvajal for some newspapers, radio stations and magazines, I finally took a drag on my Derby cigarette (I was a smoker then) and knocked on the door of that quaint doll house. Richard and Dery Dyer bid me welcome, unaware that they were going to experience a bad dream in having to teach me the do's and don'ts of English journalism.

“It was, I imagine somewhat similar to what I would experience later when I brought Elena to Miami and married her ten years ago,” says Matt.

Then the Dyers took the risk of publishing my columns, with their Tico flavor, about Costa Rican economic, labor, social, political issues for more than seven years. What wonderful years they were for me!

Thanks to those stories my husband, also a journalist (he worked for UPI for many years in Latin America), got an idea who I was. Time passed and both of us became widowed, Matt decided to spend some time in Costa Rica and we got better acquainted, when he began working for the Tico Times.

“What did this experience mean? Elena asked me.



“It meant a lot because Cupid got involved. And I had arrows sticking out of my carcass. At the same time the rhythm of work was pleasantly different from the ‘deadline every minute’ environment I had been used to.

“Elena and I salute the TT for all the doors that have been opened to many people, like us, over the past 50 years.”

Salud!

–Matt & Elena Kenny



No More Poetic Ads For U.S. Drug Trafficker

Loren Pogue was an American in his 50s who sold a lot of real estate in the Golfito area, a region full of lush tropical forests, animals and scandals. In the late 1980s, Loren would often buy many classified ads in The Tico Times, writing colorful descriptions of property for sale in paradise and giving his philosophy on life like this in bold capitalized letters: “FORGIVENESS IS THE KEY TO HAPPINESS.”

I first broke the stories about how the owners of the ranch at the hot surfing spot of Pavones near Golfito were major U.S. drug traffickers named Danny Fowlie and his son Danny Jr. In the course of my reporting, I linked the Fowlies to Loren, who was none too happy about this. I was on solid ground since Danny Jr. had introduced me to Loren as his ranch manager.

One day, Loren appeared at The Tico Times' parking lot and started shouting at me.

“I buy half the classified advertising in The Tico Times and I might pull it out,” he informed me.

This is a serious threat for any small newspaper. When I told Dery Dyer, our editor, she said, “Let's pull it for him.” This was an act of courage for Dery and her father, don Richard. It told me that they would back up my work. This is what distinguishes a great publication from a mediocre one.

A few months later, Loren was arrested in Florida on drug-trafficking charges.

My Tico Times Column on Day-to-Day Life in Sandinista Nicaragua Gave Me My Voice

Dery didn't give up easily. She kept asking me to write a column for The Tico Times from Managua, and I kept saying no.

I actually liked the idea, but I was in Managua as a journalist for Time Magazine. I'd promised them exclusivity. And I was afraid to ask. But Dery kept asking me, and finally, I got up the courage to ask Time. No problem, I was told.

Managua in the mid-1980s was at the crux of the Cold War. U.S. President Ronald Reagan had warned that Sandinista Nicaragua was only a two-day march from Harlingen, Texas.

The Contra war was at its peak, and the stories were big: a plane downed, Nicaraguan aid to the Salvadoran rebels, Sandinista reactions to important declarations in Washington, an oil embargo, a daily litany of bombs, mines, press conferences.

As a foreign correspondent in Managua, I lived this daily litany. And yet everyday life was something more, something different, than being caught in this somewhat absurd conflict between – in Reagan's terms – Communism and capitalism, between good and evil.

Sandinista women used makeup and went to beauty parlors, and at least one Army official got the latest cosmetics from her sister who worked with the Contras in Miami. The Sandinistas – and just about everyone else in the country – watched soap operas, and could passionately discuss every episode. Forget about press conferences while the whole nation was watching *Derecho de Nacer*.

Food was scarce and rationed, but people



invented exotic recipes with mangos and local ingredients. Those who had access to the dollar store could trade toilet paper for contraband beef or campesino-raised duck. The dollar store, a sort of glorified grocery store that vacillated between being available to anyone with dollars to being exclusively for the foreign diplomatic corps and Sandinista elite, was a story in itself. Who was buying all the Mickey Mouse towels?

As much as I loved my work with Time, observations about daily life had no place in my articles. Dery wanted a

column. And I gained a space for my perceptions of life in the midst of Reagan's Evil Empire.

So I wrote about food and soap operas and makeup and sometimes about Sandinista bungling and sometimes about Contra atrocities. I wrote about what it felt like to cover stories and I wrote about the stories behind the stories. And as I wrote, I became more and more observant of the ironies and tenderness of daily life in Nicaragua.

There was a war going on, but there was also a joyful life. Contras and Sandinistas were enemies, but the hatred stopped at the dinner table or over the makeup counter. I began to look for these details in every story that I covered, in every step of daily life. I wanted to have fodder for my column at The Tico Times.

I found a voice. It was a voice that looked at daily details and conveyed them in narrative form so that the reader could form his or her own conclusions. Time eventually sent

in someone from Mexico to take my place, and I started to work for a succession of other media, this time without exclusivity. Many of my Tico Times columns became the seeds for stories and op-eds. I found that the stories that emerged from my columns were almost always more commented on than my coverage of the big stories.

And although I left Managua in 1988, just before the Nicaraguan elections, to go to Berlin, I wasn't that surprised that the Sandinistas lost. It was all there – between the lines – in my columns.

Details, observation of daily life, and narrative expression told the story in a way that press conferences and news stories couldn't. I intuited that even before I began my column. And today, that's what I teach my journalism students. The Tico Times gave me the venue for my emerging voice.

Whenever someone asked me who I had worked for in Managua, I replied “Time and then The Miami Herald and some other media.” I figured that was how people would remember my Managua stint.

I might have had second thoughts. I was waiting for my luggage in the Warsaw airport, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. I noticed a familiar-looking man with an American passport slightly sticking out of his shirt pocket.

I was pretty sure it was Roy Gutman, then of Newsday, whom I had met once in Managua. He was looking at me too, and walked over, confirming his identity and adding, “You're the columnist from Managua for The Tico Times.”

–June Carolyn Erlick

(June Carolyn Erlick, publications director for Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, is the author of Disappeared: A Journalist Silenced (Seal Press, 2004). She also teaches journalism at Harvard Extension School, and is on leave in Bogotá, Colombia with a Fulbright Fellowship.)

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We Reported It All

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While awaiting trial, he contacted acquaintances at the Costa Rica Surf Hotel in Golfito. He told them he was still selling land in the Golfito area and a couple of people would be coming to look at properties.

Pogue was sentenced to 27 years in a U.S. prison for his role in shipping drugs from the Cali Cartel through Costa Rica and into the U.S.

We reported it all.

—Peter Brennan

It Was a Crazy Time

I was a staffer at The Tico Times back in the early '80s, and Linda Frazier took my place. What a crazy time that was.

One of my favorite things I ever wrote for TT was a column on "Piropos." The notion of men hissing at me as a compliment was pretty foreign to this young, feminist Gringa just learning Spanish. I wrote this self-righteous, indignant column that



would probably make me laugh today.

Wish I had a copy – or maybe not!

—Monika Maeckle

(Monika Maeckle now lives in San Antonio, Texas, where she's a Vice President of Business Wire, a commercial wire service. She recently earned her Master Gardener certification from the Texas A & M University Cooperative Extension and enjoys gardening, kayaking and cooking in her spare time. She serves on the Advisory Board of the Bexar County Land Trust and on the Board of the National Investor Relations Institute, Austin/San Antonio chapter. She has been married to Robert Rivard, editor of the San Antonio Express-News, since 1981. They have two sons, Nick, 21 and Alex, 18.)

TT: A Refuge for Critters Big & Small

When I began writing for The Tico Times in 1989, Oscar Arias was helping Central Americans disarm the Cold-War conflicts that had caused so much death and suffering in the region. As a biologist, however, I was more interested in reporting on a less dramatic but nonetheless insidious war – the steady destruction of the region's wilderness and other natural resources.

At The Tico Times, I had the good fortune to find an editor – Dery Dyer – who shared my enthusiasm for nature. She was happy to let me cover an array of ecological issues for the paper in the ensuing years, from threats to Costa Rica's rainforests to efforts to save the sea turtles that nest on its beaches. But Dery and her father, Richard, were not only supportive of my ecological obsession, they were animal lovers to a degree that made my interest in flora and fauna seem a bit academic.

The Tico Times' masthead may celebrate the fact that it is Central America's Leading English-Language Newspaper, but it could just as well read "Central America's Leading Refuge for Wayward Dogs, Cats and Journalists." There was a time when it seemed to me that The Tico Times acquired a new pet every week, either a stray that Dery had recently rescued, or an old family member who was down on a sabbatical from the Dyer enclave in the hills of Escazú.

I was a confirmed tree hugger and sporadic bird watcher, and I've been known to moan at taciturn troops of howler monkeys, but there were moments when writing an article in The Tico Times implied at bit more communion with my four-legged cousins than I really desired, at least when facing a deadline. The day I discovered that a kitten had peed on my notebook, I decided it was time to start working from home.

That said, I have always admired Dery's commitment to helping animals as I have The Tico Times' editorial commitment to the planet. I don't know how many animals she has rescued over the years, but I'm sure the numbers rival those of the freelance writers she has saved from starvation.

I suppose that I could add myself to the list of rescued strays. Certainly I've appeared at The Tico Times' doorstep in various states of scruffiness, and worse. I do know that the reporting I did for the paper was vital to my development as a journalist and environmentalist, and as I have moved from journalism more into environmentalism, I've come to appreciate the paper's commitment to our planet even more.

Despite its limited resources, The Tico Times has always done a better job of covering environmental issues than Costa Rica's major media, and I hope it will continue to do so for the next 50 years. It is a service that benefits all the country's inhabitants, from its incontinent kittens to its itinerant hacks.

—David Dudenhoefer

(David Dudenhoefer was regular Tico Times contributor for most of the 1990s. After returning to the United States in 1999 to get an MA at the University of Illinois at Chicago, he worked in Asia and Latin America as a consultant, freelancer and, eventually, as a communications coordinator for the Rainforest Alliance. He currently lives in Lima, Peru with his wife, Maria Angélica Vega, and her two children, Marcel and Isabel.)



Rainforests? No, MUD!

As a reporter for the Tico Times, I was invited by the new environmental commission in the Legislative Assembly to inspect deforestation near Tortuguero National Park. So I joined a group of 15 activists, reporters, and government officials to hike 10 miles to the park through a deforested area and an adjacent forested area. The government wanted to seize the remaining forested areas to create a biological corridor near the park.

The trip was initially a quite pleasant stroll through muddy pastures where Brahma cattle peacefully grazed. Of course, our intrepid government officials tut-tutted over the razed forests which these pastures represented.

As we got further from civilization, the trek became more arduous. Finally we reached the edge of the rainforest and it began to rain (why do you think they call it a rainforest?). City folks all, we broke out our umbrellas and continued our march into the heart of darkness. Looking back over the line of march, there was something faintly ridicu-

lous about all those umbrellas in the jungle.

My impression of the primary rainforest is plants everywhere, plants-on-plants-on-plants, incredible profusion. However, I confess that in the future when someone from, say, the Rainforest Action Network or a similar group, waxes eloquent about "primary lowland rainforests," my first thought will be "MUD"! Clinging, sucking, viscous, up-to-your-ass, omnipresent MUD. By the time our little jaunt was over, even the most die-hard Greens on the trip agreed that a little development, such as sidewalks, would be appreciated. A couple of city-bred Tico journalists on the trip eventually had to be put on horses to get them out.

—Ronald Bailey



Still Celebrating Life!

I have so many cherished memories of my 10 years in Costa Rica that it's impossible to single out one. People who read my columns, "Practically Paradise" and "Machita," know them all anyway!

I still laugh at some of my insane escapades in the jungle and adventures in traveling around the country. I image people's faces and celebrate the time that we shared. I look at photos that only begin to portray the unequaled beauty of the forests, beaches, rivers and mountains – and feel a bittersweet longing.

From Presidents to the homeless and everyone in between, I can only say, "Thanks for the memories."

After leaving Costa Rica in 1997, I've gotten older. How could that happen? Along the way, I had my own business, worked at a few other jobs, and most recently earned a Master's in Counseling. I started on a Master's in Non-Profit Leadership. I am accruing the 3,000 hours of counseling experience required to become a Licensed Professional Counselor in Texas.

Kimba, my boon and constant companion, died five years ago at age 15, and I still miss her. The other two critters who returned to the States with me from Costa Rica don't seem to have aged as much as I: Sundancer is now 16 and Moonshadow 15 by best reckoning. Each of the kitties has



adopted her/his own canine: Nightstar is an eight-year-old German Shepherd and Cherokee is a six-year-old Golden Retriever. The furfaces keep me sane – or close to it anyway.

I am blessed with good friends in my life, a home that I love, and a yard that tries to be a jungle. Life is good and I'm still celebrating it!

—Gypsy Cole

An Opera Critic Is Born

Richard Dyer and I had worked together on a neighborhood project for augmenting public lighting in our area; he knew of my interest in music, and suggested that I write a review of an upcoming opera of the Compañía Lírica, then in its second season.

I duly attended a performance of Rossini's The Barber of Seville, and wrote about the evening. Lezak Shallat gave me



several pointers on style, and kindly edited my first attempt at criticism.

I have been an occasional contributor over the past 25 years, and have seen the paper grow from 24 pages to its current format. Happy 50th Birthday, TT.

—Ted Wasserman

(Travel Agent Ted Wasserman is The Tico Times' opera critic, author of the "Travel Tips" column, and writes occasional reviews of concerts and restaurants.)

Thanks, TT, For Existing!

I think it was in October, 1991. I was a freshman at the University of Costa Rica, just starting my English major. Although I had been studying English for over three years, I was still very insecure and my experience

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with native speakers limited.

I woke up that morning ready to challenge my fate and possibilities, took my backpack and found my way to 8th Avenue and 15th Street. I had never been there but knew I could find the place; didn't know it was going to take me all morning. Tired and disappointed, I got to the corner, turned left and headed to a nearby drugstore, and lo! There it was... The Tico Times headquarters.

I took a deep breath and walked into the lobby. I was wearing shorts and a T-shirt, worn-out sandals, no socks! Now that I think about it, I was a real mess!

Two smiley faces welcomed me at the entrance. They were Trudy Watson and Xiomara Hidalgo. They asked me how they could help; I sat down and could not think of anything better to say: "I am looking for a job."

They asked me about my previous experience and skills. To tell the truth, other than delivering paintings to mechanic garages on a bicycle, my work experience was reduced to driving with my grandpa to the Sabana market every Saturday to buy fruit and vegetables for grocery stores. I told them I could speak English; that was it.

Somehow they pitied me; I left my resume (one hand-written piece of paper), my phone number, and my hopes. Next thing I knew, I was sitting in my new office editing the "What's Doing" Calendar section.

Five years later, I traveled to the United States on a scholarship that I could not have gotten without Dery Dyer's help. Leaving



The Tico Times proved to be one of my saddest moments and toughest decisions. I must say that I could not have been the person I am now, had I not worked there.

I learned the value of working hard, to share with other people from all kinds of countries and cultures, to write better, to speak better, but most important, I learned to listen. I could help others as they had helped me.

I grew up making everlasting friends, and learned to love them. For five years I could live with the father I never had at home, dear Don Richard, you know I mean it. I had thousands of brothers and sisters that advised me and preached at me whenever I was doing something wrong. I learned to fight, to dream, and I found, among the old photograph files on the second floor, the recipe for success.

After several years living in other countries, I returned to Costa Rica, finished my English major, got my Master's degree in Literature (thanks, Dery, for the advice), and have worked teaching English for several private and public universities and public institutions. Right now I am working for UNED and UCR as a full-time English professor, and, once in a while, I like to write poems and short stories.

I try to work hard and learn something new every day, but everything I do, and how I do it, is still a reflection of all the values and lessons I was taught at The Tico Times.

I am convinced that The Tico Times has been something good, necessary for me, for my country, and for my heart. I can find nothing but gratitude to Don Richard and Dery for having opened a space for me at their family table, for having invited me to eat with them, and having helped me grow a stronger and better person.

Thanks, Trudy, Xiomara and Adriana Salazar for having considered me useful, although, let's face it, at that moment, I did not look very promising! Thanks, Diego Herrera, for being my inspiration and guide, and the best boss I have ever had. Thanks to all the journalists, editor assistants, secretaries and receptionists who taught me how to write, to work and to be better. Thanks to all those guys I spent hours with getting the newspaper ready for delivery every Thursday evening and, many times, Friday morning.

Thanks, Tico Times, for existing, may your light never extinguish! Happy Anniversary, dear Tico Times.

—Minor Barrientos



Turtle Nesting, 'Gallo Pinto'!

The only thing that could keep me from a Tico Times reunion is doctor's orders. I'm having my second child soon and am earth-bound until then. I would have loved to reconnect with the paper's Diaspora – some of whom are still in my life. Karen Cheney remains my dearest friend and I have seen David Myer, Miriam Lefkowitz, Ronald Bailey, Peter Brennan and Emma Daly, though not nearly enough.

The Tico Times clearly left its mark on me professionally as well as personally. I work for a weekly and have covered a grab bag of topics from the Olympics to the White House. But nothing I've done at Newsweek has been as fun as covering turtle nesting. And I still would trade a plate of *gallo pinto* at the soda up the street for all the power lunches in Washington.

Congratulations!

—Martha Brant

The TT Set the Standard

My year at The Tico Times, 1992-1993, coincided with a complete life transition from punk to salsa, from music critic to journalist, and rockily out of singlehood. And boy did I learn a lot.

The Tico Times set the standard for me for ethics and for careful, aggressive reporting. While I was there, Peter Brennan produced the fantastic series on teak investment scams in Costa Rica, which was a brave and fascinating piece. The Tico Times was never scared to take on the big guys.

I try to model my own news-planning meetings with my staff – I'm now senior correspondent for Reuters in Chile – on the great weekly planning meetings run by Dery. What a wealth of ideas and projects would come out of the reporters.

Kurt Aguilar and Cathryn Domrose, Catalina Calderón, John McPhaul, Brian Harris, Maria Sacchetti, Peter Brennan and others I worked with at The Tico Times or met during

my time there, have become life-long friends. A few years ago some of us had a wonderful reunion at the Aguilar-Domrose home in San Francisco, and there was a belly laugh a minute as we reminisced.

My favorite reporting memory is an interview with then Minister of Natural Resources Hernán Bravo. The government had denied reports and complaints that a tourism project on the Caribbean coast was violating environmental laws. I hiked up the hill from the Tico to his office, and showed him maps that proved the hotel being built was partly overlapping both a nature reserve AND an indige-



nous reserve.

His immortal answer: "*Mirá, que vacilón.*" And the great thing: we ran it as a headline. Who else but the Tico would have dared?

—Fiona Martin Ortiz

May the Voices of Truth And Justice Prevail!

It's not every day that an incorrigible iconoclast and gadfly gets a chance to ply his trade in a paper as receptive to hard-nosed exposés and controversial opinion pieces as The Tico Times.

I was afforded this privilege when I lived in Costa Rica between 1994 and 1995 and, with less frequency, when I returned to the States and resumed what some call an engaged and combative brand of journalism "with a focus on Central America." My beat: Politics, the military, human rights and other socio-economic themes.

I have since unceremoniously kept emperors and other sacred cows suitably disrobed for all to see. Corruption, the drug trade, gang warfare, the resurgence of death squads,

human trafficking, child prostitution, poverty, malnutrition, disease and despair, all have provided grist for the mill.

I am now at the zenith of a 40-year multifaceted globe-trotting career. My byline has appeared in a number of prestigious publications. I also turned to the "alternative" press when the "mainstream" media deemed my stories too hot to handle. I took time to write three books. I'm putting the finishing touch-



es on my fourth.

I still champion the voices of political incorrectness, but the idealism and exuberance of my younger years have declined. The absence of concrete change in the face of intractable social problems has wearied me. I have become impatient. Time has come for a younger crop of maverick journalists to heed the call and lead a fresh assault on the inequities and perversions of the day.

It is in this spirit and with heartfelt gratitude that I join in celebrating The Tico Times' Golden Jubilee. To Dery Dyer, former colleagues and the current crew alike, I say *FELIZ ANIVERSARIO Y SUERTE*. May the next 50 years be fruitful and may the voices of truth and justice always prevail.

Abrazos a todos,

—W, (Willy) E. Gutman

The Tico Put Me On My Career Path

I really wanted to write something witty about my time at The Tico Times. However, I just wanted to let you all know that I loved my internship at the Tico. I feel as though I got to do so many different things, write in so many styles, travel around, interview interesting people and research some really interesting features.

It was the first time I have ever really enjoyed a job, and it put me on my career path for life: I recently got a job as a broadcast assistant at the BBC WorldService in London, in the Spanish Americas section, and I love it!

I feel that I owe the Tico a lot for where I am now! It was such a fantastic way to gain journalism experience rather than being in grotty old London (it may be a cool city, but it's wet, grey, expensive and miserable compared to Costa Rica!) And the experience was so much more exciting than anything I would have done on a local paper in London.

So thank you, it was exhausting but exhilarating, and for me, life-changing. Although I can't make it back this time, I will definitely be back in the future to visit and who knows what else!

In the meantime, rest assured that I am constantly reminding the Latin American department at work to write about Costa Rica (will not forget my beloved adopted country!) You'll see all the news on the web-page www.bbcmundo.com.

Many thanks and love to the whole team.

—Kim Beecheno

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My Dubious Distinction

In its 50 years, The Tico Times has never published a worse picture than the shot I took of Lake Managua. Readers who opened the Oct. 28, 1994 issue to the page 19 story on contamination levels in the lake were subjected to a photo depicting overgrown weeds in the foreground with an indistinguishable mass of gray where the near shoreline, lake, far shoreline and sky should have been. Readers had to take our word for it that the picture was, in fact, of the lake because it cannot be seen.



The photo, which earned me much deserved criticism from my colleagues, was officially proclaimed the paper's "worst ever" by then-reigning champ John McPahul, whose late 1980s picture of drought-affected cattle caused the professional photographer who developed the film to break into tears.

The photo was worse than any of the



plethora of dogs' behinds that made their way into the paper. It was even worse than a picture of people standing in line the photographer took from the driver's seat of his car; we know it was a "drive-by shooting" because the car's side door mirror is visible in a lower corner.

Not to be outdone by my feat, the next month I took what could arguably be the second-worst picture in Tico Times history – an awful shot of a dry irrigation ditch that ran on page 8 of the Nov. 11, 1994 edition. But alas, even I was unable to outdo myself.

The Winner? Brian's photo of Lake Managua.

Fortunately, improved technology and printing mean that it is highly unlikely that any picture approaching the wretched quality of my shots will ever appear in The Tico Times again. That means that my title is safe and that I will likely be able to go to my grave proclaiming to have taken The Worst Picture in Tico Times History.

Though ashamed of my photography, I am proud to have worked at The Tico Times, a paper that still remains far better than any mid-sized foreign-language paper I have come across anywhere in the world. I am honored to

have worked for Richard Dyer and glad that Dery Dyer was there to help me transform my poor writing into palatable copy. Without their leadership and hardened sense for news, The Tico Times would never have become the weekly "must read" it is today.

Congratulations to The Tico Times on its 50th birthday and congratulations to its readers for maintaining an independent, family-run paper that reflects the local spirit, values, quirks and idiosyncrasies – a rarity in this age of corporate publishing consolidation. The Tico Times has added much to the community and the country through its coverage over the years, in spite of having published my lousy pictures.

–Brian Harris

(Brian Harris worked at The Tico Times from 1993-96 and 2002-03. He has remained in Costa Rica. After leaving The Tico Times, he went to work for a business newswire that (thankfully) did not offer subscribers a photo service. He currently freelances and is Reuters' Central America Stringer for Commodities, the Central America Correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) and a Special Correspondent for The Miami Herald. Though he has improved his photography a tad, he does NOT recommend you hire him to photograph your wedding, bar mitzvah or scenic panoramas.)

Report on Baby Hummingbirds Was One of My Favorite Stories

I have been a contributor to The Tico Times over the past decades – usually on topics dealing with nature. The enclosed article, which appeared Jan. 21, 1994, is one of my favorites. Maybe some of today's readers will have the opportunity to extend a helping hand when a similar emergency occurs.

On Dec. 31 a neighbor called me with an emergency SOS: "Come over and tell us what to do. We have a hummingbird nest and the babies are crying and the parents haven't been around for three days."

My neighbors said the babies were born on the 23rd and they had been watching the parents feed them. The parents disappeared on the 28th, and feathers on the ground near the nest gave us the impression that cats had attacked the parents.

I brought the nest with the two tiny birds home and immediately prepared a mixture of boiled water and sugar for them. They were smaller than the first joint of a thumb. They quieted down after feeding and went to

sleep. I continued this diet for a few days and then contacted a biologist for additional advice. She said they needed protein, and suggested fruit flies.

I collected overripe bananas, papayas, and pineapple, placing pieces in several plastic bags. Soon we had swarms of flies which I killed and put in the artificial nectar solution. This was to be their basic diet, supplemented by nectar extracted from plants in my garden.

One fledgling was larger and stronger than the second, and I have been told that this is usually the case. I fed the babies about 12-15 times daily, and I placed the nest in a basket which was covered in the evenings.

At about 17 days of age, the birds started to leave the nest, grasping some cloth I had left in the basket. The larger one started exercising his wings. On Jan. 11, when the birds were about 20 days old, I was feeding them outside in the sunshine when the larger of the two suddenly took off.

He seemed to have no problem flying, circled around for a while, went to some nearby blossoms for nectar, and disappeared. A biologist friend advised that humming-

birds usually leave the nest at 20-26 days of age. Out first was just that age.

The smaller bird flew a bit on Jan. 13 (22 days of age) and returned to the area of the nest. Perhaps he did not feel strong enough to leave. I gave him additional liquid and flies on his return and he rested for a while. Later in the day he tried several short flights, and then took off again to join his brother in my garden, where we assume they will be able to find sufficient protection and food. Our biologist friend advised not to restrain the birds if they decided to go off.

I hope this account will encourage others who encounter baby or injured birds or animals to try to save them. Check with a vet or biologist for suggestions and contact any agency that deals with nature tourism and speak with their biologist-guides for ideas on care and feeding.

I always offer special prayers to St. Francis of Assisi for help and guidance. In this particular case, I was successful in saving these birds. In past instances, I have saved some animals and was able to prolong life for several days in others. There is always great satisfaction in



knowing that one has done one's best to lengthen the life of a living creature.

–Luis Ramirez

I Could Probably Write a Book

Working with the Tico, George, Dery, Christine and everyone was an incredible learning experience I will never forget. During this time I kept a journal in Spanish that I just read for the first time in nearly six years. It was quite painful to read because the grammar was so bad, but it demonstrates how each of us grows through each stage of our lives. It is great to have my journal as well as the articles I wrote that really reflect who I was and how I grew as a writer and a person throughout my short time at the Tico.

Everyone at the Tico treated me as part of the team. They taught and worked with me as well as rattled off the more than occasional joke about my Southern accent. In fact during the last month I was working at the

Tico, I spoke to my Dad on the phone and he told me I was starting to sound like a Yankee.

I also remember once a bird getting in the office through the window that I would open when I came in. I just caught it and let it go outside. Several days later I left the window open while I was gone briefly and apparently it happened again, but this time it wound up downstairs and there was quite a commotion.

I could probably write a book, and I bet we all could. Some ideas I could include are



the wall of pictures and funny postings in the bathroom, the turtles, lunches and get-togethers after work, the team-building whitewater rafting experience on that cloudy day in August and especially the banter with the entire staff.

I remember that it was not a big deal to open an umbrella indoors because you would rather have a little bad luck than be soaking wet, riding the bus and walking to work, being able to see something absolutely beautiful every weekend and still not be able to see everything that you would like to.

Sonia Cordero and her family made me part of the family and I will always cherish that. Doña Olga, Alonzo, Johana, Adrian and Erik were incredibly patient with me in my struggles to communicate, especially in the first month I was there. I loved being immersed not only in the language but in the culture as well through my Tico family.

After leaving the Tico I finished my journalism degree and decided to go to graduate school to continue learning Spanish. I received my Masters of Hispanic Studies in 2003 and taught Spanish at Auburn University for three years.

Throughout all of this my passion has been photography and writing, and I have done the occasional freelance piece. Many times I find myself saying, "When I was in Costa Rica..." and people around me can just see me light up.

I recently worked with American Hiking Society in Chattanooga, Tennessee for six months. I now live on Lookout Mountain with my cat, Dora, where I can walk to some great trails in the area. I will be teaching a Spanish class at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in the summer and fall.

–Hilary Browder

Memories, Updates & More

The Tico Times Made a Journalist Out of Me

Eight years and many life changes after leaving The Tico Times, my weekly clock still resets on Thursday nights, after deadline.

I'm now the real estate and special sections editor at a small daily newspaper near Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, and my main responsibility, the Sunday real estate section, goes to press on Friday mornings.

When I was managing editor at The Tico Times, from 1996 to 1998, the reporters and I spent Thursday evenings at Chino's across the street, stabbing thick greasy fries with toothpicks and drinking cold Imperials. As we waited to be called to the weekly staff meeting, I watched the restaurant owner's family enjoy steamed fish wrapped in banana leaves, sticky dumplings and fresh bok choy seasoned with ginger and garlic – real Chinese food that wasn't on the restaurant's menu.

About six, after Dery sent the last of the pages down to Mayra and Verny, we gathered around her desk for the staff meeting and talked about our stories for the coming week. She usually approved our plans, adding a historical perspective that traced the latest developments back to a time before we reporters knew how to locate Costa Rica on a map.

How I wondered about Dery in those days... a woman who liked spending time with animals more than people, a loner who came to work in the late afternoon and stayed into the night while most people were home watching TV with their families. And how I admired her for her skill as a journalist, her ethics, and her kind heart.

When it was my turn to do "shorts" (translate and summarize stories from the local papers over the weekend), I waited

until the Tuesday after I turned them in, fished Dery's corrected version of my copy out of the recycling bin, got myself a "cafecito" and went out on the patio to see how she had edited my work.

It was the same experience every time. Although I was alone with the red marks on paper, my face flushed with embarrassment to see where I had used too many words, awkwardly translated a quote or gotten by with a passive verb.

Now, as I edit freelancers' submissions, wire copy and my own stories, it is Dery's standards I hold myself to. Avoid wordiness, choose the right verb and don't shirk important issues because it's quicker and less stressful to write fluff pieces.

I didn't go to journalism school, and I grew up thinking I wanted to be a novelist, not a reporter. Before coming to The Tico Times, I got a Master's in International Relations, worked for a non-profit aid agency, wrote for a short-lived Costa Rican travel magazine, taught the fifth grade and was a tour guide. The Tico Times made a journalist out of me, and I've been working at newspapers ever since. I can't see myself doing anything else (except for writing novels, which is how I plan to support myself in my retirement in Costa Rica).

One of my biggest challenges came when Dery decided to take a two-week vacation to visit a shaman in Peru and climb a mountain, and left me and Mayra in charge of getting the paper out. With a lot of help from Sonia and others, we did it, and the sense of accomplishment and pride I felt has been equaled only a few times since.

I sharpened my environmental con-



sciousness at The Tico Times and learned to do opinion pieces by writing editorials. Another important experience was participating in monthly budget meetings led by Oswaldo, who used an overhead projector, transparencies and a pointer to show Dery and the department heads that The Tico wasn't doing very well financially at the time.

We talked endlessly about ways to cut costs and boost revenues, and again and again, Dery resisted letting staff go to trim expenses. Once she even rescued the paper through an injection of personal capital. I come from an academic family, and this was the closest I'd ever been to business. I was profoundly moved and impressed to see its human face.

On a personal level, the time I spent at The Tico Times was a pivotal period in my life. In some ways – although I was already a veteran

of several universities and many life experiences when I arrived – I grew up there.

I turned 30 working at The Tico, decided that having a child was a central goal for me, and went through a heart-wrenching breakup. I sort of fell apart at the end, and sat staring at my computer screen as tears rolled down my face. I couldn't eat and I couldn't remember anything, so I kept my job only because Dery is kind.

Finally, after months of paying good money to sob on my therapist's couch and flip-flop on my decision, I accepted a job offer in my home state of South Carolina and turned in my resignation at The Tico Times. I have never, before or since, been as emotionally bereft as in the weeks before I left Costa Rica, mourning the loss of my relationship and of the country that had been my beloved home for six years.

This story has a happy ending. Shortly after I moved back to the U.S. and began working as a features writer at a Knight Ridder Newspaper, I started feeling better. Then my ex – a Tico – started calling me and decided to attend grad school in South Carolina. A few months later, he moved in with me and started school.

In the years since then we married, had two sons (now ages 2 and 4) and bought a house (and a lot in Costa Rica). Every year we spend about three weeks on vacation in Costa Rica, and I always stop by The Tico Times "para saludar." Mayra, Verny, Sonia, Abby and others there feel like family.

When I heard about the 50th anniversary reunion, it took me less than five minutes to decide to attend. Thanks, Tico Times, for making me the journalist and the woman I am today.

–Carol Weir

At Some Point I Realized: 'I Love This!'

My first choice of profession was the military, but a bum hip and bad eyesight slammed the door on that dream not long after I graduated college. After about two years of wandering from Washington, D.C., to the North Atlantic on a schooner to Seattle, Washington, working as a door-to-door canvasser ("Hi, I'm John the Tree-Hugger, would you like to support the environment?"), I wound up coming to Costa Rica because that's where my parents were.

So there I was in San José at the start of 1994, having moved back in with my parents as an adult. Anyone who's read any of Gail Sheehy's self-help books would understand that dynamic.

I started freelancing at the TT in February '94, writing travel and hotel stories. One of my favorites was getting the chance to go scuba diving with Bill Beard at the Ocotal Resort. At the end of that day I was sitting in the hotel's hot tub, looking out at the sunset, barely believing I was getting paid to do this.

By July, I was working full-time on the police beat. My first big "story" was when two crooked OIJ cops murdered their drug dealer accomplice, cut off his head and hands, and threw the rest of his body down a ravine along the Braulio Carillo Highway. The whole town was abuzz about it.

I turned my story in on Wednesday evening, and Thursday morning sat down with John McPhaul, who in the next hour or so taught me more about writing tightly than I'd ever learned – before or since. I sat there and watched him chop my story into bits, with the end product being much shorter and better. I still use those lessons today.



But the point of no return, the point where I knew I was hooked on journalism, was on a Thursday morning in October or November '94, when someone came in and said that there was a fire at the Hospital Mexico. Even from the office you could see the large smoke plume. I went out to the hospital; talked to the police, firefighters and administrators, and when I returned to the office, Carol the managing editor told me I had a hour and 400 words.

So I'm sitting there, banging out the story, and at some point while writing I stop and realize: "I love this!"

I loved the process of observing and lis-

tening and writing down what I saw and heard as quickly and accurately as possible.

I loved the deadline pressure.

I loved the banter at the weekly Thursday afternoon story meetings as the next week's coverage was discussed.

I loved the shocked look on Dery's face when, during one meeting, someone suggested spraying the office with insecticide to kill the ants that walked along the windowsill in her office. Harm an animal? Uh-uh.

I loved hanging out with the rest of the TT writing staff after the story meetings, drinking cheap beer at a dumpy bar down the street.

Because of that, even while I attended graduate school in California, I still freelanced for the local newspaper. And for the past nine-plus years I've been living and working just outside of Washington, D.C., covering defense and national security issues for a newsletter company with a panoramic view of the Pentagon, Capitol and Washington Monument. I've been able to question U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, as well as powerful Capitol Hill committee chairmen and CEOs of major multibillion-dollar corporations.

And to think that I owe it all to a spunky English-language weekly newspaper in Central America.

So thanks to Dery and Don Richard (R.I.P.) and John and Patty and 1994 TT staffers Gabriela and Peter and Brian for teaching a cub reporter the ropes.

–John Liang

(John Liang is now managing editor of *InsideDefense.com*, the online component of the *Inside the Pentagon* family of newsletters.)



From Tiquicia To Patagonia

Congratulations to The Tico Times on 50 years of top-notch journalism in Central America. From earthquakes, landslides and police busts to adventures with my TT colleagues in the backwaters of Costa Rica, it was a time of great professional and personal growth for me.

I moved back to Canada and was the editor of the local weekly in our small town of Canmore, Alberta. And I married an Argentine mountain guide I met on the Pacuare River – we now split our time between Patagonia and the Canadian Rockies, running a small tour company (www.patagoniatravelco.com). In between adventures in the mountains, I continue to do freelance writing and translating. And plotting a way to get back to Costa Rica!

Saludos de la Patagonia!

–Christie Pashby de Schoffel

Memories, Updates & More

The Story of My Parents' Trip... and 'Tia Consuelo'

It always seemed amazing to me that of all the stories I wrote for the Tico Times, the article that received the most feedback was a personal report about my parents.

In my four years with the weekly, I had the opportunity to report on Arenal Volcano's massive eruption that carved a new trench in the side of the colossus and claimed two lives; I shared the heartbreaking story of young man who fought for the right to receive AIDS medications through the Social Security System. He would win that battle, but not in time to save his own life. I wrote about hurricanes and human tragedies, Dengue outbreaks and environmental scandals.

But it was the story about how to plan a trip for two aging and eccentric urbanites – my parents – that caught the attention of the public. One had a bad knee that limited movement, and the other an obsession with Diet Coke that strongly shaped our lodging choices. At that time, Diet Coke was not so easy to find.

Together we adventured in the top nature destinations of Sarapiquí, Tortuguero, Arenal before relaxing on the beaches of northern Guanacaste. Apparently this information was of more use to our readers than the news stories I sweated over late Thursday nights, before the paper went to bed.

I should have known then that my calling was in the travel industry and not jour-



nalism. However, it would take another two years for me to find my way to my current job as Marketing Director for a leading Costa Rican ecotourism company.

Today I dedicate most of my time telling

people about those same places my mom and dad visited on that "trip of a lifetime." I can only hope that the passion I shared with readers in that report still resonates with the people I reach out to today.

At some point during my time with the Tico, I came up with the brilliant notion that the paper needed a Dear Abby-style advice column. That in itself is bizarre (what was I thinking?), but far stranger was the fact my editor and other staffers agreed it was a good idea.

The twist? We would write it from the perspective of a traditional Costa Rican *doña* who would whip her foreign readers into shape with straight-talking Tico wisdom, heavy on traditional proverbs. It would be more about humor than advice, and it would highlight the cultural differences between Costa Ricans and our expat readers. Best of all, we would call her, (drum roll, please) "TIA CONSUELO".

Needless to say, by the second column, this then 28-year-old Gringo was flat out of words of wisdom and desperate to learn Costa Rican sayings that would bring Tia Consuelo to life. Despite the efforts of all of my dear Tica colleagues I turned to for help, Tia Consuelo today remains buried in the Tico Times archives, never to be heard from again – *Gracias a Dios!*

—George Soriano



I Learned to Appreciate My Country, Culture

The two years (1998-2000) I spent working with the unorthodox yet fascinating Tico Times team have left a lasting impact both on my professional and personal lives.

One major thing I learned during my TT adventure was to appreciate my incredibly diverse country and culture in ways I hadn't done before. Traveling to every possible corner of the land – and meeting all sorts of people living in so many different circumstances – allowed me to see, understand and experience in a whole new way. This I have taken with me everywhere I've been since.

Gracias!

—Mauricio Espinoza

(Mauricio Espinoza currently works as a science writer and media relations specialist for Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. He's also a court interpreter and provides Spanish-language services to organizations in northern Ohio. Last year, he started his Ph.D. in Latin American studies at Ohio State. He lives in Ashland, Ohio, with his wife Randi, their daughters Jordan, 7, and Kathryn, 2, and their black cat, Tito; they share their backyard with numerous squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits and wild birds.)

Covering (Sort Of) 'El Presidente'

I was of the Hilary Duffy, Christie Pashby era (summer '99) and ADORED my time at The Tico Times. My now husband, John Dinunzio, was living in Vargas Araya with me at the time and we often reminisce about the hilarious characters who worked there (and probably still do!)



The one outstanding memory, however, has to be getting called in on a day off to photograph an urgent press conference called by *El Presidente*. I marched off to the mtg with Guillermo (Escofet, TT reporter) pretending he didn't know me. It was my day off, what could I do! I was dressed head to toe in lime green, with flared trousers, plastic platforms and a great handbag to match.

NOT ONLY THAT, but being (foolishly) caught out without a flash for my camera, I had to borrow (TT reporter) Christine's (Pratt) point-and-shoot camera. I looked like a bloody tourist.

Julio (Láinez, TT photographer) was also there and never quite got over the sight of me, crawling on the floor in front of the president at the podium. I swear the president stopped mid-sentence and just stared at me. Who can blame him?

I am now back in my native London working on my first book, "Ginger Snaps" – a photographic coffee table book of redheads all over Great Britain. Life is good.

I wish all current TT staff members all the best. Wish I could be there. . .

—Charlotte (aka: Ginger!) Rushton

A Lot of Space for Animals

I have always been touched by the amount of space, both editorial and physical, The Tico Times devotes to animals. How many newspapers have a pet dog? How many papers ever had pet turtles? (I remember well the days of Ringo and Esmeralda.)

The Tico has always championed causes that benefit animals, whether they are big-picture environmental ones ignored by the Spanish-language press, or smaller efforts, such as adopt-a-pet programs. Animal lovers are special people; an animal-loving newspaper must be truly special as well.

I have been freelancing for The Tico Times since 1995. (Supplement stories have

become my specialty.) I am also a contributor to several Fodor's travel guides, work which has taken me to Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay, Argentina, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and, of course, here to Costa Rica. Work on several editions of the TT's "Exploring Costa Rica" guide trained me well.

—Jeffrey Van Fleet



Special Thanks!



John



Christine



Tim



Meg



Sonia

This Special Anniversary Edition owes a big round of applause to former staffers John McPhaul (now Reuters correspondent in San José) and Christine Pratt (currently a reporter at the Wenatchee World, the leading daily paper in North-Central Washington State) and Nica Times Editor Tim Rogers, who combed archives and their memories to come up with the Decade Highlights ('80s, '90s and '00s); to Weekend Editor Meg Yamamoto, Production Manager Mayra Sojo, the Production Dept's Roy Arguedas and Verny Quesada and Photographers Mónica Quesada and Tammy Zibners, for their artistry, skill and many hours' extra work; and to TT Postmaster, Editorial Assistant and Fiesta Coordinator Sonia Cordero, who has spent months tracking down (and keeping track of) former staffers and old friends. *Mil Gracias* to all!



Mayra



Roy



Verny



Mónica



Tammy

The Team Today



Gathering the News (clockwise from left): Editorial Staff Gaby, Mónica, Leland, Rebecca, Amanda, Meg, Andrey, Adam, Sonia, Auriana, Katherine, Tammy.

Bidding You Welcome: Front Office and Classified Staff Max, Luis, Bernardino, Ana Lucía, Annette, Flory.



Managing the Money: Finance Staff Chico, Rigoberto, Olman, Anita.



Promoting Your Product: Advertising Staff Silvia, Cindy, Mary, Jeannette, Ivonne, Marta, Alexandra, Carolina, (back row): Ricardo, Rod, Edwin (the Systems Man).

Photos by Tammy Zibners | Tico Times



Expanding Horizons: Nica Times Staff Ivette, Anibal, Raquel, Abby, Lizethe, Drake, Tim, Tirso.



Getting the Paper to You: Circulation Staff Clara, Martin, Lincoln; William, Diego, Rafa, Miguel.



Where the Buck Stops These Days: Head Honchas Abby, Auriana, Susan, Amanda, Meg, Dery.



Putting It All Together: Production Staff Verny, Mayra, Roy.



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lomaverdecr@yahoo.com www.lomaverdecostarica.com

