Begun again February 16 and first draft completed before the end of October, 2010:

# NATURE AND OURSELVES AS ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE: COSTA RICA AS A MODEL?

This book is intended to be an elaboration of an earlier mini-book, "Small Steps to Save the Rainforest: A Plea for Experiential Learning" (2006). My stage this time is grandiose, the entire universe, and how conservation efforts show up on that grand stage. But my platform is tiny: conservation efforts in the small Central American country of Costa Rica, where we often hear that the country's efforts to stop biodiversity loss are a model for the whole world.

What I offered before - limited up to now to my home page at the University of Delaware - has been and continues to be a set of essays, some short, some longer. I begin with two recent essays that expand the horizon to the universe as a whole.

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## IMAGINE
(March 2010)

Imagine - I wrote (for my own edification) - the classical mushroom cloud of a thermonuclear explosion that everyone my
age (I'm 77 as I write this) in the USA has seen, on screen, since our childhoods.

Then imagine it as seen from all perspectives, filling in the stem of the mushroom so that the blast is omnidirectional - the same shape of a mushroom from above, below, right, left, north, south, east, and west - literally a thermonuclear ball of fire. Some say that's what our sun is.

Then imagine it, further, as not just a blast but as an ongoing ball of thermonuclear fire, somehow including within itself enough thermonuclear fuel for the fire to continue into the seemingly indefinite (though calculable) future. Now you have a better picture of our sun - though the picture would not, by itself, explain the existence of our sun's planets, asteroids, and other objects cast out by the ongoing inferno.

How to explain these secondary (?) details?

The standard Big Bang explanation asks us to imagine a much more immense - billions and billions of times more
immense - thermonuclear explosion. Make the picture in your imagination equally omnidirectional. And with its own internal thermonuclear-like fuel source. Then trace the residue in all directions, generating - ultimately - not only planet-like solid or gaseous planetary "bodies" but all the sun-like stars, groups of stars, star clusters, galaxies, and supergalaxies (with planetary bodies in locations our astrophysical theories cannot yet explain within the supergalaxies down to individual stars). Still you would not really have a Big Bang picture of the universe. For that, as with the thermonuclear explosion in the first image, the Big Bang phenomenon, unimaginable as it is (and incalculable in the present state of our most advanced astrophysical theories, with their "dark forces" and "dark matter" and so on), would have to be an ongoing event as in the second-paragraph image above. For example, the elliptical forms of the planets of our sun - including our earth and its moon - would need to be explainable, down to the minutest detail, in terms of that seemingly ever-self-generating Big Bang.

In this supposed explanation, the only additional explanatory principle that would be needed would be a limitless empty space into which the Big Bang could explode, its debris spreading out in all directions - and for all time - in the forces and velocities and patterns and forms that we have come to know through our astrophysical theories. No empty space into which to expand, no explanation. Essentially atoms (atomic units, whether ethereal or gaseous or - ultimately - liquid or solid) in a void. (Perhaps in *the* void.)

Now get mystical. What so-called esoteric (you might as well say spiritual) theories add to this, in all the cultures we know that are compatible in any way with this "scientific" explanation, is the view that all of this makes our universe One, a true Universe. No ongoing source, no material phenomena of any kind, down to the last detail. Take away the initiating force (or explosive vibration, or what have you) and you take away every last detail. A disturbance in the tiniest portion of this immense, and ongoing, fireball spreads out to the whole Universe, like a spreading ripple on the surface of a seemingly endless lake.

Now enter Paul LaViolette with his "subquantum kinetics" theory:

"Mechanical models are inadequate for the approach outlined here, which

postulates an orderly and explicable process of matter and energy creation out of a pre-existing subquantum continuum. Instead of beginning with physical observations, subquantum kinetics begins by postulating a set of well-ordered reaction processes that are proposed to take place at the *subquantum level*. Collectively, these reaction processes compose what is termed the *transmuting ether*, an active substrate that is quite different from the passive mechanical ethers considered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It further proposes that the concentrations of the substrates composing this ether are the energy potential fields that form the basis of all matter and energy in our universe. The operation of these ether reactions causes wave-like field gradients (spatial concentration patterns) to emerge and form the observable quantum level structures and physical phenomena (e.g., subatomic particles with mass, charge, spin, and force field effects and electromagnetic waves)."

In fact, LaViolette does not stop there, but goes on to postulate the forms that all natural phenomena will take on, from the quantum level to the largest features of astrophysics - and he does so with a mathematical precision to match that of any leading astrophysicist.

Unfortunately, because he is viewed as an oddball, his work is not subjected to the same rigorous cross-examination as that of normal astrophysicists - and for that suffers the fate of many oddball geniuses: it ends up including lots of idiosyncrasies that should, in the normal course of things, have been weeded out.

What is going on here? In my view, LaViolette's approach is actually *Aristotelian* in Greek philosophy terms; that is, it is resolutely opposed to the atoms-plus-void type of explanation associated with both Greek atomism and its Modern Science revival associated with early modern physicists, such as Galileo, and philosophers, notably Descartes.

How did Aristotelian natural philosophy work in terms of what we call astrophysics? It begins, not with atomic units to be put together to explain larger structures, but with commonsense phenomena, most particularly that some motions have a "natural" tendency to rise and others an equally natural tendency to fall. But toward what do they rise or fall? Aristotle has no in(de)finite void, which can be arbitrarily marked out as up or down or east or west: the overall structure of the universe is simply *assumed* to have natural ups and downs (as well as rights and lefts and circular motions), gravity, for example, being explained (not by Aristotle himself but by some modern Aristotelians) as a downward tendency toward heavier or more massive bodies - typically at the center of spherical systems - with "lightness" being the corresponding name for the tendency of some bodies in the universe to "anti-gravitate" toward the periphery. (The neo-Aristotelian scheme is complicated, involving Newton-like centripetal and centripedal forces, and so on; but it is not useful here to provide more details. Enough to say that there are no voids anywhere, and the universe as a whole is assumed to have nothing outside it - it is a true *uni*-verse, *everything that exists naturally*. And all kinds of changes - chemical, biological, etc. - are given the same anti-atomistic "natural" commonsensical explanations.)

How is this like LaViolette - or how is LaViollete like Aristotle? The similarity lies in a proper understanding of Aristotelian matter-form-property

explanations. Any given physical form exists *only as formed matter*: no ongoing material substrate, no form. No ideal form of a Micheangelo statue, but just the particular shape that Michelangelo gave to a block of marble - take away the marble (exactly as formed or shaped, of course) and there is no more "form." So for any physical body or substance, including the universe as a whole. It has the shape we have come to know, with natural ups and downs (and sideways and circular motions, and derivative biological and other changes), but those can only exist as, so to speak, "shaped" forms of an underlying (and therefore always present) substrate, *with the particular properties, including changes, that we can come to know*. Take away the substrate (as with the marble of the statue), and nothing remains; on the other hand, assume the substrate - as "formed" - and the whole, any whole, all the way to the whole universe, "falls into place." (It emphatically does not "exist in empty space.")

Once again, however, LaViolette runs into a difficulty. *He says he came to this view from a prior belief in the Oneness of the Universe*, precisely as formulated by the mystics and expounded in ancient cultures throughout the world.

Imagine that!

And take your pick. Does the atomistic view - which can be interpreted mystically - make more sense to you? Or does an Aristotelian commonsensical view (which I think is echoed in LaViolette, and he says is based in mysticism) make more sense to you?

Either way, we live in a Universe that is One, unique - no part not connected to every other part.

I prefer an Aristotelian view, that there are no voids inside, as there is no empty space "outside" the universe.

But that brings me, finally, to ask, What about Aristotle's argument that there can be no indefinite series of changes depending on prior changes - to what, at the hands of Thomas Aquinas, would become an argument for an Unmoved First Mover or Uncaused First Cause (a changeless source of all changes)? And here I should first acknowledge the best objection, most forcefully voiced by the philosopher Carl Hempel (*Aspects of Scientific Explanation*). If there really is a supposed First Cause, why can't we legitimately ask what caused it? If science has succeeded so well up to now in its pursuit of causal explanations of natural phenomena - actually, not typically "causal explanations," but "the best confirmable theories" to account for natural phenomena - why establish a barrier against using the same methods with respect to a postulated First Source? Why not look for a scientific explanation of what preceded the Big Bang?

The problem with this objection is that it turns a quite legitimate part of Aristotelian thought against him. Not only in Aristotelian logic but in later versions such as predicate logic, any series of steps in a proof cannot be indefinite: a proof with an infinite - an undefined number - of steps is no proof at all. Every proof, beginning with the Euclidean geometry with which Aristotle was familiar, must begin with some unproved assumptions. The end of the process - in definite steps - is the classic QED: the unproven first postulate is now proven. In arithmetical terms, every series of real numbers (or any other

series of numbers, whole, real or unreal, imaginary, etc.) presupposes the (at least postulated) existence of a zero, an item without the charactertistics of the items in the series. Any legitimate explanation of whatever kind *must* involve a finite number of steps: that is, it *must* involve a categorically distinct starting point, that is *distinct from the finite explanatory steps*. Hempel should at least have mentioned the possibility that that was all Aristotle meant.

But where does that leave us in terms of the Universe as a whole, whether in a mechanistic-atomistic form or an Aristotelian "natural places" commonsensical form (which I am maintaining is similar to LaViolette's)?

Many materialistically-inclined thinkers say they see no problem. "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." Before the Big Bang there was literally nothing, a void if you will, and at some undetermined future time the Universe will return to nothingness. Some describe this in terms of indefinite, and indefinitely fast, expansion to the point that all atomic units of the Universe will disperse, will lose contact with all other previously linked parts of the Universe - so that we will (with no one or no being around to perceive it) end up with an indefinite void to match the void from which it all began.

The problem with this common solution is that it is faced with an obvious objection: might not the whole process of nothing-to-something-back to nothing start all over again? And how would anyone know whether or not this is so or not so or whether the process might indefinitely repeat itself - might be repeating itself as we speak? Hardly a question that Hempel's vaunted scientific method would be prepared to answer.

But is an Aristotelian answer any better off, that every explanation of the origin (or continuance) of the Universe as a whole - in ancient natural philosophy or Modern Science or any philosophy you can think of - requires a categorically distinct starting point, a Zero Universe, so to speak? Critics like Hempel would say that this is either equivalent to nothing-to-something-to-nothing or is just mumbo-jumbo.

Enter Plotinus and the neo-Platonists, who didn't worry about being accused of mumbo-jumbo - and Aquinas turned their mode of thought into what is called "negative theology." All we can ever say about God, about a supposed First Uncaused Cause, is that it is unlike anything in the created world: it is No-Thing . . . if by "thing" you mean anything we are aware of or even could be aware of. We may, if we will, postulate a categorically distinct beginning (beginner?) of everything we know or can know in the material world, but we can never legitimately claim to "know" anything about him or her or it (with capitals if you like).

And here we come to the final crucial point: how is this No-Thing different in any significant way from the nothing-to-something-to-nothing view? The mystics, and most cultures we know anything about, attribute divine qualities to this No-Thing, and attribute the creation of the knowable world to a loving (but inexplicable) act of him-her-it.

And in this attribution they find comfort that we live in a loving, positive Universe.

For my part, I see no good reason not to share this more optimistic, positive view.

Now I ask the reader to go all the way with the mystics and non-Western cultures:

## ON EXISTENCE
(November 2009)

It seems clear that the universe exists. In fact, what most people mean by "the universe" is whatever exists, anywhere.

But there are questions. Are there things that no longer exist but once did? And the answer to that question seems clear as well. For that matter, the past - in all that that encompasses - seems no longer to exist, though its impact (impacts of many past existent events) seems clearly to affect the present.

Could the universe as a whole cease to exist? The intuitive answer seems to be yes: the universe as we know it today - supposed to have begun with a Big Bang - seems clearly destined to end, though some speculate that that would just mean the beginning of a new sort of universe we can know nothing about.

What I want to talk about here is a non-intuitive question: if the universe exists now, is it possible that it could not *not* exist? Or at least that, for us, it makes no sense to talk about its non-existence?

I begin with why we are generally confident that the universe - whatever exists in any sense - does exist. It seems, to us reflective humans, that the existing universe is simply a background - perhaps *the* background - of our own existence. We can be sure anything exists because we, who are asking these questions, are sure that we exist.

But, with Descartes, can we doubt our own existence? Probably not as a general proposition. I can have doubts about my own continued existence; I can worry about my death, when it might come, and how - and many people do worry about such issues. But it seems unlikely that all of us humans can doubt that we exist when we are doubting. The basis of our self-confidence about existing in the first place is that we are reflective beings: we see our existence reflected in the existence of others, themselves aware of our existence as conscious of them. Self-consciousness depends on the existence of and interaction with other self-conscious individuals.

How can we be sure of this?

The usual assurance comes from interactions with non-self-conscious beings. We can love our pets, especially dogs and cats, a great deal. But those who interact with them as though they were self-conscious, conscious of our inner thoughts, are extremes - people who bury their dead pets with the same

formalities with which we bury our dead family members. And even people who believe that their pets are consciously aware of them generally seem to think of a descending scale for non-human animals: fish, they admit, are unlikely to be aware of humans watching them in a fish tank, even when they approach us with seeming curiosity. And this descending scale descends even further when we deal with non-living objects. St Francis may be revered for talking to the animals, but those who talk to rocks, or walls, are generally thought to be exceedingly eccentric.

Why should this be so? It seems to be related to our making a distinction between reflexive or self-conscious and non-self-conscious beings, including non-human animals.

Given all of this so far, what about questions of existence and non-existence? We are generally pretty confident about the possible non-existence of non-self-conscious beings. It doesn't even require modern high technology to make a mountain disappear, and we can watch nature accomplish the same thing when a perfectly conical volcano turns into a huge crater or caldera - and similarly for islands that disappear into the sea or other similar natural phenomena.

Similarly, modern biologists are fairly confident about the extinction of species of living organisms - though occasionally an animal of a supposedly extinct species will turn up. And many biologists extrapolate from this that the species Homo sapiens sapiens could also become extinct.

And that brings us back to the original question: what to say about those who feel that the universe as a whole might cease to exist?

I believe that this question does not make much sense, as normally formulated. Questions of existence and non-existence only arise - as far as we know - for self-conscious beings. Therefore, no self-conscious beings, no question of a universe as existent or non-existent.

But this seems to be counter-intuitive. Just because the human species might become extinct, why should we think that the
rest of the natural universe would *therefore* come to be extinct, would simultaneously cease to exist? A universe without humans persisted for eons before self-conscious humans - even before any living organisms - came into existence. Why should not a universe without life, and especially without human life, persist beyond the demise of the human species? Even of all living species?

To this I would reply that, in that case, the universe might just as well not exist. Indeed, the whole question of existence and non-existence would - paradoxically - be moot, non-existent if you choose. But, some scientists (and philosophers following them) retort, self-conscious beings might emerge once again from a lifeless universe, and the question of existence and non-existence might once again emerge with them, perhaps in a different form. To which I retort that this *assumes* the continued existence of a universe without life. Any question of verifying or proving it would, by definition, be out of the question.

Which brings us to the punch line of this whole quixotic essay. How do we

know that there ever was a universe before life? And the answer seems obvious: because we self-conscious humans - especially through our science and our philosophies and even our theologies - have been able to raise questions of existence and non-existence, of living and non-living beings, and how to distinguish between them. We can *know* (with some degree of assurance or even certainty) about the past. But we can only *postulate* future conditions. And, to conclude, it seems a safe postulate, a safe bet, that, once existent, the universe will never pass into non-existence. Or at least that it makes *no difference at all to us humans if that were to be (?) the case.* The scientific consensus seems to be that all the nuclear reactions of all the star-like objects would die out like dying fires, that any coal-like remnants would dissipate (into non-existence?), and so on - into nothing. But who would know? Who could verify such a scientific prediction or set of predictions?

Okay, enough for the grand stage.

Meanwhile, we have to live our lives - and it makes sense to live them as if the universe will in fact go on forever - even possibly *live* forever. Even, possibly, that *life will go on forever.*

This conclusion, however, doesn't exempt us from our responsibility to do our part to protect life on Earth in any way we can. And for me that has meant and continues to mean doing my small part, within Costa Rica, to help Costa Ricans - Ticos and Ticas - to protect their amazing biodiversity as a model for others throughout the world to do the same.

And, along that line, I have even talked with one of my friends here (I have now retired in Costa Rica) about retitling these essays along this line: "Can a small country like Costa Rica really be a model of sustainable development for the whole world?" The claim is often made here, but there are significant obstacles in the way of fulfilling the promise.

Given the lofty philosophical, metaphysical, perspective with which I chose to begin this set of essays, what more down-to-earth, even concrete, starting points do I have to offer?

Whatever they may be, they are likely to continue to take the form of brief essays - occasionally no more than small sermonettes. Why? That just happens to be the style I have fallen into in my retirement. I didn't plan it that way. It has just happened that I get small bursts of inspiration now and then, I write them down, polish them only a little, and have found that - up to now - some readers have found them interesting. And that's all I want to do here - to pique the curiosity of readers naturally inclined already to be interested in this tiny but disproportionately endowed place (in terms of flora and fauna, of Nature in general) that I now call home.

And I begin at the beginning, with the mini-book I have already made available to the world on the Internet on my University of Delaware Philosophy Department homepage: "Small Steps to Save the Rainforest: A Plea for Experiential Learning." It may look to some who might peek at the website to be a small, integrated book. But here I break it down again into the individual essays that I patched together in the first place.

I wrote an introduction to that set, and I started it this way:

"Why is it important to save tropical rainforests? The answer that seems to me the best is that it is important to avoid further destruction of life on earth - where a key indicator is the loss of species diversity - and rainforests share with the world's oceans the distinction of harboring the greatest percentage of species known to science or waiting to be discovered by scientists. And there is urgency here because the best scientists I am aware of believe that species loss is irreversible; once gone, a species cannot be revived, no matter what Jurassic Park might suggest or the marvels of DNA manipulations can now do." (Minor revisions here.)

I continued:

"Though I am a philosopher, I don't here try to spell out . . . a [new] philosophy. Taking [my] philosophy for granted, what I'm interested in is *doing something* about the problem. And I have chosen as the locus of my work a country, the tiny Central American country of Costa Rica, in which people *are* doing something about the problem. One of my ecology-minded graduate students introduced me to Costa Rica [more than] ten years ago, and I have taken it upon myself to go back again and again - and to do my little bit in working with Costa Rican activists involved in the struggle. . . . The path that I have chosen is one described by another philosopher who has done work in Costa Rica, David Crocker of the University of Maryland. In a recent article in the quarterly newsletter of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy (Summer 2004), Crocker makes a case for 'insider-outsider cross-cultural communicators' - for non-resident outsiders with appropriate views and attitudes to work with like-minded people in a country or region to bring about change for the better. They don't need to move there, but they must make a commitment to work with natives of the region in activist efforts to bring about positive change. And they can't come with the attitude that they have the answers. They must be open-minded and willing to learn. Costa Ricans in general are democratic in their approach and open to foreigners, perhaps especially North Americans, so this is an approach that has some potential. In any case, it is the approach I have taken and hope to continue to employ as long as I'm able and friendly Ticos (as Costa Ricans describe themselves) are willing to work with me."

Since I wrote that, I decided to settle down in Costa Rica, to retire there (here, as I write). But that does not in any way change my orientation. I still feel myself to be an insider-outsider cross-cultural communicator - while also joining in with local activism.

I have also written an essay that summarizes my experiences, "How I Learned from CEEP to Get Active in Costa Rica." (CEEP is the Center for Energy and

Environmental Policy of the University of Delaware.) The activism I detail there builds on the work of one of my graduate students at CEEP, Cesar Cuello. And my efforts, following Cesar's lead, concentrated mostly on the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica and the ongoing efforts – or lack thereof – of the good people there to deal with sustainability issues.
Most of the people I have come to know in these efforts have at least some interest in protecting the impressive biodiversity of Corcovado National Park, if not necessarily its surrounding buffer zone. My contributions to the effort, which have continued right down to the present - after my retirement from UD - began with bringing groups of students to experience firsthand the Costa Rican efforts, and where possible to lend a hand. That was supplemented by efforts to establish a joint graduate student and faculty exchange program with Costa Rica's National University, with its main campus in Heredia.

So I feel I have a concrete base to complement the lofty sentiments with which I began.

And I start this set of essays by way of that CEEP-related reflection on my efforts here.

## 1. HOW I LEARNED FROM CEEP TO GET ACTIVE IN COSTA RICA

At about the same time that the Center for Energy Policy, forerunner of CEEP, was established, Frieda Berryhill, a housewife married to a DuPont engineer, established a coalition to oppose the building of a nuclear generation facility in Delaware. The group had the unwieldy name, Coalition for Nuclear Power Plant Postponement, and Berryhill quickly turned herself into a formidable lay expert on nuclear power and all its problems. She became such an expert that, grudgingly, various commissions either required by law or set up especially to study the proposal eventually allowed her to speak at hearings as an expert witness.

John Byrne (hereafter JB, as everyone knows him), the founder of the Center for Energy Policy, joined with Berryhill in the fight, and even more quickly, because of his position in academia and because of the sheer intellectual force of his arguments, he too was allowed to speak at hearings.

The story of CNPPP, as the coalition was called, and of the early history of the Center, deserve to be written up in a detailed history. I won't attempt that here. What I propose to do instead is tell the story of my involvement with CEEP and its forerunner, along with the activist involvement I moved on to as a result. I had, earlier, had the privilege of serving on JB's doctoral defense committee. But it was at least in part my involvement in the anti-nuclear movement in Delaware that got me involved. The other principal part was that all this happened at a time when the Philosophy Department at the University of Delaware lost its master's program for lack of adequate students. If I wanted to continue to be involved with graduate students at the University of Delaware, the Center for

Energy Policy - forerunner to the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy (CEEP) - offered me
an opportunity; and JB immediately welcomed me to his newly founded center.

There I found something more than I had bargained for. Not only were graduate students being educated in the intricacies of energy policy; they were also, from the very beginning, expected to take part in concrete, practical projects with a political payoff.
I would not suggest that the guiding philosophy of CEEP, from its beginnings, was explicitly Deweyan or "progressive." In fact, there is reason to believe that this was only my own orientation. But it *was* my orientation, and it found a congenial home with JB's center. For different reasons, JB and I and the others associated with the center from the beginning - all of us were convinced that education *must* be related to problems in the real world, and that all graduates of the program should have hands-on experience trying to solve real problems of the real world outside academia.

In 1995, at an international conference on sustainability in Barcelona (actually a nearby town, Terrassa), I presented a paper detailing my work with four CEEP doctoral students. It was published in the proceedings volume as “Activist Philosophy of Technology, STS Programs, and Sustainable Development” (in J. Xercavins i Valls, ed., *Sostenible? Tecnologia, Desenvolupament Sostenible i Desequilibris* [Terrassa/Barcelona: Universitat de Catalunya], pp. 566-571). The paper included sketches of the doctoral theses, and the research on which they were based, of Subhod Wagle, from India, Shih Jung Hsu, Taiwan, Bo Shen, mainland China, and Cesar Cuello, a Dominican but working in Costa Rica. All four examples, I claimed, demonstrated that it is possible, in a technology teaching and research program that focuses on sustainability, to incorporate these concerns within theoretically rigorous research projects that also manage to *accomplish* something in terms of sustainable outcomes.

More than ten years later, I expanded on this, adding nine more CEEP-related graduates, to make more than a dozen activist cases throughout the world as examples of CEEP-type initiatives. See "Sustainability Activism, the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, and Experiential Learning" (*Problemy Ekorozwoju/Problems of Sustainable Development* 4:1 [2009]: 15-32), where the profiled students included Lawrence Agbemabiese (Ghana), Carolyn Bitzer (USA but work in India), Felix Edoho (Nigeria), Chandra Govindranajalu (India), Jong-dall Kim (South Korea), Jesse Manuta (Philippines), Bosire Maragia (Kenya), Cecilia Martinez (USA), and Bill Smith (Chuuk Islands).

(The 13 doctoral theses are listed at the end. All were written either for the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy - including its forerunner, the Center for Energy Policy - or the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, the administrative unit in which CEEP was housed for a long time, at the University of Delaware.)

I believe that these new examples, along with those summarized in my earlier article, amply demonstrate the value of experiential learning not just as attached to, but at the very heart of graduate education at CEEP. In my opinion, it is a model not only for the USA but for the world.

That links me to the theme of this volume. (I wrote this for a commemorative book that may never appear in print.) And the activism I'd like to detail here builds on the work of one grad student I included in both of those earlier papers, that of Cesar Cuello in Costa Rica.

My efforts, following Cesar's lead, concentrated mostly on the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica and the ongoing efforts – or lack thereof – of the good people there to deal with sustainability issues. Most of the people I have come to know in these efforts have at least some interest in protecting the impressive biodiversity of Corcovado National Park, if not necessarily its surrounding buffer zone. My contributions to the effort, which have continued right down to the present - after my retirement from UD - began with bringing groups of students to experience firsthand the Costa Rican efforts, and where possible to lend a hand. (This paragraph repeats what I said above.)

I began by taking about twenty North American students there for two weeks every January between 1999 and 2006.

(We did try to form a group, Amigos de Corcovado, to raise money to help out. But it was later transformed into no more than a student group to do a reforestation project in the buffer zone. Finally, we dissolved our USA foundation because groups in Costa Rica were already doing everything we had hoped to accomplish.)

I first arrived in Osa in January 1998. With my wife at the time, I had been invited by Cesar Cuello to see firsthand the wonders of the peninsula where he was then working. At that point I had no idea of doing anything to help out. It was supposed to be just the beginning of a tourist trip through Costa Rica - an ecotourist trip, I hoped and expected, but no more than that. We had hosted Cesar in the USA several times, and he was reciprocating in his adopted country.

We did end up seeing a number of well known sights throughout the country, including Arenal Volcano with its touristy Tabacon lodge and hot springs (we stayed at a place we found to be much better, Arenal Paraiso, where we enjoyed twenty minutes of fiery lava flow at one o'clock in the morning) and nearby La Fortuna waterfall; Lake Arenal and the beautiful Arenal Botanical Gardens alongside it; and a nice Corobici restaurant next to the river of that name flowing down from Lake Arenal - along with Jaco, to let us experience Costa Rica's beaches.

But nothing prepared us for the wonders of Sirena Biological Research Station in the middle of Corcovado National Park on Osa, and no memory of the country has stayed with me longer than that of hundreds of Scarlet Macaws flying over our heads, the Howler Monkeys outside our tent early in the morning and late into the evening, and previously unimaginable birds and flowering plants by the thousands in the mostly virgin forest that is Corcovado. We had, we thought, very nearly killed ourselves on the hike getting there from the Los Patos station, but the paradise that is the Sirena station more than made up for it.

We did the grueling hike in the company of guides from the Tropical Youth

Center of the Fundacion Neotropica. We escaped
by small bush pilot plane to Puerto Jimenez, while the guides - and Cesar - did the hot and dangerous hike out along the Pacific Ocean to the other entrance to the park at Carate. The whole adventure introduced me to the TYC staff, with whom Cesar was working closely, as well as to the supporting agency for all of them, the Neotropica Foundation. But in just a few short days, and with little to tell us what they were trying to do beyond Cesar's explanations in our long rental car rides to and from Osa, we had no idea of the urgent needs of the poor people on Osa. We were just marveling at Corcovado's wonders, briefly experienced, which is what happens to most tourists who manage - usually with similar difficulty - to get there.

In Puerto Jimenez, we were able to see a little bit of the hot and dusty town, to eat at Carolina's restaurant which we quickly discovered to be the favored haunt for other mostly gringo tourists heading into the park, and to learn how generally isolated the town is, in spite of its small airport and ferry run across the Golfo Dulce to the more with-it town of Golfito. I admit that our impressions weren't generally good, that day, and we definitely didn't feel any strong need to help anyone there.

With Cesar, in our long rides through much of the Pacific-slope side of Costa Rica as far north as the Rio Corobici, conversations led to talk about beginning to bring undergraduate students to experience Costa Rica's forests - and efforts to
save them - in future years.

But for me, that idea was supposed to have a different payoff. I wanted to establish CEEP graduate student research links,
with a focus on environmental policy. The undergraduate program - supported by the dynamic Study Abroad program at the University of Delaware - was supposed to do no more than provide me a regular home base in Costa Rica. I will, further on, say something about the grad student venture.

I still had no idea of trying to do anything, myself, to help in save-the-forest efforts.

In this essay, I try to explain how that inauspicious beginning led to my getting actively involved in rainforest protection efforts, not only on the Osa Peninsula but, to a lesser extent, in other parts of Costa Rica as well. The first part is about my undergraduate groups; later, and more briefly, I will talk about the granduate program - which barely got beyond the planning stage - and offer some general reflections.

*The undergraduate program:*

In 1999 I led my first group of eight undergraduate students to Costa Rica, where we spent more than two weeks on Osa and specifically at the Tropical Youth Center. We were joined there by another group, five graduate students from CEEP, plus one more undergrad from the environmental ethics seminar I taught regularly for CEEP. These six were in Costa Rica only ten days, but most of that time they spent with us on Osa, including doing a now fourteen-student

hike to Sirena.

While the whole group, undergrads and grad students, were there, we made what would turn out to be the first of our visits to local communities. The community we visited on that occasion is called Rancho Quemado, and it's a story in itself. Among other things, that visit taught me as well as the students much about the level of poverty and desperation among the people who live on Osa.

The very name of the town is significant. It means "burned community center." When logging companies first came to Osa in the 1960s, they tried to expel settlers from the land they wanted to clearcut. They were successful in the sense that a fair number of homes were built outside the target forest, plus a rough community center building. But the men of the town kept returning to the forest, which they saw as their birthright (at least their squatters' right), for hunting among other things. In retaliation, the loggers came one night and burned the *rancho,* and the name stuck: Rancho Quemado (burnt rancho).

The community is fairly extensive in acreage (or hectareage), and aside from a rebuilt community center, a school, a church,
a few tiny stores, and a soccer field, it is mostly small farms. At the time we first visited there, the farms were barely above the subsistence level, though there had been a proposal to grow cash crops - and large tracts had been leased or purchased by a company called Ston Forestal (a subsidiary of the Chicago-based Stone Container Corporation) to grow melina trees, plantation style.

The cash crops were a proposal of the Boscosa (*bosques de Osa*) project of the Fundacion Neotropica. At least some of the farmers would grow *palmito*, a species of palm tree used commonly in Costa Rica for hearts of palm, ordinary enough but also enough of a delicacy to be profitable. Unfortunately the trees that were planted turned out to be sterile. And the road to any conceivable market was long and arduous, not to mention that there were few if any trucks that could be used for shipping.

So subsistence farming continued to be the norm, along with a wait for Ston to start harvesting melina. (Our guides told us
that that would actually be a disaster, because clearcutting would turn large patches of what used to be native-tree jungle into a wasteland.) Our next student group would return the following year to find that a significant percentage of the young men were leaving Rancho Quemado in search of jobs a long way off. Still later, once when we passed through the community on our way back to the Tropical Youth Center, we could see that there were, finally, some efforts underway to turn the village into a tourist attraction - though the roads in and out, from either west or east, continued to be long and treacherous. And what my students saw would not seem very promising as an attraction for tourists.

In 2002 we didn't go back to Rancho Quemado. Instead we visited the self-sufficient farm of a man named Antonio (we almost never learned last names) in the town of Banegas - on the way toward Quemado from the TYC but off on a side road. We returned there a second time in 2004. At some point we saw workers putting up electric poles, but at the time there was no electricity and no

telephone service to Banegas. Antonio's farm was as different from those in Quemado as it would be possible to imagine. He had two horses and about a dozen cows, one of which he would occasionally slaughter for meat to sell to neighbors, including relatives on nearby farms. There were chickens and pigs and a Scarlet Macaw, more or less a pet but flying free, that had set up a family with a male. (When we visited the second time, the male had unexpectedly flown away. Normally Macaws mate for life.) Antonio grew every type of fruit and vegetable native to the area in a roughly one hectare garden. His home, built almost exclusively with his own hands, was two-story; and Antonio had piped water from a mountaintop more than a kilometer away, so that the family always had fresh water. Antonio's wife was as industrious as he was, and they had a teenage daughter, equally impressive, who was agonizing over whether or not to go off to high school - almost unheard of in that area. In short, Antonio's farm was totally self-sufficient, including a small local market for meat or other produce if the need came, as close as I could imagine to being the near total opposite of all but one or two farms in Rancho Quemado. And neither Antonio nor his son, who helped out but also worked on other farms in the area, was likely to feel a need to move elsewhere. Not only no need but no desire; one of the students asked, and Antonio, in a translation by one of our guides, said he would never consider moving.

This came to be our pattern over the years. We always visit Puerto Jimenez and La Palma, the two biggest towns on the peninsula (in round numbers, over 2,000 and about 1,000, respectively), and by 2005 we had visited quite a few families: right around the TYC (many family members worked at the center) and in the corridor area linking Rincon (the "corner" of the Golfo Dulce) to Chacarita (the service station on the Interamerican Highway at the turnoff to Osa), as well as La Gamba near the entrance to Piedras Blancas National Park (the mainland end of the proposed biological corridor to protect Osa's big cats and other large animal species), as well as Drake Bay on the Pacific coast farther along the Rancho Quemado road.

We have never gotten to the rich tourist hotels - for example, Lapa Rios - south of Jimenez on the road to Carate, the southern entrance to Corcovado; and all we have ever seen of Drake is to have lunch with local families, never visiting the rich tourist hotels that Drake is famous for. Once, as an exception, one of our students discovered that her mother was vacationing in Drake, at the classy Aguila de Osa, and she visited her there; and once, in 2001, the United States Ambassador to Costa Rica, Christopher Dodd - also vacationing in Drake - was asked to make a stop at the TYC, where the students got to meet him and his entourage.

So generally our contacts are with ordinary local people, not rich (or even middle class) tourists. And the closest we have ever come to loggers was a chance meeting some students had in a local bar. Once I did get into a heated discussion with a family on the local public bus to Jimenez who staunchly defended their right to sell trees.

If there was a failing in my program, it was that students one year didn't know what students from previous years had experienced, and I never managed to solve that problem.

Educators at the TYC (often our guides) in our earliest visits did give the students one lecture on the socio-economic situation on Osa. But that is classroom teaching, not experiential learning. The facts presented (based on a limited sociological survey in the late 1990s) include: a population of about 12,000, the largest number living in and around Jimenez and La Palma; a stratified hierarchy of farmers, ranging from an income above $4,000 a year, through a middle level between $2,000 and $4,000, to a day laborer (or unemployed) would-be farmer gaining less than $2,000, often less than $1,000; almost no social life except soccer (girls usually just watch) and an occasional dance (they say *discoteca*) in Jimenez or La Palma; schooling through the legal sixth grade, though many kids drop out to help on the farm after the fifth grade, and few - especially few girls - go to high schools in Jimenez and (now) in La Palma. Obviously in this situation there are few chances for girls to marry anyone other than neighboring farm boys. And, finally, because the peninsula is split between two cantons, all official business must be conducted in either Golfito, on the other side of the Golfo Dulce, or in Ciudad Cortez, near Palmar Norte on the Interamerican Highway two or even three hours away.

In the early days of the Tropical Youth Center, there was an environmental education program, involving both weekend visits by local schoolchildren to the center and visits by educators to the 20 or so community schools, including (at the beginning) the high school in Jimenez. But by the time of our January 2003 trip this program had been seriously cut back. When it was still operating at full strength, our students were impressed with the evidence they saw at the center, though they never actually experienced either a weekend youth program or lessons in the small local schools. (It's summer vacation time for Costa Rican kids when we're there.)

In 1999 with my first group of students, the first shock was the beauty of the site and the grounds at the Tropical Youth Center. In my first visit, I had been there only briefly, late at night before the hike to Sirena, and overnight afterward, before leaving with Cesar Cuello right after breakfast. We had seen nothing of the new cabins, rancho (outdoors meeting area), dining area, or a new administration building. And we had learned nothing about the history of the place. It was originally the headquarters of the Canadian lumber company that was going to clearcut Corcovado before the park lands were expropriated by the Costa Rica government in 1975 - for something on the order of $250K. The managers had laid out the terrain, including site pads in a pentagon arrangement with connecting walks, a water purification system with a small dam upstream in the creek. The road coming in had been the rough runway for small planes to land. There were pieces of heavy lumbering equipment left behind. And someone - possibly the lumber company - had begun a small reforesting project behind the complex, which provides a nice short hike through tertiary forest.

There is a story about how the site passed into the hands of the government - along with the expropriation - then into the hands of the Fundacion Neotropica (and its Boscosa project to help the locals learn how to reforest and otherwise do beneficial things that had failed miserably), then to become the Tropical Youth

Center of the Fundacion Neotropica (ever after to be identified by the locals with Boscosa). I actually know little about these various transfers of management or ownership. But the actual management of the operation, when I started going there, was in the hands of Jose Rogelio Vargas, and he seemed to me to be doing a great job.

The mission of the TYC had also changed, as mentioned, to become primarily environmental education for local young people, including visiting environmental educators going to the small one room schools that dot the Osa Peninsula's rural areas. The educators also visited the local high school in Puerto Jimenez, and invited young people to come to the TYC for weekend workshops. Over several years, I would watch this once-promising venture fall on hard times: educators not welcomed in the schools, a breakdown of relations with the high school in Jimenez, and so on.

The second shock was the local people around the TYC. Since many of them worked there, you might expect generally good relations. But at the surface level, my students and I experienced nothing but smiles and waves and a congenial reception, not only in the immediate neighborhood but all the way through Puerto Escondido to La Palma and further on to Puerto Jimenez.

The students probably didn't feel it, though almost from the beginning I felt an undercurrent of resistance, and later I would find that some neighbors - including two families living right next door (especially the male heads of those families) - were defiantly hostile; one man, in particular, took great pleasure in hunting small game around the place, and we could often hear his rifle shots. We could also hear, not too far away, the sound of chain saws as some locals persisted in felling trees, probably illegally. It was attitudes like these that the TYC hoped to change by way of educating the young people in more environment-friendly behaviors.

In 2000, we were lucky to get an expert talk by Ministry of Environment administrators on how the locals cheat on the
forest management plan, enlarging their cultivated acreage row by tree row, and how tourists (like us) do as much damage to Corcovado as we do to preserve it. Our group joined with another University of Delaware group - led by entomologist Doug Tallamy - in the hike to Sirena, and one memorable event was that the entomology students happened to see a spectacular site at the mouth of the Sirena River: a large school of sharks, feasting at high tide on fish swimming in the river toward the ocean. This was also, because some students and I had injured ourselves either on the hike in or on hikes around Sirena, the first boat trip out of Sirena to Drake Bay, with magnificent views including sharks (though a pair of adventuresome females in our group still chose to dive into the Pacific Ocean). My daughter Angela (one of the students that year, but who had to get back to her classes at Rice University in Houston) and I took a flight from Puerto Jimenez to San Jose, with a really good view of the terrain below all the way to the airport at Alajuela. I rejoined the group at Manuel Antonio, with my wife, who had wonderful birding experiences there - more than 25 *new* birds while lolling around the Cabinas Espadilla pool. That luck continued in Monteverde, with the fabled Coki as guide, including our "assured" quetzals but also dozens of emerald toucanets when, the next day, we horned in

on another of Coki's groups. Back in San Jose at the end of the month, we also added a side trip - because we had extra money and the students could go for half price - to the Teleferico ride into the canopy, a nice educational experience in terms of lore about the layers up to the top, at the other side of Braulio Carillo National Park. That day there also happened to be a large pack of coatis, 30 or so, milling around the grounds at the gift shop and restaurant there. This too was a memorable experience, as many tourists say, but we could certainly second the motion. This was the only one of my groups to go to Poas Volcano and actually see the crater.

In 2001, we added northwest Costa Rica to our itinerary, centered in the town of Liberia and the Hotel Boyeros at the main intersection, with its swimming pool surrounded by mango trees. It was also our first visit to Santa Rosa National Park, where we learned about Dan Janzen's efforts to establish Guanacaste National Park, in addition to Santa Rosa, to create the "largest natural tropical biology laboratory in the world." We visited the mini-Yellowstone at the foot of Rincon de la Vieja Volcano, and the students tried to climb to the crater. They wouldn't let me go, too old, and that year they didn't reach the crater - though later groups of students would. Several students chose not to climb to the crater, and instead joined me for a strenuous hike to a beautiful 70-foot waterfall with a pool in which to swim at the bottom.

By 2002, our itinerary had become settled, so that year and 2003 followed the same pattern.

After the Osa part of our month in Costa Rica, we go on up the Pacific slope to compare and contrast different levels of forest protection in three different *areas de conservacion* (conservation areas) - three of the SINAC conservation areas in Costa Rica: ACOSA (Osa), Mid Pacific (for us, centered on Manuel Antonio National Park), and Guanacaste.

Our first stop is Manuel Antonio, a tiny remnant of what was once "humid," not a tropical rainforest, now turned first into banana then African palm plantations. There the students experience the magnificent beaches that were somehow saved, but they also see what happens to large mammals - especially monkeys - as they are cut off from escape and lose their genetic diversity. They become almost like animals in a zoo, dependent on humans for survival. Monkeys, for example, eat bananas from the hands of tourists, or rob their lunches on the beach.

Next we travel - stopping along the way to marvel at the dozens and dozens of crocodiles in the mouth of the Tarcoles River - to Liberia in Guanacaste Province. There, as mentioned, we visit Santa Rosa National Park - where the students get a lecture on the SINAC system - and look across the road at Guanacaste National Park (Janzen's addition that created what he calls the largest tropical biology lab in the world). Then it's Rincon de la Vieja National Park, including a climb to the crater of the volcano.

That's followed by a few days in Monteverde, the Quaker-founded forest preserve that never became part of the national park system. Sometimes the students also see the other preserves that have been added on, to make the total

come close to equaling Corcovado in size. But most important they experience what a private preserve system, when supplemented by tourist attractions, can do - that, so far, the national park system has not been able to accomplish. Monteverde is a town in which everyone works - I repeat, *no one* is unemployed - and everyone has a democratic say (the Quaker way) in keeping things that way. My students love the tourist attractions as much as the forest preserves, but the way the town is set up that actually supports the forest, including new plantings and additions. Some people say I should start my group's trip here, to see the best first; but I think there is an advantage (including a natural geographical progression from south to north and back toward the Central Valley) that adds to the lessons the students learn, not by being preached at but *experientially*.

In 2005 I had the least interested of all groups I've had - I'm talking about real interest in the forest and protecting it - but even the least interested of my students can't help learning a great deal both about the different kinds of forests, about the locals, and about the different levels of forest protection.

Brett Matulis, my assistant in the 2004 group - who had come with my 2002 group and has on his own led later student trips with the help of our Quira Expeditions guides (he deserves a story on his own - later) - worked out an arrangement for Manuel Bianco, who lives near the TYC, his daughters Guissell and Carmen, and the craftspeople in the area with whom Manuel has been the leader, to export craft works to our University of Delaware town of Newark. Before coming in 2004, Brett had inquired and found out that the woman who runs a local import shop was interested enough to pursue things. He had sent digital pictures of some of the work; the craft shopkeeper was interested; and a small export-import business might have gotten underway. (It never materialized). This is one example of how my students, in various ways, have tried to help the locals.

Reflecting, I have often asked myself whether these trips do any good – do anything (beyond this limited example) that will help improve the lives of the people on Osa. And the first thing I should say is that the people on Osa, more every year, offer a warm *pura vida* welcome to me and the students. They appreciate my interest in coming back year after year, and they at least hope that they are helping naïve students get to learn more about what life is really like on the Osa Peninsula.

### *A graduate program?*

Quite a few of the environmental students who have studied with me have been graduate students from CEEP, my second department at the University of Delaware. One would expect those who have also accompanied me to Costa Rica to be eager. Here again, however, there is something special in how they come away impressed, like the undergraduates, with experiential learning and local activism.

But I have also managed to establish some structural links. The first came when I was able to get JB to come for a short visit to - and to give a talk at - the

Centro Internacional de Política Económica para el Desarrollo Sostenible (international center for the political economy of sustainable development, CINPE) of the National University of Costa Rica (UNA). This was followed, about a year later, by a visit to the University of Delaware by the Cinpe director, Olman Segura Bonilla. At each institution, the director was well received, and the hope we had was to establish a formal agreement between the two. That did follow, after a year or two of bureaucratic delays, ended definitively when Segura Bonilla was elected as rector (president) of UNA.

That seemed to promise good things for the future, since Cinpe regularly hosted foreign graduate students, and faculty exchanges seemed likely as well. When two CEEP graduate students, Nozomi Okubo and Melissa Weitz, accompanied my undergraduate group in 2004, the three of us visited Cinpe with the idea of planing possible future visits. As things turned out, Okubo ended up instead going to the Dominican Republic to work with Cesar Cuello, who was now back in his native country. And Weitz did not seek a fellowship to return to Costa Rica.

I visited Cinpe in October 2005, where I worked with one of Olman Segura's senior assistants (at Cinpe then at UNA), Leiner Vargas Alfaro, to plan a joint workshop for January 2007. That was to be a preliminary, exploratory workshop on sustainable energy initiatives, not only within Costa Rica but also involving other Central American countries and the Dominican Republic. We chose the date to coincide with my 2007 undergraduate group, so that I would already be there, and CEEP would only need to pay for a small number of participants, while UNA would arrange to cover the other invitees as well as host the workshop. Back in Delaware, another graduate student, Noah Toly - who had a research interest in sustainable development in Costa Rica (and proposed corridors linking the country all the way to southern Mexico) - was the principal CEEP planner.

Unfortunately, that event never took place. I had retired from the University of Delaware in 2004, to continue to work on such inter-institutional agreements with universities in Spain as well as Costa Rica. Then in 2006, while visiting Spain, I had a major health problem that would not allow me to fly; UD canceled my 2007 trip to Costa Rica (no on-site director); that eliminated me as the UD anchor in CR for the workshop; and the whole venture fell apart.

However, in 2006, before my illness, I had managed to arrange a visit to UNA by the directors of the Delaware Biotechnology Institute and the related technology park at UD. And also a visit by an entomology professor, Joaquin Baixeras, from the University of Valencia, not only to UNA but to the world famous Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (national institute for biodiversity, INBio), as well as other research institutions in Costa Rica. Both efforts were aimed at fostering future cooperative research ventures.

Thus far, to conclude this part, everything is still a promissory note.

But that is not the whole story. Noah Toly, mentioned earlier, had not only worked with me on planning the proposed CEEP-Cinpe workshop. He had accompanied me, as my assistant, on the 2003 undergraduate trip; then

returned later in the year to do research on environmental policy in Costa Rica, at INBio and other institutions; and, finally, completed his doctorate in environmental policy in 2006. His thesis had been narrowed down to just Costa Rica, and is a major study - in many ways critical - of the country's environmental record.

So, although the CEEP-Cinpe agreement is now moribund, it could be revived in the future. And even one student like Noah demonstrates what might still be accomplished.

*General*

However, I feel that my most significant accomplishment was simply to get involved, actively, in Costa Rica's attempt to preserve the country's amazing biodiversity. I wrote an account in a small online book, "Small Steps to Save the Rainforest: A Plea for Experiential Learning." It's available on my Philosophy Department web page (www.udel.edu/Philosophy/sites/pd) and was never intended to be published anywhere else.

The path that I chose - I say there - was one described by another philosopher who has done work in Costa Rica, David Crocker of the University of Maryland. In an article in the quarterly newsletter of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy (Summer 2004), Crocker makes a case for what he calls “insider-outsider cross-cultural communicators.” That is, for non-resident outsiders with appropriate views and attitudes to work with like-minded people in a country or region to bring about change for the better. They don't need to move there, but they must make a commitment to work with natives of the region in activist efforts to bring about positive change.

My most important efforts probably turned out to be, not either the undergraduate or the graduate programs, but my contacts - including ongoing contacts - with three Costa Ricans, Carlos Araya, Aider Santamaria (sometimes more properly Hayder), and Alberto Herrera. Together they formed an ecotourism guide group, Quira Expeditions (current name Endemico), that I used
for the last three of my undergraduate student trips. The choice of a name - first Quira and then Endemico - reflects their commitment to the Osa Peninsula, where the Quira, a tree that can grow to 90 feet and is very durable but also in danger of extinction, is endemic. (It can also be found in some other parts of Costa Rica, but in any case is endemic in the country.)

The guide group, which I chose to help financially, is not as important as the individuals in their roles as "insiders" to me as an "outsider." Each of the three is now employed as well in a job with importance for Costa Rica's preservation efforts, which is what I focus on here - especially in terms of my continued work with them in the years since my retirement from the University of Delaware.

I start with Aider (as the students and I always referred to him) because his work now is fundamental in ACOSA, the conservation district within the Costa Rica system that includes Corcovado National Park. I met Aider for the first time

in 1998 on my first visit to Costa Rica. He was our main nature guide on the difficult hike from the Los Patos entrance - over 20 kilometers - in Corcovado National Park to the Sirena Biological Research Station at the heart of the park. He was recommended to us, by
the Tropical Youth Center team, as being capable of "hearing the shadow of a grasshopper at 20 meters"; and that was no exaggeration. He could, and did, spot an amazing number of animal and other sights that the rest of the guides would never have spotted. And he repeated the feat, year after year, for my student groups. But on that first occasion, he had one failing - he could communicate with us in English to a very limited extent. A year later, for the first student group, that had already changed, and his English continued to improve every year. By 2006, my last regular student group, he had become the revered mainstay, in terms of nature guiding, not just of a few but of every single one of my students - including the graduate students who came along from time to time. When Alvaro Ugalde, one of the two founders of the Costa Rican national park system, took over as head of - and created a foundation that did successful fundraising for the ACOSA district - Aider was hired as a park guard. Then as temporary head of Sirena and then of another Corcovado station. And finally as the principal nature educator for ACOSA, the post he still holds. From a beginning as the best nature guide on Osa to his current position as ACOSA's nature educator, Aider's scope of influence had grown, gradually but exponentially. Now he has an impact on the public not only on the Osa Peninsula but beyond, to the whole district encompassed by ACOSA; and that is not only a large but an important reach of southern Costa Rica, including the most important mangrove forest in the country, between the mouths of the Sierpe and Rio Grande de Terraba rivers. My student groups, however, continued to enjoy him as our chief guide for Quira, in a sort of loan arrangement with ACOSA. He has also come to be a trusted friend to me, and I have come to know his wife and children and other family members well. If I am a trusted outsider in the nature education activities on and around the Osa Peninsula with its amazing biodiversity, Aider is without doubt the insider I trust to have the best knowledge of the flora and fauna there.

Alberto Herrera comes close to being equally important in my efforts. He was one of the Tropical Youth Center nature educators in 1998 when I did my first Los Patos to Sirena hike, and it is safe to say that without his kindness my wife at the time would never have made it to the end. That led to another 10 plus years of friendship, even when Alberto's career track took him away from the Tropical Center. When Quira was founded and became our guides for my undergraduate student groups from 2004 to 2006, Alberto - along with his beautiful partner Jessica Mata - came to be another mainstay. They traveled with us beyond Osa to other parts of Costa Rica, including a climb to the crater of Rincon de la Vieja volcano north of Liberia. Later, Alberto would add a second job to his Quira guiding, serving as a nature guide for a private hotel in the Puerto Jimenez area - and finally, up to the present, doing the same for the fabled Lapa Rios hotel high on a bluff at the southern tip of the Osa Peninsula overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Another trusted insider to me as (I hope) a trusted outsider - but now working in the private ecotourism sector.

Finally I come to Carlos Araya, the de facto business manager of Quira and the main contact with the outside world - including with me in the USA and now,

after my retirement, in Spain. (That's where I wrote this essay.) Carlos is an old hand at this kind of work, having had similar jobs with the Fundacion Neotropica before the founding of Quira. He now also serves in pretty much the same capacity - contact with people all over the world - for Earth University. Here is one official description of that institution:

"Earth University is an international institution created out of a deep conviction that the environmental and social challenges confronting the planet can be resolved through education that promotes science, technology and entrepreneurship while focusing on essential human values, leadership and a commitment to social and environmental service. EARTH offers an undergraduate program in agricultural sciences and the rational use of natural resources leading to a licenciate degree. The campus is located in Guacimo, Limon Province, Costa Rica."

There is an Earth University Foundation. Institutional supporters range from National Geographic to Whole Foods markets to one of the major guide companies in Costa Rica, Costa Rica Expeditions. Students come from all over the world, and the university's stated philosophy of education says it is "more than just a university. Learn how you can get involved." In that sense, it is clearly dedicated to experiential learning, the theme of this essay - and this entire (proposed) volume dedicated to CEEP and its lessons for the world.

And Carlos as an insider there has become every bit as much of a friend to me as an interested outsider as Aider and Alberto.

Right down to the present, in visits every March back to see - and work with - my friends in Costa Rica, the three of them continue to be my contacts, my guides, and educators not just to me but to former students of mine who also want to return. And to pay back something of what they - of what we - have learned from the wonderful Ticos who have befriended us. Their ongoing efforts at sustainability, trying to sustain the incredible biodiversity of Costa Rica's forests and other natural resources, is a model for planet Earth. I feel privileged to have been able to take part in this effort - to continue to take part in it - and thus to have learned *my* activist experiential lesson from CEEP.

## 2. INTRODUCTORY ESSAY FOR ORIGINAL "SMALL STEPS"

Why is it important to save tropical rainforests? I repeat (from the introduction here) that the answer that seems to me the best is that it is important to avoid further destruction of life on earth - where a key indicator is the loss of species diversity - and rainforests share with the world's oceans the distinction of harboring the greatest percentage of species known to science or waiting to be discovered by scientists. And there is urgency because the best scientists I am aware of - as I said before - believe that species loss is irreversible; once gone, a species cannot be revived, no matter what Jurassic Park might suggest or the marvels of DNA manipulations can now do.

To meet the challenge of species loss, one strategy that has been proposed is called "hotspots"; it singles out not only important locales where species are abundant, but also places where something can be done about slowing or stopping the loss. But the authors of the hotspots strategy say it will work only if we can develop a biodiversity preservation philosophy: saving species is *simply the right thing to do.*

Though I am a philosopher, I don't here try to spell out such a philosophy. Taking that philosophy for granted, what I'm interested in is *doing something* about the problem. And I have chosen as the locus of my work a country, the tiny Central American country of Costa Rica, in which people *are* doing something about the problem. One of my ecology-minded graduate students (Cesar Cuello, mentioned earlier) introduced me to Costa Rica more than ten years ago, and I have taken it upon myself to go back again and again - and to do my little bit in working with Costa Rican activists involved in the struggle.

It is not an easy task. Many government officials in Costa Rica - not all, of course - have been involved over the last couple of decades, but even those with the best of intentions are stymied by the lack of money and political will. There have also been a great many international environmental organizations involved in Costa Rica; the best list I have found is in Les Beletsky's *Costa Rica*, a "traveller's wildlife guide" (1998 and 2005 editions). Some of the organizations are still at work there, but others have moved on to other parts of the world where they think they can do more good. And so it goes through the ranks of leaders down to the level of ordinary citizens (or up from there). Some are apathetic. Some are concerned but feel they have higher priorities - as basic as making a living for their families. Nor should we forget that, at all levels, there is sometimes open opposition to environmentalism in general or to particular efforts to save the forests.

The path that I have chosen - I repeat - is one described by another philosopher who has done work in Costa Rica, David Crocker of the University of Maryland. In an article in the quarterly newsletter of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy (Summer 2004), Crocker makes a case for “insider-outsider cross-cultural communicators” - for non-resident outsiders with appropriate views and attitudes to work with like-minded people in a country or region to bring about change for the better. They don't need to move there, but they must make a commitment to work with natives of the region in activist efforts to bring about positive change. And they can't come with the attitude that they have the answers. They must be open-minded and willing to learn. Costa Ricans in general are democratic in their approach and open to foreigners, perhaps especially North Americans, so this is an approach that has some potential. In any case, it is the approach I have taken and hope to continue to employ as long as I'm able and friendly Ticos (as Costa Ricans describe themselves) are willing to work with me.

Such cross-cultural communicators do not have to be philosophers certainly, nor academics of any kind. But my plea here is for *academics to get involved*: environmental scientists and ecologists, obviously, but anyone from any discipline - a language teacher, a geologist, a geographer, anyone with some

useful knowledge *who is willing to add to his or her knowledge by working with others* - can play this role. It takes collaborators in the host country (in my case in Costa Rica), but the most important thing is that it takes a commitment on the part of the communicator.

I am a philosopher, though an unusual one I admit. I am a pragmatist. That is not all that unusual among academic philosophers in the USA in the last couple of decades. What makes me unusual is that I am what I might call a *pragmatic* pragmatist, an *activist* for social and political causes, and I claim to do so *as a philosopher* and not just a citizen. I find that approach best exemplified in the work of the American Pragmatist philosopher, George Herbert Mead, who practiced his activism in the turmoil of Chicago in the first decades of the twentieth century. (See Andrew Feffer's *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism*, 1993.)

Mead was a friend and colleague of the equally activist John Dewey, who moved on from Chicago to be active on the national scene. But when he was still in Chicago, Dewey (with his wife Alice) ran what was popularly known as the Lab School; it was built on the principles Dewey had been working out in his educational philosophy, and the central feature was experiential learning. Here are two different accounts of the venture.

Robert Westbrook, in *John Dewey and American Democracy* (1991), shows how:

"In [Dewey's Lab School] one can see not only how the child's interest in a particular activity of his own ([for example] building a model farm) served as the foundation for instruction in a body of subject matter (skills in measurement and the mathematics of fractions) but also how this method introduced children to the methods of experimental problem-solving in which mistakes were an important part of learning. Providing children with firsthand experience with problematic situations largely of their own making was the key to Dewey's pedagogy."

Then Westbrook quotes Dewey:

"Until the emphasis changes to the conditions which make it necessary for the child to take an active part in the personal building up of his own problems and to participate in methods of solving them (even at the expense of experimentation and error) mind is not really freed."

And Westbrook goes on, later in the book, to link such experiential learning to adults as well as schoolchildren, in adults' efforts to learn, from their own work experiences and from their dissatisfactions with politics as usual, to try to improve their lives and the society in which they live.

Jay Martin, in *The Education of John Dewey* (2002), offers a different perspective on the same material. His book shows how Dewey himself was learning new things all his life, just as he was advising teachers how to help their students - children or adult learners - to do that. Repeating some of what Westbrook says, Martin emphasizes that:

"A child in Dewey's school was instantly a member of a cooperative commonwealth. Learning and creating knowledge were merely two forms of knowing, what Dewey called 'methods of life.' From occupations, students in Dewey's school proceeded naturally to their correlatives in the so-called disciplines: from production to economics; from cooperation to politics; from experiment to science; from activity in a community . . . to history, social studies, geography, and culture."

Martin echoes Westbrook in further emphasizing lifelong learning and education for citizenship, but his book's main focus is on how Dewey was constantly growing in his psychology, making discoveries that paralleled other psychologists, including brain physiologists, but typically correcting or advancing beyond them. According to Martin, Dewey was a lifelong experiential learner.

I should repeat one more item here, that for the past twenty years plus I have worked in more than one department at the University of Delaware, including the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy. There, in contrast to most academic fields in contemporary higher education, graduate students are encouraged to combine their scholarly work with experiential - even activist - learning. These students come from all over the world, and after graduating a large number of them have returned to their home countries to continue activism there.

At the beginning of my philosophical career at the University of Delaware, I started to do my personal experiential learning in
work with the then-new organization Common Cause, John Gardner's good government group that had as its goal the reform of democratic governance in the United States, both nationally and locally. In our tiny state of Delaware, I watched while the national organization narrowed its focus more and more until by the beginning of the twenty-first century it had become identified exclusively with the battle for campaign finance reform. In Delaware, we retained a broader focus. We did work to open up state government, with some success; but we also tried to open up the processes of professional regulatory agencies - for example, the local medical society and similar bodies - as well as to keep a focus on ending the Vietnam War and protecting the environment.

One of our Common Cause activists, the late Ernie Thorn, deserves most of the credit for the focus on the environment. I dedicate this essay, in part, to his memory. But Ernie was strongly influenced by Russ Peterson, former DuPont scientist, former governor of Delaware – where he was largely instrumental in getting the General Assembly to pass some of the first legislation for coastal zone protection in the United States – former environmental bureaucrat with Republican administrations, ex-Republican turned Democrat when his former party disdained environmental protection, now a retired full time activist helping to turn an old industrial district along the Christina River into a thriving retail area with a related wildlife sanctuary. Peterson also has an appointment in the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy. I dedicate the essay to Peterson as well.

Instead of Delaware, I have chosen to do most of my activist environmental philosophizing, my experiential teaching, in Costa Rica. Even there I think I am more than a little out of the mainstream. I have found no other philosopher-activists, Costa Rican or not, working there to protect some of the most pristine forests in the world. That doesn't mean there are no other philosophers with an interest in Costa Rica. I have already mentioned David Crocker, of the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, who specializes in what he calls development ethics – and he has worked in Costa Rica. In the article I mentioned earlier, where Crocker makes his case for "insider-outsider cross-cultural communicators," he provides one example with strong Costa Rican links, in the work of sociologist Paula Palmer of the University of Colorado. She now runs Global Response www.globalresponse.org, but earlier she had spent over a decade working in Costa Rica – and has written several books on efforts there (Palmer, 1986, and 3 books published in 1993).

There are visionaries with whom to work in Costa Rica. The best examples would include the outstanding tropical biologist, Dan Janzen, and the two people who are usually credited with founding Costa Rica's impressive national park system, Mario Boza and Alvaro Ugalde (both biologists by training). Boza has become the most visionary, working with international environmental organizations to establish a biodiversity corridor from Alaska to the tip of South America; while Ugalde has focused on the Osa Peninsula in southwestern Costa Rica – where I have concentrated my efforts. I would like to dedicate the essay to Boza and Ugalde as well.

I wish I could dedicate it to at least one female – and I will be telling the stories of a few female activists – but it is men who have dominated the environmental efforts where I have worked. To add a woman to this list, I should include Helena van den Hombergh, author of *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce* (1999). She would probably say it ought to be one of the heroic women whose efforts she describes there. But van den Hombergh's book is another example of what a cross-cultural communicator, who gets actively involved in struggles to save the rainforest, can do.

Mentioning these people leads me to one final introductory remark. I will be telling my story mostly through stories of others, of the individuals – and the groups they have worked with – who have done the most to save (or in some cases block the saving of) Costa Rica's rich forests. This was the pattern followed by David Wallace in *The Quetzal and the Macaw* (1992), another book I admire, and I will follow his example wherever I can.

## 3. DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

*As we all know, our planet is suffering from a variety of environmental ills, with issues like global warming, . . . air, soil, and water pollution . . . making news on a daily basis. . . . However, as serious as these problems are, we believe that the most far-reaching problem that we currently face is the grand scale loss of our planet's biological diversity. . . .*

This biodiversity . . . is our living resource base, . . . and what distinguishes it is the fact that its loss is an irreversible process. (*Hotspots,* 2000, under heading, "The Global Significance of Biodiversity.")

. . . *As indicated . . . the 25 biodiversity hotspots are absolutely critical to maintaining life on Earth. . . . To ensure this, it is . . . essential that we adopt a new biodiversity philosophy, . . . :* we have to create a value system that recognizes maintenance of the full range of life on Earth as simply "the right thing to do."

. . . *If we allow a "biotic holocaust" to take place, . . . this will be far and away the biggest "decision" ever made by one generation for future generations. Conversely, if we were to take the decisive action necessary . . . , this would surely rank as the most "responsible" initiative ever taken by one human generation in support of those that will come after us.* (*Hotspots*, under heading, "The Moral High Ground in Hotspots.")

*Hotspots* says that the problem is enormous. The hotspots plan seems to me to offer more in terms of solving the problem than any other proposal.

Sources for this plan include three books more or less by the same team: R. Mittermeier, Gil, and C. Mittermeier, *Megadiversity: Earth's Biologically Wealthiest Nations* (1997); the Mittermeiers and Gil, plus Norman Myers, *Hotspots: Earth's Biologically Richest and Most Endangered Terrestrial Eco-Regions* (2000); and the Mittermeiers plus several others, *Wilderness: The Earth's Last Wild Places* (2002).

All of the hotspots and similar efforts are based on the premise that it is important – possibly even morally imperative – to protect biodiversity worldwide. Perhaps nowhere is this more important than in the tropics, including the New World tropics or neotropics.

Many international environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been involved in preservation activities in Costa Rica in recent decades. The focus has included the Golfo Dulce and Corcovado National Park areas. For example, *Parks in Peril: People, Politics, and Protected Areas* (The Nature Conservancy, 1998), in a chapter on Corcovado National Park, mentions the roles of the Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund. The book's focus includes parks from southern Mexico and Belize to Peru (including a sideways jump to the Dominican Republic but nothing on Brazil or the north coast of South America).

Les Beletsky's *Costa Rica: The Ecotraveller's Wildlife Guide* (1998; 2005 edition changes the title slightly) adds the important work done by the Caribbean Conservation Corps in and around Tortuguero National Park, as well as their support for the formation of a biodiversity corridor from Mexico to the Panama Canal. The first edition of Beletsky's book detailed the work of the Wildlife Conservation Society (see Bronx Zoo and earlier versions of the society), which has a conservation program for most of Latin America, including the Brazilian Amazon all the way to Patagonia.

My favorite guide book for Costa Rica, Christopher Baker's *Costa Rica Handbook* (5th edition, 2004; I like the 2001 4th edition better) lists dozens of conservation organizations, adding, for example, the Rainforest Alliance (or Rainforest Action Network), but also emphasizing Conservation International, supporter of the hotspots program.

Helena van den Hombergh's important book, *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce* (1999) adds the German NGO, Pro Regenwald – to which I could add, based on personal experience, an Austrian Regenwald research group. (It is mentioned in Baker's *Costa Rica Handbook*, 4th edition.)

These Costa Rica-related environmental NGOs are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg (however inappropriate that phrase may seem for tropical Costa Rica!). There are many, many other organizations involved, including a United Nations-related IUCN (World Conservation Union).

These organizations are devoted to biodiversity preservation (whether worldwide or in Costa Rica) in general. For a capstone species-related story (specifically about large predatory felines), see *Time* (8/23/04): "Nowhere to Roam: Wildlife Reserves Alone Cannot Protect Big Cats; A Look at New Ways to Save Them." The article mentions, without much detail, an effort to protect a habitat for jaguars that would extend from Belize to northern Argentina and would include Costa Rica's significant jaguar population. For the jaguars of Belize, with almost nothing included about the corridor, see Susan McGrath, "Top Cat," *Audubon* (July/August 2004).

By singling out Conservation International and the work of the hotspots group, I do not mean to denigrate any of these (and other) NGOs, international, multinational, national, or local. All I want to emphasize is that the hotspots plan seems to me to reflect the urgency of the problem better than anything else.

For a sketch of the lead scientist here, see the Conservation International website: www.conservation.org.

It would be tedious to mention all of them, but Mittermeier has assembled around him an expert team. Some are fellow scientists, including experts for many specific regions all around the globe, but others are corporate or business leaders with an interest in biodiversity preservation for a variety of reasons. Regions all over the world are included; and functional experts cover finance to outreach, again over a broad range. The regions include Mexico to the Philippines, Ghana to Cambodia, Brazil or Costa Rica to Madagascar, and so on.

A profile of Mittermeier by Roger Rosenblatt, who followed him for several days in the jungles of Suriname, can also be seen in *Time* magazine's "environmental heroes" series in 1998 (www.time.com).

My experiences in Costa Rica haven't been exactly like those of *Time* reporter Rosenblatt, though I have had many similar experiences spread over more than

ten visits since 1998. Nor have I focused on a single scientist/activist like Mittermeier. I have followed many like him, looked at the fruits of the work of others firsthand, and met far more local leaders and just ordinary people than Rosenblatt mentions. But the overall flavor – along with the sense of urgency about preserving biodiversity – is similar enough to make Rosenblatt's account of Mittermeier a touchstone for my book.

On the other hand, I shouldn't end this discussion of the dimensions of the problem without at least referring to challenges that might be made to the hotspots/Mittermeier claim that stopping the loss of biodiversity is "simply the right thing to do." Moral philosophers, and more particularly environmental philosophers, rarely accept a claim that any activity is simply the right thing to do – without argumentation. And there is a lively debate among environmental ethicists about the priority, let alone unchallenged duty, of preserving biodiversity or saving species from extinction. (See Bryan Norton, *The Preservation of Species,* 1986.)

So it may be worthwhile to end this chapter with some references to a spectrum of environmental ethics claims and the philosophers (and others) who make them.

Some people say that contemporary environmental ethics begins with the work of a scientist, Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* (1962; see also Frank Graham, 1970). Others say the movement began earlier, with a famous debate between Gifford Pinchot, of the U.S. Forest Service, and John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, over the Hetch Hetchy dam project in California in the early decades of the twentieth century.

But what I am talking about is not such disagreements among scientists; it is about philosophers' disagreements over the principles on which they think answers to questions such as water pollution or dam building must be based – as well as the spectrum of positions on that issue.

Many of these disagreements can be followed in two books: Michael Zimmerman, ed., *Environmental Philosophy* (4th edition, 2004 [copyright says 2005]), and Joseph DesJardins, ed., *Environmental Ethics* (1999).

Among the disputants, I begin with Andrew Light. He was co-editor of, among many other books, *Environmental Pragmatism* (1996). Most of Light's work in environmental philosophy (according to his web site) has focused on the failure of the discipline to fulfill its promise as a guide to formulating better, more morally responsible environmental policies. Identifying several theoretical debates in the field which have prevented it from aiding in the development of better policies, Light argues that a pragmatist methodology is needed to transform environmental ethics into a more practical ethics, able to participate in the actual resolution of environmental problems. Light also says he is currently completing a monograph on ethical issues in restoration ecology and has been actively involved in that movement.

Light's (and others') environmental pragmatism and work on such issues as

ecological restoration (typically around urban centers such as Chicago) brings criticisms from opponents on both the political left and the political right.

At the most extreme among critics of environmental activism are those who say there is no problem and restoration is wasted effort; some of these critics are people associated with the so-called Wise Use or Anti-Takings movements. (See, among others, Ron Arnold, 1999; and Gregg Easterbrook, 1995, and elsewhere.)

From the other end of the environmental (and/or political) spectrum come critics, like J. Baird Callicott (for example, in the Zimmerman anthology), who worry that environmental pragmatists (he explicitly mentions Light) are simply avoiding the basic issue of environmental ethics – whether or not, and to what extent, non-human beings such as animals and plants and ecosystems have either interests or rights that conflict with human beings' rights. Callicott himself is a long-time defender of Aldo Leopold's "land ethic," which he has updated, turning it (he thinks) into a defensible holistic ecocentrism.

There are also Marxist and ecofeminist environmental philosophers for whom environmental problems are the result of various divisions within society or between humans *and nature* – class divisions, male domination ideologies, false nature/humans dichotomies, and so on. In my opinion, Karen Warren is the best defender of such views, and her latest version (as well as her best, I think) is also to be found in the Zimmerman volume.

I should add here radical defenders of wilderness for its own sake, such as David Strong in *Crazy Mountains* (1995).

As will be clear throughout this book, I side with the pragmatists against philosophers such as Callicott. (I do agree with Calicott that we need to see different viewpoints as complementary rather than antithetical.) My philosophical heroes, John Dewey and G. H. Mead, are often accused of anthropocentrism; but as Larry Hickman (2001) has ably shown, Dewey was no "liberal individualist" for whom solving human social problems was the only or the highest priority. And Mead's views, as well as his association with early-twentieth-century Progressivism, were even more pronouncedly socialist/activist, including early forays into conservation. Callicott's suggestion that pragmatists should see their approach as complementary rather than in opposition to radical theorizing is echoed by Bryan Norton (1994), who explicitly argues for a pluralism of viewpoints in dealing with urgent environmental issues. To which I say amen. But I also say amen to Mittermeier's claim that preventing further loss of biodiversity is "simply the right thing to do" - where I would emphasize *doing something*, along with others (not just philosophers by any means!), who are trying actively to prevent biodiversity loss.

## 4. COSTA RICA'S AMAZING BIODIVERSITY

It is hard to imagine that a country as small as Costa Rica can have the rich biodiversity it has. In a quarter of a hundredth of the total land mass of the

earth, scientists have found five or six percent of the known species on earth. But there are good reasons. The land mass is recent, indeed is still rising from the seafloor as a tectonic plate moves inexorably northeast. (See Denyer and Kussmaul, editors, *Geologia de Costa Rica*, 2000.) When the isthmus that is now Central America formed, flora and fauna were already wildly abundant in tropical areas north and south. Some plants and animals moved north, others south. The greatest diversity ended up in what are now the two countries of Panama and Costa Rica. But there is more to the story. As eons passed, some of the plants and animals got cut off from the passage north or south, creating islands of what ecologists call endemism. Costa Rica has a very large percentage of the endemic species in what Mittermeir calls the Mesoamerican Hotspot, extending from southern Mexico to Panama. And two areas are particularly high in endemism, the Talamanca mountain range (with mighty 12,000-foot Chirripo at its center) and the Osa Peninsula. In tiny Costa Rica, where scientists have found up to six percent of the known species on earth, *half* of this abundance is found on the Osa Peninsula.

Thanks to some farsighted scientists – who will be sketched here – the Costa Rican government (really a series of governments of alternating parties) has established an ambitious program for protecting all of this biodiversity. The effort is centered on a remarkable national park system, but there are also areas of protected forest outside the parks, and there is a fair amount of government-sanctioned protection even on private land. W. R. Wallace, in *The Quetzal and the Macaw* (1992), tells this story in an animated and informative way. His book, as I said before, is one place I learned to use personal sketches, often based on interviews, to tell a story. In this chapter, I will lean on Wallace for sketches of two scientists, Daniel Janzen and Mario Boza, though I will supplement Wallace's sketches with some of my own or ones I could find on the Internet.

I want to begin with another scientist who is less well known. But as it happens, he was the one who introduced me to Costa Rica, to its biodiversity, to governmental claims about sustainability (sometimes dubious), and especially to the Osa Peninsula and Corcovado National Park. I'm talking about a former philosophy student of mine, but also a student in the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, where he received his doctorate: Cesar Cuello Nieto.

Cesar was the most important person involved in getting me to Costa Rica in the first place, but, more important, in getting me to Corcovado National Park with its magnificent tropical rainforest. When Cesar's first research project involving Costa Rica did not receive external funding, he turned to the Osa Peninsula, to study the discrepancy between official governmental rhetoric about sustainable development and what is actually happening. (See Cuello Nieto's doctoral thesis, "Sustainable Development in Theory and Practice: A Costa Rican Case Study," 1997.) Sustainable development is supposed to do (at least) two things simultaneously, preserve the environment (in this case primarily a magnificent tropical rainforest) while providing jobs and income for people in buffer zones around protected areas such as national parks. Although Cuello is listed as only one of the authors of the chapter on Corcovado in *Parks in Peril* (also mentioned earlier) in fact he did the majority of the field research. That work ended up providing most of the material for his thesis.

In early 1998, Cesar invited me and my then wife Lydia to come to Costa Rica and, among other things, hike the trail from Los Patos to the Sirena Biological Research Station on the Pacific Ocean side of Corcovado National Park. It was a hike we will never forget, not only because of how difficult it turned out to be for us poorly prepared gringos to do in the tropical heat, but also because of the sheer magnificence of the setting of the Sirena station at the end. We arrived to the sound of dozens of pairs of scarlet macaws, then slept in a tent at the edge of Sirena's airstrip, only to be awakened at 4:30 AM to the sound of howler monkeys that sounded like roaring lions right outside our tent. We were exhausted from the hike, but after a little recuperation we fell in love with Sirena, as close to an earthly paradise as either of us had experienced. Thanks to Cesar's invitation, and contacts he helped me make, I have now been back to Sirena every January since – and to the Osa Peninsula more than ten times.

Cesar is a modest man, but he has been involved in successful projects that one would never know about because of this modesty – unless you talked with the many people with whom he has interacted so well and with such good intentions. He is now back in his native Dominican Republic, continuing the same sort of work there.

Cesar ended up working in Cost Rica because of his wife Sandra, who is herself a scientist, an economist, and a native of Costa Rica. The two of them met, and got married, in Moscow when they were part of a Soviet effort to influence young people in Latin America. When Cesar began his doctorate with me in Delaware, he was already planning to rejoin his family in Costa Rica. By the time he finished – and invited me and my wife to visit Costa Rica – he already had a job as director of field projects for the Fundacion Neotropica. Osa was the focus of one of the projects, and Cesar introduced me to a group there with whom I have now become good friends. The devotion of these people, to both saving the rainforest and helping the local people to learn how to make a living without destroying the forest, is a marvel to behold.

For my part, I started planning immediately to bring groups of undergraduate students to Costa Rica to compare and contrast preservation efforts in Corcovado with those in other forested areas on the Pacific slope of the isthmus. The students – eight groups by 2006 and more planned for the future – are always impressed with the beauty of the forest; but they are also impressed with the tranquility (Costa Ricans call it *pura vida*) and the simple lives of the people on Osa, no matter how poor they are. The students in the early years met Cesar, and at least a significant percentage of them have shared his devotion to the dual task of preservation and sustainable rural development.

Part of my effort has also included an attempt to gain a foothold for graduate students of environmental policy. That work has proceeded more slowly, but a group of these graduate students did join my undergraduates the very first January (1999). And they were as impressed as the undergraduates with the benefits of experiential learning.

I can only hope, in some small way, to help to advance some of the projects that Cesar was partly responsible for initiating. On
one occasion, he introduced me to the next character I will talk about, national park co-founder Mario Boza. One of my journals
for Costa Rica visits says it was 2001 when I heard Boza talk about corridors. It must have been the time when I had paid my own way to Costa Rica for a board meeting of a group, Amigos de Corcovado, that Cesar Cuello and I were trying to establish. The organization's focus at the time was on a proposal to establish and preserve a biological corridor linking Corcovado National Park, by way of its buffer zone, to Piedras Blancas National Park on the mainland at the entrance to the peninsula. The corridor focus was enough to make me want to hear Boza talk about corridors, not only on Osa or in Costa Rica more generally, but for the whole Pacific coast of North and South America.

Boza is, as Wallace says in *Quetzal*, scholarly and shy looking; tall and thin and with the general demeanor of an accountant. His presentation that day fit the image: it was careful in detail and tightly structured – but he also fumbled around a good bit with his overheads, sometimes tried to show pages from books to an audience of over 50 people, and so on. He would fit right in on campus.

Though he spoke in Spanish that day, his English is flawless, as I found out when I was introduced to him afterwards by Cesar. The introduction wouldn't have meant much to him. I was just one more gringo trying to show interest in Cost Rica's biological corridors, and the Osa corridor at that. Boza now hangs out mostly with leaders of important environmental NGOs trying to establish the long corridor along the Pacific coast from Alaska to the Southern tip of South America. When I met his co-worker in the earliest days of the Costa Rican national park system, Alvaro Ugalde, he said, "Oh Mario, his head is always in the clouds nowadays!"

But Boza and Ugalde hardly had their heads in the clouds in the old days. They worked literally on the ground, in the parks. Like almost everyone I've met connected with Costa Rica's parks, the uniform is jeans and a short sleeve shirt. In fact, the favored shirt of most young people in Costa Rica would be a tee shirt with some North American team logo on the front – whether the wearer had any idea which sport the team plays or not. Park workers and administrators are not that informal, but they do tend to wear this national uniform. And Boza and Ugalde worked really hard in those first days, under conditions that would have seemed primitive even to today's park workers, though living conditions are not all that much better today.

What Wallace says they accomplished – not singlehandedly, of course; they ended up getting regular and ongoing support from lots of people all the way up to the presidents of Costa Rica – was the transformation of a budding park system into one that can truly be called a model for the world. Boza wrote an influential and attractive book, *The National Parks of Costa Rica* (1998, with later editions in paperback and compact form). Nowadays the parks make up over 12 percent of Costa Rica's land surface (and some ocean territory too), and are surrounded by or otherwise supported by another system of protected areas, mostly forest. The total takes up about 25 percent of Costa Rica's land.

Though Wallace says Boza was reluctant at first, both Boza and Ugalde were also instrumental in adding still another feature: SINAC, the Sistema Nacional de Areas de Conservacion, which is devoted to further supplementing the park system by adding such features as local control in the various areas, outreach to the neighboring communities, including environmental education, services such as fire prevention, and, most important, employment. That means jobs of various sorts, from park guards to naturalist guides, including maintenance and service chores in and around the parks and protected areas. I can say from firsthand experience that the system is not perfect, and never really provides enough jobs or education. But it's definitely a needed next step after forest protection, and as Dan Janzen (see his story below) figured out long ago, Costa Rica's amazing biodiversity won't be protected for long without a system something like this.

Boza, from the beginning, has often been the "big idea" man on these issues – and Wallace says he quickly bought into the SINAC idea when he was convinced that it would not take too many resources away from the parks and protected lands themselves.

At some risk because of its length, I include here an interview in which it is possible to get a better picture of Boza's thoughtfulness than I could ever convey.

*Interview with Dr. Mario Boza* [CRNews.net – date uncertain]

Conservation visionary Mario Boza co-founded Costa Rica's National Parks Department in 1970, while still in his twenties. Now a consultant with the Wildlife Conservation Society, Boza envisioned the Path of the Panther biological corridor, to link parks and protected areas throughout the length of Central America. The Path of the Panther served as a blueprint for creation of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, signed by all seven Central American nations at the Presidential Summit of the Americas in 1994, and funded with nearly $100 million in international support.

Dr. Boza is currently leading an initiative to expand the Path of the Panther into the "Ecological Corridor of the Americas," an ambitious program to link biological corridors and parks throughout the western hemisphere, and ultimately create an unbroken chain of protected areas from the Arctic to Tierra Del Fuego.

*Is progress being made on the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor?*

No, on the contrary. There is no progress anymore.

The fact is that the Wildlife Conservation Society decided to discontinue the project that was originally called Path of the Panther. The Path of the Panther no longer exists. It was transformed into the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

The Wildlife Conservation Society was very active in the beginning, but we aren't involved now. No one in the WCS is promoting the Mesoamerican

Biological Corridor.

*Why isn't the Wildlife Conservation Society involved in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor?*

First, because it is in other hands. It is the responsibility of the United Nations Development Program, the GPZ of the German government, the World Bank - the organizations that finally allocated funds.

This doesn't mean that organizations that haven't contributed funds are not involved. For example, the IUCN and other organizations are involved. Not the WCS, because of lack of funds, although Archie Carr helps in some projects in Mesoamerica. But this is not necessarily under the umbrella of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

*What's wrong with the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor project?*

I'm disappointed with the role of the corridor in helping protected areas. Protected areas are in the same bad shape as they were before. The corridor has not been of any substantial help to the protected areas system in the different countries. That's because they are involved in so many different things that the original idea - the original biological idea - became a small department. There is now a department of protected areas.

Originally, what we conceived for the Path of the Panther was a major effort in the consolidation of protected areas, creation of biological corridors, and restoration of biodiversity to the region. It was specifically a biodiversity program.

But it changed. Now you have a lot of things, including the alleviation of poverty in Mesoamerica. Well, that's totally wrong! To alleviate poverty is the role of the government, not of a specific program that has another role. They are working in so many different areas that the attention paid to biodiversity is minimal.

*Has the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor been taken over by commercial interests, such as transnational corporations as part of Plan Puebla-Panama?*

I cannot say. I don't know really.

My concern, again, is biodiversity and protected areas. They are working in the fields of women and development, watersheds, pollution control, I don't know how many other things, and the original effort on behalf of biodiversity became diluted, and the effort is very small. That means that the protected areas continue to be in the same situation as they were before this program started.

*You mean that the protected areas in Central America remain as isolated*

*islands?*

Yes. Perhaps only in Costa Rica is there much effort in the creation of biological corridors. Really, only in Costa Rica

*Is the progress that has been achieved in the creation o f biological corridors in Costa Rica a result of local initiatives, such as the San Juan - La Selva corridor, rather than the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor?*

Yes. I'm part of the local advisory group for the corridor here in Costa Rica, so I have been trying to give more emphasis to corridors and protected areas in general, but the problem is that the money available for protected areas is very small, because they have to use the money for many other things.

*So there's not enough money available for the purchase of lands necessary for the creation of biological corridors?*

Purchase of lands? Forget about this - there's no money for the purchase of lands. That's not in their budget.

*What is the money being used for?*

To pay personnel, as always happens. The major part of the money goes to pay personnel.

*So in fact there's no environmental impact resulting from the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor?*

No, I don't see any real environmental impact. They make a lot of noise, but the reality in the field is different. I don't see any major or important impact on the forestry sector or on biodiversity.

*Does the Environment Ministry have a budget for the purchase of new protected lands?*

Very little, almost nothing, because of budgetary constraints. There is not enough money for land acquisition.

*Is land acquisition most important in the creation of a biological corridor?*

Yes. In some cases you can create the corridor by giving incentives and promoting better use of land. In other cases you have to acquire the land. Incentives include environmental services payments - for example, paying for the water that a privately owned forest produces. But that's not happening at the

country level.

It's happening in a few local cases. There are three or four cases where an electrical utility is paying the owner of a forest. The owner of the forest is a conservation NGO, such as the Monteverde Conservation League.

But at the national level, payments for water as an environmental service do not exist. It's a pity, and I'm very concerned, because this could mean a real revolution. For me, the green revolution is not the agricultural one, it's the protection of forests for the use of the environmental services that the forests can provide, and recognizing the owner for the services.

Those services include scenic beauty, water, carbon-fixing, mitigation of disasters, and so on.

*Is the Environment Minister aware of your views, and is anybody working to achieve this?*

They're not only my views, they're the views of a lot of people. Yes, we published a large document of recommendations for the new administration, and everything that I'm saying is included in that document.

*Is the Minister favorable to those recommendations?*

It's rather strange. Everybody says, "Yes, you're right, we're going to promote this." But nothing happens.

*Is that simply due to the budgetary restrictions which the government's under as a result of the Fiscal Contingency Law?*

That's only part of the problem. If you don't have enough money in the budget, why not go to other sources of funds - environmental services, the funds that protected areas can generate through research, entrance fees, concessions . . . whatever. International cooperation is also not moving here in Costa Rica.

There are all kinds of sources of funds, but nobody is looking for funds in a serious way.

*Are there opportunities for private entrepreneurs to operate environmentally friendly concessions in the national parks?*

It's totally open.

Now we're promoting the concept of co-management. This means that a private nonprofit conservation organization, a conservation foundation, administers protected areas under contract on behalf of the ministry. This is happening in Guatemala and Peru with a lot of success at present.

The national park will continue to be a national park, but the management will be handed over to a private conservation NGO with enough capabilities to administer the protected area. In this way, all revenues through entrance fees, research fees, concessions - whatever revenue a park can raise - remains at the park, and doesn't go to the government's general treasury as at present.

*Isn't that what they were trying to do at Manuel Antonio National Park - keep the resources generated in the park for local administration?*

Yes, but that won't last, because of a decision by the Controller General that made it illegal to have trusts in the park, or in any other public institution, including museums, national theaters, all of this. Consequently, all funds have to go to the central fund of the ministry of finance.

The National Museum is in a crisis because of that decision. When you pay your entrance fee for admittance to the museum - they are not able to keep those funds anymore.

So we have to change this trust scheme from public to private, to a joint venture.

*Because of the problems in public parks, are private reserves important for conservation? For example, is the purchase of Costa Rican lands by wealthy foreigners a positive factor in environmental preservation?*

Yes, extremely positive. At present, about 5 percent of all protected areas are in private hands, including private owners, private conservation NGO's, universities. It’s most important when they are in the buffer zones of public parks.

*Would the millions of dollars spent on Puntarenas Marine Park have been better invested in the national parks and other protected areas, to hire more park guards and purchase supplies and equipment for them to do their jobs?*

Certainly. The money invested in the Puntarenas Marine Park is a waste - a total waste of money. They spent hundreds of millions of colones which, had it been spent in the parks - in lands acquisition and improving the facilities - would have been much better spent.

Costa Ricans don't usually go, but if they go, they go once and then forget it. A tourist? Well, when you have in the States the Miami Seaquarium, the Santa Barbara Aquarium and the New York Aquarium, and all those extraordinary attractions, you're not going to come to Costa Rica to see a tiny marine park with little importance.

The ex-Environment Minister had a lot of influence, and she forced public institutions to allocate money to that, so they spent several hundred million

colones which, to me, that's a disaster.

*What about the fact that the fuel taxes aren't allocated to pay environmental services, as required by law? Does that affect parks and other protected areas?*

Just a fraction of those funds that were supposed to be used for reforestation are being used for that purpose. The rest is allocated at the ministry of finance to other needs. It's a mechanism that does not work to the benefit of the environmental sector.

(End of interview)

If Boza is a thoughtful scientist involved in efforts to preserve Costa Rica's rich environmental resources, the next person I'd like
to introduce is a legend. I have not yet had the good fortune to meet Dan Janzen, which is not because he is inaccessible. One of my graduate students working in Costa Rica, Noah Toly, simply contacted Janzen's website and got an immediate answer. My closest contact was with one of my groups of students. We were hiking a short trail in Santa Rosa National Park when we came across some mousetraps. Our guide checked them out, and sure enough they were part of a project Janzen was working on with a group of students. But meet him in person or no, Janzen is a legendary force among tropical biologists in Costa Rica, but also more generally, with stories about him coming at you from every side. Actually, my first encounter with him, if you can call it that, was with the incredibly influential book he edited, *Costa Rican Natural History* (1983). Anyone who wants to know anything about the amazing biodiversity of this small country will find it there.

Daniel Janzen is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, but he has been associated with the study of tropical biology in Costa Rica for decades. In 1980 or so he headed the project that generated *Costa Rican Natural History,* that gold mine of mostly otherwise unavailable data on everything from geology to what is currently known about the flora and fauna of CR. And, as my story above about mousetraps suggests, he's still doing active field work.

In most people's opinion, Janzen gets major credit for the science infrastructure at Santa Rosa – housing for foreign (and long-time) researchers, lecture halls and office buildings where seminars can be given (I'm talking about in-the-forest scale), a dining hall, as well as administration buildings both for the park and for the investigators.

What Wallace in *Quetzal* gives Janzen greatest credit for is the establishment of Guanacaste National Park. For Janzen, it meant a huge step toward restoring the dry forest that he wanted to re-establish; without uplands, including cloud forest, animals – both insects and larger critters – which would in the past have migrated according to wet and dry seasons would have no place to go in the driest part of Guanacaste's long dry season. So they would be threatened, if they did not actually become extinct. And to make the new park happen, Janzen took off his scientist's hat and became a major fundraiser, particularly in the USA and

with large corporations as well as major environmental NGOs. Wallace's book puts the figure at about $12 million, but I have seen reports of double that (and Wallace may include the higher figure too).

This major fundraising effort also enabled, or at least greatly augmented, one of the significant advantages that the Guanacaste Conservation Area has in relation to all the other parts of the national conservation system (SINAC): namely, its large endowment fund.

Here is *Hotspots* on these efforts of Janzen:

"Working with the Costa Rican Government and the Nature Conservancy International Program since 1985, Janzen obtained donations from governments and private foundations to engineer a debt-for-nature swap of $25 million for this area. In response, Costa Rica set aside the Guanacaste Conservation Area and created a $12 million endowment for it. Once the area was established, the challenge was to demonstrate its value to the region and to the country as a whole, which Janzen has done by describing the area as a farm rather than a traditional protected area. This farm differs from others in that it is not cultivated and does not produce the usual cows, alfalfa or rice. Rather, its products are ecotourism, research opportunities, educational programs for students at all levels, pharmacological products for drug companies, and water supplies for the entire region. It also produces 'ecosystem services' such as carbon fixation – basically a deal offered to large utility companies that emit carbon into the atmosphere. The idea is to pay countries like Costa Rica to protect more forest as a 'carbon sink' or to plant lots of trees which, through their growth, will remove carbon from the atmosphere. This innovative process, called 'joint implementation,' is a win-win situation in which the national government and the international community credit the utility company for cleaning up the environment and give it a greener image, while the company in turn provides the financial resources to protect natural forest and increase forest cover through reforestation. Aside from the many direct conservation benefits provided, the Guanacaste Conservation Area has also served as a stimulus to and testing ground for the growing field of Restoration Ecology, in which Janzen is one of the pioneers and leading practitioners" (p. 101).

And here is Janzen's bio sketch from his University of Pennsylvania website:

"Janzen is one of the foremost ecologists and tropical biologists in the world. His indefatigable field research has provided much of our present understanding of coevolution in terrestrial arthropods and plants, as well as the extent and impact of seed predation by insects.

"Research Interests**:** I am a tropical ecologist who specializes on animal-plant interactions in Costa Rican tropical dry forest and on biodiversity development and management of large conserved tropical ecosystems. I work as a team with my wife, Winnie Hallwachs, likewise a tropical ecologist. Special research emphasis is given to Lepidoptera larvae (caterpillars), their food plants, and their parasitoids (parasites). This information is processed into user-friendly databases, images and web pages

available in the public domain. Special conservation emphasis is given to seeking ways for decentralized administration of the non-damaging use of large conserved wildlands by society. Examples are biodiversity prospecting, carbon sequestration, ecotourism, biodiversity services to agriculture, and direct field research."

Another sketch might be helpful here, not of an individual but of an institution: the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS). There are a number of important research institutions in Costa Rica – especially for the study of tropical ecosystems – but this one is probably the most important. Its history is unique; it was begun with support from the US National Science Foundation when that institution was trying to develop a major niche in biological research to rival the National Institutes of Health. Initially a group of North American biologists at well known universities banded together to get it underway; now there are upwards of 70 institutions involved, and counting. OTS (in English; in Spanish it's OET, Organizacion para Estudios Tropicales) has three research centers in Costa Rica. OTS hosts countless students and researchers in Costa Rica, from the undergraduate level to world-famous scientists.

In place of a sketch, I will just summarize here one course that seems to me especially relevant to my concerns: an annual course on managing tropical forested areas (*manejo de areas silvestres tropicales*). It is related to the limited involvement of OTS/OET with policy research, as opposed to its mammoth tropical biology involvement. The online advertisement for the fifth such course, October-November 2003, is what I quote from. The course is offered by the Environmental Policy Office of OTS.

The general objective of the course is to offer participants overall instruction in both theoretical and practical aspects of the management of forest areas, with an orientation toward professional development and real improvements in the places where the participants work.

Specific objectives include:

1. To explore the principles of managing forested areas, such related fields as ecology, administration, environmental extension programs, and all of this with an eye to practical applications.

2. To foment an interdisciplinary and teamwork approach aimed at identifying and resolving problems that affect the national parks and other areas of protected forest.

3. To share apprenticeship experiences in demonstration protected areas of Costa Rica, chosen for applicability to similar Latin American areas.

4. To promote an ongoing interchange of ideas and experiences among the participants, including foundations for follow-up work after completing the course.

5. To familiarize the participants with the potential of modern techniques using advanced technologies (GIS, computerized databases, etc.), as well as strengthening the participants' abilities in oral and written communication.

The course takes advantage of participants' prior knowledge and experience as a teaching tool. Other teaching modalities include informal seminars, case studies, group projects, the preparation of reports, writing and presenting a proposal, living with the personnel in areas visited, and analysis and discussion of the relevant literature.

The course is taught in Spanish, and participants must be citizens of and have official forest management responsibilities in Central American or Caribbean countries (with some exceptions permitted), with at least two years of work experience (some of which can be as a volunteer) – and they should have some post-secondary education.

This is clearly serious business, with serious objectives, on the part of the Organization for Tropical Studies.

Another important Costa Rican science organization is the National Biodiversity Institute (INBio). Here is *Hotspots* on that:

"Founded in 1989, this nonprofit entity has as its mission the promotion of greater awareness of Costa Rican biodiversity both to conserve it and to use it to improve the quality of life for people. It has a number of programs, including a national biodiversity inventory, an information management program, a bio-prospecting program, a conservation for development program, and a social program aimed at transferring biodiversity knowledge to Costa Rican society at large. Although an NGO, INBio works closely with the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) and the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC) of the Costa Rican government. Among its many accomplishments was a 1992 agreement with the pharmaceutical giant Merck, the first agreement of its kind between a pharmaceutical company and an institution in a tropical country. [INBio - I add - by 2004 had nearly 30 similar agreements.] Also of note is its world-renowned Parataxonomy Program, a country-wide biological inventory program in which local villagers are trained in collection and preparation of

museum specimens. An outstanding example of local capacity building, a number of the people who have participated in this program have gone on to higher-level training in biodiversity" (p. 101).

INBio and OTS collaborate on the previous item, training for other countries.

Maybe I should summarize what I think these sketches tell us. Cesar Cuello was my ticket to Costa Rica, to its incredible biodiversity especially on the Osa Peninsula, and to all the people I have met there; but he has now returned to his native Dominican Republic. Mario Boza is practically a legend, as is Dan Janzen for sure. Nowadays Boza represents corridor work, not only within Costa Rica but also far beyond. And as we will see next, protecting the Osa corridor is absolutely essential to preserving the magnificent rainforest of Corcovado. Janzen's work has been mostly in the Northwest, in Guanacaste, where he has documented a level of biodiversity that parallels that of Osa; and he has shown how to do more than just preserve what he found. He worked forcefully to expand Santa Rosa by adding Guanacaste National Park to provide the space that species need to survive. He was also largely instrumental in creating the infrastructure needed for that project in the Guanacaste Conservation Area. The Osa Conservation Area, as we will see, needs a similar infrastructure – and might have (see below) had the needed champion in Alvaro Ugalde, Boza's co-worker in the founding of the national park system, along with the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC), as we know them today. INBio is unique, but the Organization for Tropical Studies is just one - albeit the best known - of the science institutions in Costa Rica. To my knowledge, they are unique in having science policy programs as well as ecology and tropical biology programs. And biology alone, without the right kinds of policies, is not going to save Costa Rica's forests and other natural resources. Janzen is proof of that. He is also proof that it is necessary to go beyond science and science policy to activism, as in his search for funding for the establishment of Guanacaste National Park

## 5. THE OSA PENINSULA WITHIN THE COSTA RICAN PICTURE

I start this chapter with my second oldest friend in Costa Rica, after Cesar Cuello. When my (then) wife and I arrived on the Osa Peninsula, in January 1998, the first person we met (we were introduced by Cesar) was Jose Rogelio Vargas. He was director of the Tropical Youth Center of the Fundacion Neotropica, from which we would set out very early the next morning for our difficult hike through Corcovado National Park to the Sirena Biological Research Station. Since there were several other Jose's in the group, he was introduced to us as Rogelio, and that's what I have stubbornly insisted on calling him ever since.

I begin with Rogelio partly because of his position with the Fundacion, but also partly because of the role the Fundacion had played on the Osa Peninsula in

the previous five years or so. There had been confrontations earlier, in the struggle to save this pristine forest from loggers, but the 90's was the time of a major campaign against Ston Forestal, the Costa Rican subsidiary of the Stone Container Corporation based in Chicago. For starters – though the story is much more complex – Ston had been given approval by the government to build a chip mill in Rincon del Golfo. It would be situated in Rincon, the northwestern corner of the Golfo Dulce that divides the Osa Peninsula from the mainland, and the chips would be used for paper production. The chips would be produced from Melina trees that Ston had planted a decade earlier. Unfortunately, according to environmentalist opponents, the mill would lie squarely within the hoped-for Osa corridor, and trucks leaving the site would also pass through the corridor. The struggle can be followed in detail in Helena van den Hombergh's *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce* (1999). Rogelio played some part in the Fundacion Neotropica's important (but Van den Hombergh says ineffectual) scientific contribution to the solution of the problem. But when we met him his job was primarily that of an environmental educator for Osa youth and for foreign visitors like those I would later bring to the TYC, as it was known.

Rogelio is thus (or was until recently) inextricably linked with the Fundacion Neotropica and its efforts in the local education and employment sectors of sustainable development on Osa. In the *Guerreros* struggle, he had a minor part to play in the Fundacion's scientific study that was part of the anti-Ston campaign. I wrote the following paragraphs in January 2004 during that year's student trip to Osa.

Originally just Rogelio for the students as well as myself, in January 2003 Jose Rogelio became (or wanted the students to call him) just Jose. In 2004 he was nowhere to be seen. He had been director of the Tropical Center (formerly Tropical Youth Center) since I first went to Costa Rica in January 1998. In 2004 not only was he no longer director, he did not even have an office in the TYC for his Avina project (more on that later). I had hoped to see him during my month in Costa Rica, but even that turned out not to be assured.

In January 2003, Rogelio had served both as our local director and as the director of an Avina project for "young entrepreneurs on Osa." Avina (www.avina.net) is a Swiss-based non-governmental organization that aims to develop entrepreneurship, especially in so-called developing countries. Here what that means is helping young people (the oldest of Rogelio's group is in her early thirties, but most are younger) to develop sustainable projects that will allow them to make a living in non-traditional ways. There are a couple of organic farming projects, but most are organized around tourism and similar ventures, rather than the traditional farming (typically on the family farm rather than their own) or especially instead of timber cutting or any other activity that would threaten Corcovado National Park or its buffer zone all the way to and surrounding Piedras Blancas National Park on the mainland. One of the highlights for our 2003 students was meeting with the Avina group, playing soccer with them and the locals, and learning salsa dancing from two members of the Avina group. I had hoped to repeat that the following year, but something happened.

Part of the reason may have had something to do with our guides, Quira

Expeditions. All the principals in Quira had once worked at the TYC, and all had left on more or less bad terms with Rogelio. He had told me that he wished them well in their venture, but he also gave me some very vague and unspecific warnings. Part may also have to do with the latest of several reorganizations of the TC after Rogelio became director of the Avina group.

Whatever, it was our loss, and I felt sad about it.

This sad sketch may give a lopsided picture of Rogelio and his contributions to forest protection on the Osa Peninsula. Until he started the Avina group, his role had been primarily that of an environmental educator – and he could claim modest successes in
that endeavor. For example, my students were always impressed with the focus on teaching future generations about sustainable development. In 2003 they were equally impressed with the vitality of the Avina group of young entrepreneurs. Apart from the sad experience (mostly my sad experience) in 2004, the students I have taken to Costa Rica and to the Tropical Youth Center have all gone off with fond memories of Jose Rogelio. And, for the most part, I have watched with admiration the respect Rogelio receives from Osa's good people.

The Fundacion Neotropica's efforts on the Osa Peninsula have been anything but uniformly successful. The first major venture, under an umbrella name of Boscosa (Bosques de Osa), involved teaching locals how to plant a saleable crop, palmito. Unfortunately the tress that were planted turned out to be sterile, and, equally unfortunate, the Boscosa name has stuck to the Fundacion's efforts ever since. Whenever we gringos tell locals where we are living on Osa, they say, "Oh yes, Boscosa" – not Fundacion Neotropica or Tropical Youth Center.

But none of this has dimmed the luster of Rogelio's reputation on Osa, and the Avina group is likely to enhance it.

I already mentioned the campaign against Ston Forestal. I'd like now to give brief sketches of some of the other persons and organizations – in addition to the Fundacion Neotropica – that were involved in that mostly successful struggle.

Helena van den Hombergh is the author of *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce: Industria Forestal y Conflicto en la Peninsula de Osa, Costa Rica* (1999). This is a book for wider circulation based on her doctoral thesis at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The work was supported by the Netherlands Foundation to Promote Tropical Research. Earlier, van den Hombergh had published two books: *Gender, Environment and Development* (1993), and *Gender and Land Use: Diversity in Environmental Practices* (co-edited, 1997).

*Guerreros* attempts to be fair to all parties, including the "heavies" of the story, Stone Container Corporation and its Costa Rican subsidiary Ston Forestal; but Van den Hombergh comes across as unabashedly sympathetic with the anti-Ston activists, some of whom had strong Marxist-environmentalist backgrounds. She is particularly sympathetic toward Maria del Mar Cordero – who, along with activist companions Oscar Fallas and Javier Bustamante, died (and may possibly

have been assassinated) just a few days after the (partial) victory over Ston. Here is her account:

"The next day [December 3, 1994], after meeting with a few groups, members of AECO [the Asociacion Ecologista Costarricense], local activists, and I went to a waterfall to swim. AECO members Maria del Mar Cordero, Oscar Fallas, David Maradiaga and I jumped in the water. After a short time, I was afraid I was going to get sunburned, so I moved to the bank of the river; but Maria and Oscar were tireless. Oscar climbed higher and higher on the slippery rocks while fighting against the force of the water. Maria followed him, but not before having played a game with the little girls who had come with us; she carried them on her back from one side of the river to the other as though she were a turtle. From the river bank I watched, but grew fearful; I was afraid they would fall. But no; not that day.

"They did 'fall' three days later, when a fire destroyed their house. On December 7, Oscar and Maria died, together with Javier Bustamante, another AECO activist" (my translation; p. 22).

Max Koberg – manager of Ston Forestal and its chief spokesperson, but also a member of the Costa Rica Legislative Assembly – spoke out repeatedly for Ston's interests, not only in the Assembly but in public meetings, for example, in debates with the activists in Osa (pp. 87, 260-261, and 268).

Rene Castro (I know little more about him) became the environmental minister, shortly thereafter, under the new (Liberation Party) Figueres Olsen administration. It was he who oversaw the satisfy-everyone solution – something uniquely Costa Rican. It allowed Ston Forestal to move its plant across the Golfo Dulce to the town of Golfito (p. 87).

Professor Gerardo Budowski, later a well known Costa Rican environmental scientist and peace activist, took up the cause of Ston; he spoke out in favor of tree plantations in the name of economic development in the blighted Southwest of Costa Rica (pp. 212-13).

It was, however, the scientist Heinz Hartmann, of the Universite Blaise Pascal in France, who produced the definitive study of the ecology of the Golfo Dulce (1994) that turned the tide against Ston. Hartmann's study convinced many that the gulf had all the characteristics of a fiord – a tropical fiord, of which there are said to be only four in the entire world. The gulf has a deep interior pool, with a depth greater than 200 meters, and an exterior pool near its mouth with a depth no greater than 70 meters. Such a topography produces a reduced water circulation, and guarantees that pollution problems will only be exacerbated over the years. Any pollution from a mill at the head of the gulf would be disastrous (p. 228).

The campaign against Ston Forestal (which is now a Costa Rican company rather than a subsidiary, and now provides wood for pencils in a plant on the mainland side of the Golfo Dulce), as well as the middlingly successful efforts of the Fundacion Neotropica, are now part of the past.

I next turn to Mario Boza's sidekick in the founding of the national park and SINAC systems, Alvaro Ugalde. He faces the future and he might turn out to be Osa's Janzen-like savior, though that is by no means assured. (It wasn't, as he backed off in short order.)

Wallace's *Quetzal* has maybe 20 references to Ugalde in the index, some of them giving a very personal view of a voluble talker, an enthusiastic defender of the Costa Rica parks system but also a defender of nature more generally, as well as a tough opponent in a confrontation. In 2002 at Sirena, with Jose Rogelio doing the introduction, I met Ugalde and can confirm some of these impressions, just on the basis of a five minute conversation. I have also heard more about him, in my visits, and one can check the website of his foundation, CRUSA (Costa Rica-USA) to add detail.

In 2004 I heard more about Ugalde as the administrator of ACOSA, Osa Conservation Area – and it was not all good. But there have been positive changes. For example, park guards were in evidence at Sirena during our 2004 student trip, and they almost kept our guide, Aider, from fishing. Some of what I heard was about Ugalde's fundraising efforts for Corcovado and the corridor. In addition to the added guards and patrols, a much-needed new research facility is being built at Sirena as well; or at least they were bringing in materials and preparing them, so that actual construction could start soon. (I guessed that the building would be finished when our student group arrived in January 2005, but it didn't happen.) Ugalde had already won much praise for his earlier efforts, alongside Boza, in building the park system.

An Internet source provides the following interview **(see www.eco-index.org/new/record/2004/january.cfm):**

**Interview with:** Alvaro Ugalde, Director of the Osa Conservation Area, National System of Conservation Areas, Ministry of the Environment and Energy, Costa Rica.
**Date:** December, 2003

**Interviewed by:** Katiana Murillo

*Known as one of the architects of Costa Rica's system of protected areas, Alvaro Ugalde has twice been director of the country's National Parks Service, a post he held for a total of 14 years. He moved on from the government to administrative positions with the UN Development Programme, and later the Costa Rica-United States Foundation (CRUSA). Last February, Ugalde returned to government service to take charge of the Osa Conservation Area – known by its Spanish acronym, ACOSA – in the country's southern Pacific corner.*

*The nucleus of ACOSA is Corcovado National Park, which covers a third of the Osa Peninsula and is home to such endangered animals as the jaguar and scarlet macaw. Together with the contiguous Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve and Piedras Blancas National Park, on the other side of the gulf, Corcovado*

*protects the last significant expanse of rainforest on the Pacific coast of Mesoamerica. Ugalde, one of the founders of Costa Rica's famous national parks system, was instrumental in Corcovado's creation in 1975. Since leaving the helm of the Parks Service, he has collaborated with various conservation projects, among them the Osa Biological Corridor: an effort to reestablish a forested connection between Corcovado and Piedras Blancas National Parks, and to promote sustainable development in the area's communities. We spoke with Alvaro Ugalde about the challenges he faces as director of ACOSA, and the future of the biodiversity in the Osa Peninsula and nearby wilderness areas.*

**Question:** Why is Corcovado National Park so important to Costa Rica?

**Ugalde:** Fifty percent of the country's biodiversity is found there – which is some two percent of the world's total biodiversity. In biological terms, it is an exceptional area – it has high endemism and is a meeting point for species from North and South America. The creation of Corcovado was Costa Rica's response to a movement to save the world's rainforests during the 1970s. The park is the magnet that draws everything else to the area. Without Corcovado, the macaws and other remarkable animals would disappear, and with them, the direct economic benefits that the park provides the local economy.

**Q:** What are the principal threats to the park?

**Ugalde:** Out of ignorance, we created a park that is too small. At the time, we thought it was gigantic. What the years have proven, though, is that Corcovado is very small in terms of the area required by the biodiversity it contains, especially when we talk about critical species such as the jaguar, peccary, and harpy eagle. The isolation of Corcovado from other tracts of healthy forest exacerbates this problem. In the past, we erroneously assumed that the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve was going to be well administered. But it was pillaged, and the pastures that were created broke the forested connection between Corcovado and Piedras Blancas National Park. The fragmentation of the reserve together with an increase in hunting became the greatest threats to the Osa Peninsula's biodiversity. The government had also drastically cut protection of the area in recent years.

**Q:** How viable is the proposal to establish the Osa Biological Corridor?

**Ugalde:** For me, the most important issue isn't what has been damaged, but what is going to be done from here on. Because repairing a biological reserve is theoretically easy. You leave nature in peace, you pull the cows out of a pasture, and in 10 years, you have the beginnings of a forest; and in 20 years, you have a forest. The challenge is that no species disappear, because it would be possible to have an Osa with good forest cover, but without fauna, you would have what is called an "empty forest." The task of restoring the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve is

an enormous one, and it requires that people be willing and capable of making it happen. I'm speaking about all the players: government, land owners, etc. If we can agree on the means, the reserve will be restored, but hopefully it will be done with jaguars. They are a banner species for the Osa, and also one of its most endangered (a population of less than 100, according to studies). If we can't stop the hunting, those 100 jaguars won't last long.

People's mentalities have changed. They want to conserve, but they also want to live, and the challenge is to find ways for them to improve their lives while conserving. I would say that there is quite a bit of forest, and that it holds a lot of fauna. What needs to be done is to put a halt to hunting, and put into practice the programs that will restore and maintain the forest. We already know what's needed: payment for environmental services, private reserves, and ecotourism.

This is the main premise: we first need to put a stop to hunting in the park, which has been one of the measures we've taken since I arrived in this position in February 2003. Hunting reflects a lack of opportunities for local people, but it is also an indication that the park lacks proper management. I'm talking about stabilizing (wildlife) populations within the park first, then continuing the struggle in surrounding areas.

For that part, we need optimism, education, work with local people, and money to pay for services, or buy forests from people who don't want to conserve them. It also requires the completion of a land-use plan for the forest reserve, so as to determine how future funding can best be spent. We also need to straighten out the land tenure situation, because a lot of people still don't have titles for their property. The thing is, even though nature is key to the Osa's economy, there are sectors that don't receive any economic benefits from conservation and ecotourism. This is the big challenge: how to democratize the tourist dollar in the Osa Peninsula, to reach a point where more people are earning something, and taking better care of nature.

**Q:** What kind of relationship do local communities have with the park?

**Ugalde:** I think that now the communities are proud of Corcovado. The wounds of resentment made by the park's creation 30 years ago have healed. I feel that the people of Osa are open to the general concept of conservation. Are there lots of disagreements? Of course. Do people not trust government? Sometimes, but not only in the Osa, but in other areas as well.

For communities on the agricultural frontier that are struggling to meet their own basic needs, it is difficult to forgive the failures of past governments – the abandonment and broken promises. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that the Osa has to be taken care of, and that the best way to save it is through tourism. Today, nobody cuts down a patch of forest to plant rice and beans on

the steep slopes of the Osa. It is understood that the peninsula is extremely fragile, and that we have to learn to exploit it without altering it too much.

**Q:** Do you think that in order to preserve a protected area's biodiversity, it is more important to train and educate nearby communities, or is it better to invest directly in the protected area?

**Ugalde:** We have to do both things. The key is to balance the investment. In the beginning, we invested more inside the area, because the goal was to get the park functioning, so that private investment could follow in its surroundings, and that's what has happened.

However, you can't say that economic improvement in Osa alone is going to save the species; it has to go hand-in-hand with more efficient management of the protected areas, with education and better incomes for the families living around those areas. For me, investing in the capacity of the communities is essential. But people resent it when organizations show up, talk, make promises, and families in rural areas end up as poor as they were before. Without a doubt, there needs to be a high level of investment in the communities, more than there is now.

Ensuring that people become educated and that money reaches their pockets can't be achieved from one day to the next. We've been working for 30 years, and things are still moving slowly. But a well-protected park is a guarantee for the communities while they learn to use their resources in a more sustainable manner, such as through tourism.

Mechanisms for payment of environmental services would be more effective if they were more stable, more long-term, and they reached more people, such as indigenous communities, for example. Things aren't so simple, though, because there are individuals who want to log, and the Ministry of the Environment and Energy is incapable of controlling illegal logging. I think that it would be difficult to help local people rise out of poverty without paying them for environmental services, because not everyone is ready to become involved in ecotourism.

**Q:** How can we achieve a balance between sustainable and unsustainable activities taking place on the peninsula?

**Ugalde:** That isn't an easy question to answer. ACOSA is, on the whole, a region with limited services. If I say that everything we are doing is sustainable, but the dollars aren't reaching the poor majority, then we're not pulling it off. Osa has the potential to become an economically and ecologically self-sufficient region. There are misguided projects, though, and we need to see how we can re-direct this wave of development projects that don't respect the environment, or the people, because the temptation to trample the environment in the name of employment is very great. We want tourism to come to Osa as much as the investors do, but what we don't want is for it to be turned into a degraded, artificial place.

In other Pacific Coast areas, such as Dominical, there are environmental problems related to tourism projects. There's a lack of management and coordination between the municipality and the environment ministry and abuses by investors who have built on steep slopes of the coastal mountain range. This is dangerous, and tends to be environmentally unsustainable. There have been plenty of accusations, but few prosecutions. The judiciary's interpretation of environmental infractions and how they should be punished remains very weak, with little importance given to environmental infractions. This is also a big problem in Osa.

Still, small projects are the predominant trend in the area's tourism, and Osa has a lot of potential for ecotourism development. If there is a little more coordination between the municipalities, the environment ministry, and the tourism institute, it is possible.

**Q:** What is the strategy for attaining the sustainability of Osa's protected areas?

**Ugalde:** We're working on two levels: The Osa Conservation Area is raising its own funds, and the National System of Conservation Areas is trying to raise funds on a national level for the payment of environmental services. It depends on whether the government manages to raise water and electricity rates in order to invest part of the funds in ecosystem maintenance.

We're betting that the country will go ahead with a payment for hydrological service, the bulk of which should go to protected areas, as well as payment for water pollution, and the installation of a mechanism by which the tourism industry pays for the services of biodiversity and scenic beauty. None of this is being charged for now. We believe that a portion of water revenues should go to support the maintenance of wildlands. I think that this will start within a matter of months. It would be a sustainability tax. We are always going to need water, whereas tourism fluctuates more.

We need greater fundraising efficiency than the Legislative Assembly has granted us through the forestry tax and protected area entrance fees. We also need to be more efficient in our use of funds, and the development of a capacity for ACOSA to raise its own funds. This is the focus of our campaign for $30 million to create a heritage fund, $10 million of which would go toward establishing heritage fund with the goal of improving protection of Osa's parks and reserves, $10 million of which would be used to settle debts with the owners of land within Piedras Blancas National Park, and $10 million of which would be used to pay for environmental services and for encouraging ecological easements and private reserves.

This won't resolve everything. The campaign could fulfill just a small part of ACOSA's needs, which will be billions over the years, but we are hoping to generate funds through the payment of services, admission fees for the areas, and through a change in mentality – the Osa's hotels and other tourism activities also need to contribute much more to conservation.

(End of interview)

So the struggle to save Corcovado National Park, as well as its buffer zone and the corridor linking it to Piedras Blancas National Park, is ongoing.

But as I found out in 2006, Ugalde had decided to resign as head of ACOSA, and it's not clear that his ideas will win out in the long run.

Note: There is still hope. After I wrote "Small Steps," a magnificent pictures-with-text book appeared, *Osa: Where the Rainforest Meets the Sea* (2009), by photographer Roy Tofts and author Trond Larsen, with a foreword by Adrian Forsyth. It was published under the auspices of a group called Friends of the Osa, led by Forsyth. They are not just championing, but executing the steps needed for a wildlife corridor that would link (in part already links) the Matapalo cliffs in the extreme south of the peninsula with Corcovado National Park and on to Drake Bay. A complete corridor on the southwest slope of the peninsula to outdo the corridor planned through the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve from Corcovado to Piedras Blancas National Park (formerly a distant part of Corcovado) on the mainland. The latter is the corridor Ugalde talks about, and it would clearly be wonderful if it could ever be realized - though that now seems less and less likely every year. Meanwhile, the big animals - jaguars, pumas, tapirs, monkeys - have at least one functioning wildlife corridor to roam end to end.

## 6. MY VISITS TO OSA AND THE FUTURE THERE

I start this section with a preliminary note. It was the most difficult material to carry over from the original "Small Steps" and to incorporate in this larger venture. I was tempted to change every "is" to "was." But that would have robbed the essay of its immediacy - its "as it happened" character. So I decided that it was better to keep it in the present tense. (For the most part. I couldn't resist changing some items where things have changed drastically in the meantime. And even in "Small Steps" I had updated a few items.

Furthermore, this material was written earlier than section one, above, on what I learned from CEEP about activism. In fact it was used extensively as a source, often verbatim, for that essay. The result is that there are repeats here now that I have not (yet, at this point) managed to eliminate. I may never do so.

I come now to my home-away-from home in Costa Rica, the Osa Peninsula and the ongoing efforts – or, as I said, lack  thereof – of the good people there to deal with sustainability issues. Most of the people I have come to know there have at least some interest in protecting Corcovado National Park - if not its surrounding buffer zone. My main contributions to the effort, so far, have been to bring groups of about twenty North American students there for two weeks every January from 1999 until 2006 - with follow-up visits later. (We did, at one

point, try to form a group, Amigos de Corcovado, to raise money to help out. But it turned into no more than a student group to do a reforestation project in the buffer zone; and finally the USA foundation was dissolved in 2005 because Ugalde's CRUSA and other groups were already doing everything we had hoped to accomplish.)

January 1998: When I first arrived in Osa - my wife at the time and I had been invited by Cesar Cuello to see firsthand the wonders of the peninsula where he was then working - I had no idea of doing anything to help out there. It was supposed to be just the beginning of a tourist trip through Costa Rica - an ecotourist trip, we hoped and expected, but no more than that. We had hosted Cesar in the USA several times, and he was reciprocating in his adopted country. We did end up seeing a number of sights throughout the country, including Arenal Volcano with its touristy Tabacon lodge and hot springs (we stayed at a place we found to be much better, Arenal Paraiso, where we enjoyed twenty minutes of fiery lava flow at one o'clock in the morning) and nearby La Fortuna waterfall; Lake Arenal and the beautiful Arenal Botanical Gardens alongside it; a nice Corobici restau-rant next to the river of that name flowing down from Lake Arenal; and Jaco beach, to let us experience Costa Rica's beaches. But nothing prepared us for the wonders of Sirena Biological Research Station in the middle of Corcovado National Park on Osa, and no memory of the country stayed with us longer than the memories of hundreds of scarlet macaws flying over our heads, the howler monkeys outside our tent early in the morning and late into the evening, and previously unimaginable birds and flowering plants and the forest that is Corcovado. We had, we thought, very nearly killed ourselves on the hike getting there from the Los Patos station, but the paradise that is the Sirena station more than made up for it.

We did the hike (it was grueling for us) in the company of guides from the Tropical Youth Center of the Fundacion Neotropica. We escaped by small bush pilot plane to Puerto Jimenez, while the guides - and Cesar - did the hot and dangerous hike out along the Pacific Ocean to the other entrance to the park at Carate. The whole adventure introduced us to the TYC staff, with whom Cesar was working closely, as well as to the supporting agency for all of them, the Neotropica Foundation. But in just a few short days, and with little to tell to us what they were trying to do beyond Cesar's explanations in our long rental car rides to and from Osa, we had no idea of the urgent needs of the poor people on Osa. We were just marveling at Corcovado's wonders, briefly experienced, which is what happens to most tourists who manage - usually with similar difficulty - to get there.

In Puerto Jimenez, we were able to see a little bit of the hot and dusty town, to eat at Carolina's restaurant which we quickly discovered to be the favored haunt for other mostly gringo tourists heading into the park, and to learn how generally isolated the town is, in spite of its small airport and ferry run across the Golfo Dulce to the more with-it town of Golfito. I admit that our impressions weren't generally good, that day, and we definitely didn't feel any strong need to help anyone there.

With Cesar, in our long rides through much of the Pacific slope side of Costa Rica as far north as the Rio Corobici, conversations led to talk about beginning

to bring undergraduate students to experience Costa Rica's forests (and efforts to save them), in future years. But for me, that idea was supposed to have a different payoff. I wanted to establish graduate student research links, with a focus on environmental policy, and the undergraduate program - supported by the dynamic Study Abroad program at the University of Delaware - was supposed to do no more than provide me a regular home base in Costa Rica. I still had no idea
of trying to do anything, myself, to help in save-the-forest efforts.

In this section, I try to explain how that inauspicious beginning led to my getting actively involved in rainforest protection efforts, not only on the Osa Peninsula but, to a lesser extent, in other parts of Costa Rica as well.

In 1999 I led my first group of eight undergraduate students to Costa Rica, where we spent more than two weeks on Osa and specifically at the Tropical Youth Center. We were joined there by another group, five graduate students from the University of Delaware's Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, plus one more undergrad from my environmental ethics seminar. They were in Costa Rica only ten days, but most of that time they spent with us on Osa, including our hike to Sirena.

While the whole group, undergrads and grad students, were there, we made what would turn out to be the first of our visits to local communities. The community we visited on that occasion is called Rancho Quemado, and it's a story in itself; among other things, that visit taught me - as well as the students - much about the level of poverty and desperation among the people who live on Osa.

(I trust that the friendly reader will tolerate the many repeats here from the learn-from-CEEP section, above.)

The very name of the town is significant. It means "burned community center." When the logging companies first came to Osa, in the 1960s, they tried to expel settlers from the land they wanted to clearcut. They were successful here, in the sense that a fair number of homes were built, plus a rude community center building. But the men of the town kept returning to the forest, which they saw as their birthright (at least their squatters' right), for hunting among other things. In retaliation, the loggers came one night and burned the rancho*,* and the name stuck: Rancho Quemado.

The community is fairly extensive in acreage (or hectareage), and aside from a rebuilt community center, a school, a church,
a few stores, and a soccer field, it is mostly small farms. At the time we first visited there, the farms were barely above the subsistence level, though there had been a proposal to grow cash crops - and large tracts had been leased or purchased by Ston Forestal to grow melina trees, plantation style.

The cash crops were a proposal of the Boscosa (*bosques de Osa*) project of the Fundacion Neotropica. At least some of the farmers would grow palmito, a species of palm tree used commonly in Costa Rica for hearts of palm, ordinary enough but enough of a delicacy to be profitable. Unfortunately the trees that

were planted turned out to be sterile. And the road to any conceivable market was long and arduous, not to mention that there were few trucks that could be used for shipping.

So subsistence farming continued to be the norm, along with a wait for Ston to start harvesting melina. (Our guides told us
that that would actually be a disaster, because clearcutting would leave large patches of what used to be native-tree jungle a wasteland.) Our group would return the next year to find that a significant percentage of the young men were leaving Rancho Quemado in search of jobs a long way off. Still later, when we passed through the community on our way back to the Tropical Youth Center, we could see that there were, finally, some efforts underway to turn the village into a tourist attraction - though the roads in and out, from either west or east, continued to be long and treacherous. And what my students saw would not seem very promising as an attraction for tourists.

In 2002 we didn't go back to Rancho Quemado but instead visited a man named Antonio on his farm in the town of Banegas
- on the way toward Quemado from the TYC but off on a side road. (We returned there again in 2004.) At some point we saw workers putting up electric poles, but at the time there was no electricity and no telephone service to Banegas. Antonio's farm was as different from those in Quemado as it would be possible to imagine. He had two horses and about a dozen cows, one of which he would occasionally slaughter for meat to sell to neighbors, including relatives on nearby farms; there were chickens and pigs and a scarlet macaw, more or less a pet but flying free, that had set up a family with a male (at that moment the male had left); he had every type of fruit and vegetable native to the area growing in about a hectare-size garden; his house, built almost exclusively with his own hands, was two-story; and Antonio had piped water from the mountainside, more than a kilometer, so that the family always had fresh water. Antonio's wife was as industrious as he was, and they had a teenage daughter, equally impressive, who was agonizing over whether or not to go off to high school - almost unheard of for a female in that area. In short, Antonio's farm was totally self-sufficient, including a small local market for meat or other produce if the need came, as close as I could imagine to being the near total opposite of all but one or two farms in Rancho Quemado. And neither Antonio nor his son, who helped out but also worked on other farms in the area, was likely to feel a need to move elsewhere. Not only no need but no desire; one of the students asked, and Antonio, in a translation by one of our guides, said he would never consider moving.

This came to be our pattern over the years. We always visit Puerto Jimenez and La Palma, the two biggest towns on the peninsula (in round numbers, a little over 2,000 and 1,000, respectively), and by 2005 we had visited quite a few families: right around the TYC (many family members worked there) and in the corridor area linking Rincon to Chacarita (the service station on the Interamerican Highway), as well as La Gamba near the entrance to Piedras Blancas National Park (the mainland end of the proposed biological corridor to protect Osa's big cats and other large animal species), and Drake Bay.

We have never gotten to the rich tourist hotels - for example, Lapa Rios -

south of Jimenez on the road to Carate, the southern entrance to Corcovado; and all we have ever seen of Drake is to have lunch with local families, never visiting the rich tourist hotels Drake is famous for. Once one of our students discovered that her mother was vacationing in Drake, at the classy Aguila de Osa, and she visited her there; and once, in 2001, the United States Ambassador to Costa Rica, Christopher Dodd - also vacationing in Drake - was asked to make a stop at the TYC, where the students got to meet him and his entourage.

So generally our contacts are with ordinary local people, not rich (or middle class) tourists. And the closest we have ever come to loggers was a chance meeting some students had in a local bar; though once I did get into a heated discussion with a family on the local public bus to Jimenez who staunchly defended their right to sell trees.

If there is a failing in my program, it's that students one year don't know what students from previous years have experienced; but I don't know how to solve that problem.

Educators at the TYC (often our guides) do give the students one lecture on the socio-economic situation on Osa. But that is classroom teaching, not experiential learning. The facts presented (based on a limited sociological survey in the late 1990s) include: a population of about 12,000, the largest number living in and around Jimenez and La Palma; a stratified hierarchy of farmers, ranging from an income above $4,000 a year, through a middle level between $2,000 and $4,000, to a day laborer (or unemployed) would-be farmer gaining less than $2,000, often less than $1,000; almost no social life except soccer (girls usually just watch) and an occasional dance (they say *discoteca*) in Jimenez or La Palma; schooling through the legal sixth grade, though many kids drop out to help on the farm after the fifth grade, and few - especially few girls - go to high schools in La Palma or Jimenez. Obviously in this situation there are few chances for girls to marry anyone other than neighboring farm boys. And, finally, because the peninsula is split between two cantons, all official business must be conducted in either Golfito, on the other side of the Golfo Dulce, or in Ciudad Cortez, near Palmar Norte on the Interamerican Highway two or even three hours away.

In the early days of the Tropical Youth Center, there was an environmental education program, involving both weekend visits by kids to the center and visits by educators to the 20 or so community schools, including the high school in Jimenez. But by the time of our January 2003 trip this program had been seriously cut back. When it was still operating at full strength, our students were impressed with the evidence they saw at the center, though they never actually experienced either a weekend youth program or lessons in the small local schools. (It's summer vacation time for Costa Rican kids when we're there.)

In 1999 with my first group of students, the first shock was the beauty of the site and the grounds at the Tropical Youth Center. My wife and I had been there only briefly, late at night before the hike to Sirena, and overnight afterward, before leaving with Cesar right after breakfast. We had seen nothing of the new cabins, rancho (outdoors meeting area), dining area, or new administration building. And we had learned nothing about the history of the place. It was

originally the headquarters of the Canadian lumber company that was going to clearcut Corcovado before the park lands were expropriated by the Costa Rica government - for something on the order of $250K. The managers had laid out the terrain, including site pads in a pentagon arrangement with connecting walks, a water purification system with a small dam upstream in the creek. The road coming in had been the rough runway for small planes to land. There were pieces of heavy lumbering equipment left behind. And someone - possibly the lumber company - had begun a small reforesting project behind the complex, which provides a nice short hike through the tertiary forest.

There is a story about how the site passed into the hands of the government, along with the expropriation, then into the hands of the Fundacion Neotropica and its Boscosa project to help the locals learn how to reforest and otherwise do beneficial things (it failed miserably), then to become the Tropical Youth Center of the Fundacion Neotropica (ever after to be identified by the locals with Boscosa). I actually know little about these various transfers of management or ownership. But the actual management of the operation, when I started going there, was in the hands of Jose Rogelio Vargas, and he had seemed to me to be doing a great job.

The mission of the TYC had also changed, to become primarily environmental education for local young people, including visiting environmental educators going to the small one room schools that dot the Osa Peninsula's rural areas. The educators also visited the local high school in Puerto Jimenez, and invited young people to come to the TYC for weekend workshops. (Over several years, I would watch this once-promising venture fall on hard times: educators not welcomed in the schools, a breakdown of relations with the high school in Jimenez, and so on.)

The second shock was the local people around the TYC. Many of them worked there, so you might expect generally good relations. But at the surface level, my students and I experienced nothing but smiles and waves and a congenial reception, not only in the immediate neighborhood but all the way through Puerto Escondido to La Palma and further on to Puerto Jimenez.

The students probably didn't, though almost from the beginning I felt an undercurrent of resistance, and later I would find that some neighbors - including two families living right next door (especially the male heads of those families) - were defiantly hostile; one man, in particular, took great pleasure in hunting small game around the place, and we could often hear his rifle shots. We could also hear, not too far away, the sound of chain saws as some locals persisted in felling trees, probably illegally. It was attitudes like these that the TYC hoped to change by way of educating the young people in more environment-friendly behaviors.

In 2000, we were lucky to get an expert talk by Ministry of Environment administrators on how the locals cheat on the
forest management plan, enlarging their cultivated acreage row by tree row, and how tourists (like us) do as much damage to Corcovado as we do to preserve it. Our group joined with another University of Delaware group - led by entomologist Doug Tallamy - in the hike to Sirena; one memorable event was

that the entomology students happened to see a spectacular site at the mouth of the Sirena River: a large school of sharks, feasting at high tide on fish swimming in the river toward the ocean. This was also, because some students and I had injured ourselves either on the hike in or on hikes around Sirena, the first boat trip out of Sirena to Drake Bay, with magnificent views including sharks, though adventuresome females still chose to dive into the Pacific Ocean. My daughter Angela (one of the students that year, but who had to get back to her classes at Rice University in Houston) and I took a flight from Puerto Jimenez to San Jose, with a really good view of terrain below all the way to the airport at Alajuela. I rejoined the group at Manuel Antonio, with my (then) wife, who had wonderful birding experiences there - more than 25 *new* species while lolling around the Cabinas Espadilla pool! That continued in Monteverde, with the fabled Coki as guide, including our "assured" quetzals but also dozens of emerald toucanets when, the next day, we horned in on another of Coki's groups. Back in San Jose at the end of the month, we also added a side trip - because we had extra money and the students could go for half price - to the Teleferico ride into the canopy, an educational experience in terms of lore about the layers up to the top, at the other side of Braulio Carrillo. That day there also happened to be a large pack of coatis, 30 or so, around the grounds at the gift shop and restaurant there. This too was a memorable experience, as tourists often say, but we could certainly second the motion. This was the only one of my groups to go to Poas Volcano and actually see the crater.

In 2001, we added northwest Costa Rica to our itinerary, centered in the town of Liberia and the Hotel Boyeros at the main intersection, with its swimming pool surrounded by mango trees. It was also our first visit to Santa Rosa National Park, where we learned about Dan Janzen's efforts to add on Guanacaste National Park to create the "largest natural tropical biology laboratory
in the world." We visited the mini-Yellowstone at the foot of Rincon de la Vieja Volcano, and the students tried to climb to the crater. They wouldn't let me go, too old, and that year they didn't reach the crater -though later groups of students would. Several students chose not to climb to the crater, and instead joined me for a strenuous hike to a beautiful 70-foot waterfall (El Cangrejo, the crab) with a pool to swim in at the bottom.

By 2002, our itinerary had become settled, so that year and 2003 followed the same pattern.

Recalling my notes, above, at the beginning of this section, here begins the 2004 narrative, more or less as originally written for my journal that year. (The students also do a journal.) I chose to use the material from the journal in order to give some idea of what the students and I used to do each year on Osa. I hope that that gives the narrative an as-experienced feeling - though it might also create problems for some readers, where I talk about things in the present (or intersperse comments from later years) that clearly occurred in the past. For now, I'm going to leave things that way.

I begin my account based on the itinerary handed out to our students by Quira Expeditions, our guide group for 2004 as
well as the next two years. I add a few modifications and comments, but the

account tracks Quira's itinerary for January 2004 reasonably closely.

Friday January 2: We arrived in Costa Rica and were picked up at the airport in Alajuela by Alberto and Aider of Quira Expeditons, in a hired microbus, and taken next door to the very North American Hampton Inn. We ate dinner all together at the Rosti Pollos restaurant, next door to the Hampton. Many students went out to bars in Alajuela.

Saturday January 3: We started early on the long trip south to the Osa Peninsula, with stops along the way at a "mega superstore" in Cartago; at the *paramo*, above the tree line, near Cerro de la Muerte (short lecture by Alberto); and for lunch at
the beautiful restaurant Mirador Vista del Valle, surrounded on every side by flowers, including orchids. The restaurant was as beautiful as ever but had no view because of the clouds. We didn't arrive at the Tropical Center (formerly Tropical Youth Center) until 7:30 PM, but were welcomed with dinner and a few comments about expectations (few were spelled out this year, except by me). Guides Alberto and Aider led the way to a local bar in the evening; the first of many such trips for a good many of the students.

Sunday January 4: Presentation on dangerous and annoying critters of the tropical rainforest, given by Pablo, a young biologist hired to do the presentations this year; then our first hike, on the community trail, to a waterfall, with educational “labs” along the way; lunch, followed by student presentations on what they had learned; an evening presentation on the natural history of Osa.

Monday January 5: Introduction by Pablo to the social history of CR and Osa, then visit to Don Antonio’s incredibly self-sufficient farm in Banegas. (I chose to go into Puerto Jimenez with Luisa, the new director of TC; see below.) A few tips on Spanish in the afternoon. Video “Creatures of the Black Lagoon” - National Geographic type presentation of Corcovado National Park - in the evening.

Tuesday January 6: Trip to La Gamba community, beginning with hike to Avellan waterfall (see below), then lunch with community leaders, including history of the community and Fundacion Neotropica’s work there.

Wednesday January 7: Morning trip to Playa Blanca, on the Golfo Dulce near La Palma, where students experienced the mangrove forest, then went swimming in the gulf; the afternoon exercise was cooking on traditional wood burning stoves with local host wives (all TC employees), and resulting main dishes or desserts were taken back to the TC for others to share.

Thursday January 8: In the morning there were research projects in the form of visits to two biological corridor farms. In the afternoon there was an introduction to local crafts by Manuel and Guisselle Bianco. (For special reasons, I include the last name of this family; see below.)

Friday January 9: All day trip to Puerto Jimenez, going by public bus, returning in a rickety bus hired by Quira; the students had bad luck trying to get cash at the only bank in town, and they mostly just hung out and had lunch, then

swam in the gulf.

Saturday January 10: Presentations of research results from the two corridor farms in the morning. In the afternoon there was a meeting with a few Avina project leaders (see below), followed by a soccer game with the locals, where our students did surprisingly well. The evening provided a wild treat: Latin dance lessons at TC, then off to what was billed as a “snow storm” dance (frequent blasts of soap bubbles) at a bar in La Palma - including incredibly loud music, lots of interactions with Ticos, men for the women students, women for the men.

Sunday January 11: We left the TC for Merlyn Oviedo’s Danta Corcovado lodge in Guadalupe outside La Palma. (I include Merlyn's last name because he advertises internationally for his lodge.) Only a small group did the planned hike around the nearby recovering forest, with lots of tree lessons by Alberto. Many went into La Palma or back to Playa Blanca in the afternoon. In the evening Merlyn provided an outdoor barbecue, Tico style.

Monday January 12: We did a long and (for me) difficult hike (good practice for the following day) to the Guaymi indigenous reservation that the government established, as an add-on to Corcovado, a few years after the creation of the park; after a talk by the leader of the community, there was much purchasing of indigenous artifacts, followed by a simple lunch prepared by the extremely shy women of the community. Back at Danta Corcovado, we had a delicious soup of leftovers from the previous night’s barbecue, followed by instructions about the Los Patos to Sirena hike through Corcovado to come the next day, and early to bed.

Tuesday January 13: Finally, the big hike to Sirena, arriving at 4:00 PM after starting at 6:00 AM with a ride to the entrance of the park on a wagon pulled by a tractor. Nozomi Okubo (a Japanese student in the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy program at the University of Delaware, and one of two graduate students who accompanied us that year) had cut her foot swimming in the gulf the previous Wednesday, so she went with me by boat to Sirena from Jimenez. Much grousing at the end of the hike, though all denied it was hard.

Wednesday January 14: The first hike at Sirena is nominally to swim in the Rio Claro, but it's usually the first opportunity to see lots of wildlife; however, this year it was something of a disaster because many of the students had awakened miserable because of little sleep in their rustic quarters. Most spent the afternoon just getting used to the big front porch of the lodge, from which many animals can be spotted, and to the place in general. There was a soccer game with park employees, after which some went to the beach for a beautiful Pacific sunset. Aider led a night hike to the beach to try to see jaguars (they didn’t) and crocodiles (they did, with eyes glowing in the dark - also a couple of sharks).

Thursday January 15: This time the hike, about 5 kilometers on the Espavel trail, got a much better reaction from the students, and again they saw crocodiles in and on the bank of the Rio Sirena. What-they-had-learned talk in an

auditorium after dinner, then parlor and card games, storytelling, etc.

Friday January 16: Now we were off to Drake Bay, by boat, after watching an incredible feat of unloading materials for a new research building under construction - quite a task to get into the boats in the surf (I fell, getting totally wet), but it's a beautiful trip, this time including a school of dolphins. We had a delicious fish lunch at boatman Emiliano's house; then went by taxi back to the TC to pack to leave the next morning.

I should add something here about what a taxi means on Osa. Most commonly it is a large pickup truck, with seats - and sometimes a cover over the back. The students love their experiences in Osa's taxis almost as much as any other part of the trip.

End of the Osa part of Quira's itinerary. I don't include the rest, for the second half of the trip in other parts of Costa Rica, but I can say this much. We go on up the Pacific slope of Costa Rica to compare and contrast different levels of forest protection in three different *areas de conservacion* (conservation areas) - three of the SINAC conservation areas in Costa Rica: ACOSA (Osa), Mid Pacific (for us, centered on Manuel Antonio National Park), and Guanacaste.

Our first stop is Manuel Antonio, a tiny remnant of what was once "humid," not tropical rainforest, now turned first into banana then African palm plantations. There the students experience the magnificent beaches that were somehow saved, but they also see what happens to large mammals - especially monkeys - as they are cut off from escape and lose their genetic diversity. They become almost like animals in a zoo, dependent on humans for survival. Monkeys, for example, eat bananas from the hands of tourists, or rob their lunches on the beach.

Next we travel - stopping along the way to marvel at the dozens and dozens of crocodiles in the mouth of the Tarcoles River -
to Liberia in Guanacaste Province. There we visit Santa Rosa National Park - and the students get a lecture on the SINAC system
- and look across the road at Guanacaste National Park (Janzen's addition that created the "largest tropical biology lab in the world"). Then it's Rincon de la Vieja National Park, including a climb to the crater of the volcano.

That's followed by a few days in Monteverde, the Quaker-founded forest preserve that never became part of the national park system. Sometimes the students also see the other preserves that have been added on, to make the total come close to equaling Corcovado in size. But most important they experience what a private preserve system, when supplemented by tourist attractions, can do - that, so far, the national park system has not been able to accomplish. Monteverde is a town in which everyone works - I repeat, *no one* is unemployed - and everyone has a democratic say (the Quaker way) in keeping things that way. My students love the tourist attractions as much as the forest preserves, but the way the town is set up that actually supports the forest, including new tree plantations and other additions to the forest. Some people say I should start my group trips here, to see the best first; but
I think there is an advantage (including a natural geographical progression from

south to north and back toward the Central Valley) that adds to the lessons the students learn, not by being preached at but *experientially*.

In 2005 I had the least interested of all groups I've had - I'm talking about real interest in the forest and protecting it - but even the least interested of my students can't help learning a great deal both about the different kinds of forests and the different levels of forest protection.

Back in 2004 I had decided to modify my yearly journal by doing a set of character sketches. The country is beautiful, an incredible bounty of genetic diversity - about five percent of the entire world's biodiversity in a tiny isthmus with a fraction of one percent of the earth's land surface (as I said earlier) - but the people also make it very attractive to visit.

In this section, where I am dealing with ordinary citizens, things can get a little touchy. They have no idea, when I visit them
- or even in some cases work with them - that I would ever be writing about them in a journal, let alone a book. And, as I said before, I suspect that they would prefer anonymity for themselves and their families if the book were to be published for just anyone to read in far-off countries. The locals are often shy even at having their pictures taken (not the kids!), especially if the pictures might reveal something about the simplicity of their homes and lives.

On the other hand [I said in the "Small Steps" version of this] it adds to the authenticity of the account for potential readers - like the students, guides, or anyone else who might at one point have met some of the same people - if I use real rather than made-up names. My compromise is to use first names only, just as the students do in their journals, even for those individuals I refer to elsewhere here (sometimes with last names too, depending on circumstances). The locals on Osa, if they ever read the students' journals, would often be surprised at the way the students render their names; I sometimes have to read a paper several times to be sure they are talking about the same people I know. For those I don't mention elsewhere, I though about fictionalizing at least slightly, and I do that here and there. Sometimes I will just not use a name. Or I will do so sparingly.

I begin my first-name sketches with a man mentioned elsewhere here (including at the end of section 1, on CEEP) who has been our guide for seven successive years in January and also in April 2003 for a birding trip - and who has become a dear friend: known to the students only as Aider. (It's hard to believe the versions of that name that I get!)

I also know Aider's mother, Cristina, who was once the cook at the Tropical Youth Center of the Fundacion Neotropica - the main place (as I said earlier) where we stay on the Osa Peninsula - so I can start with the name Aider. It is supposed to be Hayder, but Spanish drops the "h" in pronunciation and it got dropped as well in spelling. Where did the name Hayder come from? Probably a poster or a name in the newspaper; a sister of Ayder is named Shirley, but from the various ways people write it, you might never know that. Most names in Costa Rica have a vague Spanish sound or even origin, but here on the frontier some of them seem even stranger to my gringo ears.

Aider himself is in many ways as strange as his name. Small and unassuming-looking in appearance, he is prodigious in his strength and abilities. As a guide in the forest, he is unparalleled; he was first introduced to my wife and me in January 1998 as being able to "*hear* the shadow of a grasshopper at thirty meters." Once I was alone with him walking down a forest trail when, suddenly, to our right an anteater appeared. (In general they are among the more difficult animals to spot.) What he said to me was, "I just see them in my head and they appear." Again, though he says he has yet to see the even more elusive jaguar, he is sure he has been watched by them several times. Still another time, when our bird watching group was in Costa Rica in April 2003, he was driving down the road at the maximum speed allowed when suddenly he pulled over. Off to the left and down the bank of a creek, he said, was a tiger heron - a bird that is difficult to see because of its camouflage - and as usual he was right.

Aider is more than a little bit a ladies man, but he is also a fiercely loyal family man. To see his three children greet him when
he has been away on a guiding trip is a sight to behold. He loves to dance and I have seen him stay out much longer than his wife Rocio approves, but I am pretty sure he is completely faithful. (And that in an area where one well known local lady was said to have had five children by five different men; and even within his family it seems clear that some of the siblings have different fathers.) Aider married Rocio when he was 22 and away from the forest to study computers; Rocio was 16. The marriage has obvious rocky spots, but it is equally obviously more stable than many in the area.

One of the rocky spots in the marriage has been instability. I have visited with the family in five different homes, all rented and all poor even by local standards. One year Rocio opened up to me about her dissatisfaction over not having a home of their own after so many years. (A sign of their different attitudes, Rocio would have been happy for Aider to move to the city and work with her brother in a butcher shop.) But finally [recall that this was written in 2004] his guide work has paid off. The group, Quira Expeditions, that is now regularly guiding our students, is prospering, and Aider and Rocio were able to get a bank loan, to open a small snack shop nearby, and to continue their computer game room, where they also sell ice cream for local teenagers. They are also building a tourist information center for Quira on their property - though with only the sign there (in addition to three others at strategic points along the road), tourists were already stopping for information. Later on, Aider would be employed as one of the additional park guards for Corcovado that Ugalde would be able to pay for with grant money.

Aider is also, without any official title, a very important person in the town of La Palma (as well as the Playa Blanca part of it). Many of his extended family live there, and he has represented the citizen association - all the way to San Jose, eight hours away, when they have to present town improvement appeals to the national government. The town is small - roughly 1,000 people -
and their appeals almost always go unheeded. But he goes doggedly on.

I will end with this little story. Aider is almost never injured, even in falls from great heights, but one year he had one complaint, a sprained ankle. He had hurt

it in an inter-family soccer game - the Santamarias against their cousins, the Quinteros. Soccer is the national passion in Costa Rica as in many Latin countries, and Aider is the best player I have seen on the Osa Peninsula. When you watch him compete, even in a small pickup game, you would never know that this is the same kind, gentle, funny, all-competent man you thought you knew so well.

Later addition, 2006: Aider went to work for Corcovado National Park in 2005, and by 2006 he had become the manager of one of the park stations, El Tigre.

Now to our other guide in Quira Expeditions, Alberto - also mentioned elsewhere here. My wife and I had an intriguing introduction to Alberto in January 1998 on our first visit to Costa Rica and our first hike from the Los Patos entrance of Corcovado National Park to the Sirena Biological Research Station. (I have already talked some about that hike.) The first two kilometers are impossible; the next 7 or 8 were extremely difficult for the two of us; and both of us were carrying much too much baggage for our first visit to the tropical rainforest. Alberto had been the soul of kindness to us, staying back at the end of the line and explaining with infinite patience all the wondrous new things we were experiencing. Then more or less at the midpoint of the hike, we felt that we simply could go no further. The problem is that at that point there is no way out: four hours forward or four hours back, and you couldn't even get a helicopter rescue through the canopy. I have seldom in my life experienced such kindness. Aider carried my wife's pack in front, his in back, and Alberto added our tent to his already overloaded guide's baggage - while both sympathized and cajoled until we decided the only way to go was forward, suffering beyond belief all the way, while Alberto continued to hang back with us and encourage us in every kind way possible. My wife never forgot that kindness, and has always kept one of the warmest spots in her heart for Alberto.

Alberto lasted one more year with the Fundacion Neotropica's Tropical Youth Center, when he was let go for reasons only Jose Rogelio Vargas (above) could explain (but hasn't, at least to me). Then Alberto opened a very nice small nature bookstore, Madre Natura, right next to the University of Costa Rica. I visited him there many times - to meet the same kindness and warm hospitality. I never left without a gift for my wife.

When we again came to Costa Rica in 2003, for a birding trip guided by Quira Expeditions, with whom Alberto was working as a founding member, we had limited, though still positive, contacts with him. In January 2004 [this account], with Quira guiding my students, I saw Alberto as more of a take-charge person. He was positively eloquent (and sometimes too longwinded for the students) on native trees - his first love - as well as on plants, including medicinal plants and the way they are used by indigenous peoples in Costa Rica.

Alberto is one of the youngest among several children, and an older brother is [now was] in the Costa Rican General Assembly as a member of the Libertarian Party. But the most interesting family item in 2004 was his involvement with a young woman named Jessica in La Palma; he told me on the way to Osa that he was likely to move to La Palma soon - and one day I overheard him say that he

very much wants to get married. Jessica is about a dozen years younger than Alberto, and once had a project going with Jose Rogelio's Avina group; but the students and I saw the two of them together a few times and they seem well suited to each other (and to have both families' blessing).

For the rest, Alberto seemed to have a good future with Quira, and he has many excellent ideas for projects for the group. He would also love to reopen Madre Natura, maybe this time at the San Jose airport if he could afford the space.

Later addition, 2006: Alberto is now working full time as a guide for a hotel in Puerto Jimenez; he and Jessica are still a pair; but the cost of a rental for the proposed space at the airport turned out to be too expensive.

Louise [name slightly altered], my next sketch, was 2004's "manager of the month" for the renamed Tropical Center, formerly Tropical Youth Center. That has been the story since Jose Rogelio Vargas turned his attention elsewhere. I don't really know her well - we were only at the TC one week in 2004 - but I managed to observe her with a certain attentiveness and I managed to go into Puerto Jimenez with her early in our stay while the students were elsewhere. And she was, on that occasion, very open about her life story.

She had two degrees from the University of Costa Rica, one in biology and the other in administration. She said she would love to be a science administrator, and she told me that she had once worked for the Organization for Tropical Studies, the premier tropical biology research institution in Costa Rica (with links to dozens and dozens of universities in the USA and elsewhere, as I noted earlier). She was young to be in the position she now held (mid-twenties), and she would like to pursue further studies, maybe even a doctorate. Then go into the field she loves.

She is fairly typical of young professionals these days in Costa Rica. Well educated, still living with her family when she is not in Osa, and spending a lot of time on week ends at clubs; she particularly loves to dance. (So she said, and there was evidence of it during our stay.)

But the point of including her here at all, aside from the fact that she is such an attractive and interesting person, is what her presence there says about the TC. She admitted to me that life there was lonely and "very hard" for her. I also saw signs of self doubt about her ability to manage the place. (I guessed in 2004 that it wouldn't be too long before she moved on, but she was still there in 2005.) If she does eventually move on, she will have outlasted all of her predecessors as managers of the month.

I already mentioned Aider's mother, Cristina. With only a brief introduction at breakfast at the Tropical Youth Center after our ill-fated Sirena hike (see Alberto story), my first real introduction to her was the next January, 1999, when I returned with my first group of students. She was the excellent cook for the center, but what stood out most for me was her friendliness toward me - an attitude that seemed a little too friendly since we had barely met the year before. But she confided a great deal in me, expressing concern for the future of

her two youngest children, and she complained about her meager wages as the center's cook. (She was a really superior Costa Rican cook - the adjective being worth emphasizing because she sometimes unsuccessfully attempted non-Costa Rican dishes such as spaghetti.) She had grand ideas about upgrading her place at Playa Blanca, a half mile or so down the road from the restaurant of Lola (name slightly altered, and the next person to be sketched), where she occasionally helped out.

Once she expressed a desire to come to the USA, even to work for our family and be paid under the table; but especially she wanted to build some tourist cabins and a small snack bar for visitors to the beach. I discouraged her from thinking about the USA as an illegal immigrant, but I did end up, the next January, giving her $100 to help her fulfill her other dreams. Her gratitude far exceeded the monetary value of the gift, and she went out of her way to send a gift back with me for my wife.

I have mentioned the somewhat unusual family pattern of naming the children. But it's not unusual for the people on Osa. In 2004 I was able to watch the success of Cristina with her youngest sons, getting them into high school - though only far away and in part by having them live with their long-gone father.

The most surprising thing for me in 2004 was where she was working. At least two or three years earlier she had lost her cook's job at the Tropical Youth Center, but in January 2003 I visited her where she had been working for over a year, at the home of a rich farmer in La Palma who was also opening a very nice lodge high on a hill with a view over the Golfo Dulce. In fact, the lodge was nearly complete when I visited, and it looked as though she might have stable employment for awhile. Instead, the next year I found her working in a new snack bar that Aider and his wife had opened within the year, which was surprising to me because, to my knowledge, Aider's mother never got along very well with his wife Rocio. (Rocio in fact later complained to me that her mother-in-law insisted on working no more than eight hours a day, while, Rocio said, her workday there and at their game room and ice cream shop seemed endless, from early morning to late at night.)

I like Aider's mother a lot, and she is still always warm and friendly toward me. But I always had a suspicion that she was friendly toward anyone who would help her with what seems to be her life project now, helping her two youngest sons to succeed.

I have to be very careful with this next sketch, but I include it because to me it says much about life on Osa. There, everyone seems to know everyone else, and this is particularly true around the small town of La Palma. And Lola, as I will call her, is better known than most. She is a magnet for men, and I was drawn to her like all the males of the Western shore of the Golfo Dulce when I first visited her restaurant in January 1998. I said is, but in 2004 there was no Lola. Alas, the restaurant - Tastes of the Sea - was now closed. And this sketch is about her absence rather than her presence in the community at that time.

She was described to my wife and me by our driver, along the dusty road from Puerto Jimenez, long before we got to the restaurant. She had had, we were told,

four children by four different fathers. When we then met her, she was no beauty by Hollywood standards, but her charm drew everyone, especially men. I returned to the restaurant many times, and there were always men around - supposedly for her excellent Costa Rican cooking, though they often seemed just to hang around, drink beer, and watch the TV that hung above the restaurant counter. Charming Lola, when we met her in 1998, had a baby, Hillary, who was equally charming and probably the most beautiful girl baby I had ever seen. She could have gone to Hollywood as a twenty-first century Shirley Temple child star. Monica came along later, and this story is about her and her siblings.

The last time I saw Lola she told me, with the kind of determination I could see accompanied her charm, that she was going to join her brother in Texas. There, she was sure that she could make it as she felt she had not in Costa Rica. (This in spite of the success of her restaurant and the land she planted in rice that made her rich by local standards.) She did go, but then wandered further to Toronto, Canada - where, presumably, she is doing as well as ever.

[It should always be recalled that this was written in 2004. In 2006 I was able to talk with her in Toronto, on a cell phone from Playa Blanca, and she was as amiable as ever. And she could speak English well.]

The children? One daughter, now about 15 years old [in 2010, I add], had for a long time lived the life of a stepdaughter with her father and his wife and family in Jimenez. The others are scattered here and there, with fathers or their grandparents in the southern Costa Rica mini-metropolis of San Isidro de El General (or Perez Zeledon) and elsewhere. I once met Lola's parents in her restaurant when they were visiting, and they were as wonderfully outgoing as their princess of a daughter. But it seems to me now, with my North American perspective - colored by what I know about childrearing - that grandparents can never really substitute for parents (or at least a parent). And this was borne out by one story I heard in 2004. I asked how the children were managing with their mother away, and I was told that the oldest, a son, talked by telephone with his mother almost every day (or at least very frequently), and that he was "very sad." But such is life on Osa, and this story is not at all unusual. At least half the families I have gotten to know well have absent fathers - sometimes with houses of their own that the children can visit, but not always.

As I said, Lola was rich by Osa (or at least La Palma) standards. The general run of people make do the best they can. The next cook I will mention (no name) and her family are a case in point; she had been assistant or head cook for probably four of the six years I had brought students to the Fundacion Neotropica's Tropical Center, but 2004 was the first time that I – or we, the students and myself - had the opportunity to get to know her well. Or, better than just as a generally cheerful (and improving) cook, Costa Rican style. That's mainly because Quira had built into the program a chance for the students to learn how to do traditional cooking on an open wood burning stove. (Probably as noticeable as anything to them - and I was with the group there - was how much smoke drifted into their simple house, which is not on the electric grid and is only lighted by candles after 6 PM.) Not only could we watch her work on her own turf; we actually helped out with the chores and saw where the vegetables grow in the family garden. She was cheerful as always, in every way, even while

telling everyone what to do and watching over them as they (we) did it. Her way with her husband, who also helped out (which surprised me), was similar: always cheerful, even funny, but also always in control.

I had had some idea, before, about the family makeup; but it's still not entirely clear to me. There is a daughter, but except for one fact, I know nothing about her, have never seen her, and don't know whether she ever comes around. I assume she is the oldest because her son, who is being raised like a son in the family, was 15 in 2004. The oldest son does occasionally work at the TC; and his mother very proudly pointed out that he has an attractive plot of his own a short distance away. The younger son, on the other hand, could not be more of a dutiful son, and he is a truly loyal guard and all round handyman around the TC. He too has been given a small plot of land, right across from the family farm; once he replied, when I asked him about whether he had ever been to the big city, San Jose: "No, and I never want to go there."

The grandson (being raised as a son) is a story in himself. More than once, he has been my guide on the local trails, especially the main trail that ends up in a very nice waterfall that our students love to visit. He is almost as natural in the woods as Aider, and I had a long talk in 2004 with Aider, on the long ride south, about how he - and others - might help the youngster to become a guide. At the time, he was spending all of his December and January vacation time fishing, usually alone (only occasionally catching anything). He doesn't like school, isn't good at it, and would surely be better off if he were able to spend the rest of his life in the forest - both on and off the trails there. Whether that will happen is an open question, and in 2006 Keylor was back in school, and told me he was doing well.

Manuel Bianco and family - and here I have no problem using names - are a little better off. I use the full name here for two reasons. The family is well known in the area, and there could even be an international market for Manuel's work, as I will be saying below. He is the local artisan and has lectured to our students and shown them how to do simple crafts from my very first group in 1999. Showing the students how to do crafts has mostly meant that Manuel would carve an animal figure and get it close to ready for painting, so that the students (and I) could sand, put the final touches on, and paint. In 2004, instead, he and one of his daughters, Carmen, just showed us how to string natural beans to make a necklace - much easier and less interesting than before.

But the main point of the exercise is to teach the students how a self-taught skill like carving can be turned into a career that allows Manuel to support his family. Also how he has spread the word about this to other artisans on the Osa Peninsula. The important thing, in each case, is to use only natural materials. As one example, Manuel uses only wood from fallen trees. (Some environmentalists say he shouldn't do even that; that fallen trees ought to be left where they fall; but such environmental educators as Aider and Alberto have never had a problem with what Manuel does.) And the story is the same for people who practice other arts and crafts.

Manuel is an interesting story in other ways. He and his family run the community public telephone - the only phone in the neighborhood of dozens of

square kilometers. People often ride up on horseback to use the phone, and that also helps pay the family bills, which include an advanced education in far off Heredia for Manuel Jr. - though he also supports himself by ambulance work (most recently, in 2006 after graduation, at a hospital in Alajuela). The oldest daughter, Guisselle, I will discuss separately. She has yet to go off to art school as I think she deserves, but all the older children - Manuel Jr., Guisselle, Carmen, and Ana have gone to high school, rare enough in this area. Another daughter, Yessenia, and the youngest, Arelis, will surely follow in their footsteps.

Just as our group of students were leaving in 2004, I stopped for a last visit with the family, and Manuel proudly showed me large new electric tools that he has been able to buy, which will make his work much easier. In addition to his wood work, he was building his own studio and (with the help of a bank loan) totally refinishing their modest house. Clearly craft work was paying the bills for this family. Even the female head of the household had decided to raise pigs to do her part. (Manuel and Guisselle were not too sure about that project because the pig pen would be too close to the house - and in 2006 the pigs were gone.)

Brett Matulis, my assistant in the 2004 group - who had come with my 2002 group and has on his own led later student trips with Quira's help (he deserves a story on his own, and I will tell that shortly) - worked out an arrangement for Manuel, Guisselle, Carmen, and the craftspeople in the area with whom Manuel has been the leader, to export craft works to our University of Delaware town of Newark. Before coming, Brett had inquired with the woman who runs a local import shop about whether she would be interested in Costa Rican work, and he had found her to be interested enough to pursue things. He had sent digital pictures of some of the work; the craft shopkeeper was interested; and a small export/import business might be underway. Another way for Manuel (and two daughters) to help support the family - and for others on Osa to do the same for their families.

I offer here a couple of extra paragraphs on Guisselle Bianco, second child and oldest daughter in the Bianco family. Guisselle deserves a separate entry from the rest of the family for several reasons. For almost all the time our groups have been going to Osa she has been the main person helping our students when they have tried to contact family and others back home. (This was less true when the Tropical Center got computers that the students could use; but that didn't last long when the telephone link to the community went down.) In a kind of communication dance - Guisselle still speaks no English [this was written in 2004] and most of our students speak little or no Spanish - the students manage to get through to parents and friends back home. And they always appreciate the pleasure Guiselle gets from helping them to succeed.

Guisselle also turned into something of a love interest for the men in my various groups. Almost every year she has taken a special interest in one tall, blond, gringo guy. She is attractive, so naturally they reciprocate. I'm pretty sure one of them even managed to get a kiss one year, after Guisselle showed up at the annual Latin dance that ends our stay at the Tropical Center. (When I met him on campus after we returned, he said he had had no further contact - and he wasn't even sheepish about it!) 2004 - the year I chose to feature here - was the same, with another tall, blond gringo. And again Guisselle showed up, first at

what were supposed to be Latin dance lessons for the group, then on a trip to a wild local dance at a bar in La Palma; of course, sisters Carmen (who is much more shy) and Ana (a really good dancer for her then 14 years), and Manuel Jr. came along as well. Guisselle mostly stayed outside - the music (?) was deafening - but naturally her favored gringo followed her outside while the rest of his buddies stayed inside.

I should, finally and most importantly, mention that Guisselle has turned into an excellent artist - painting mostly landscapes
or landscape-background animals in a primitive style. She also does the painting details on her father's carvings, especially of birds - and the details are truly detailed if the subject is, for example, a hummingbird. Guiselle would love to go off to art school in San Jose, but her father wants her to study business. More than once I have suggested to him that she could do both. Maybe she will one day - even if she has to combine art school with business school. In my opinion she deserves the chance.

In 2005, I found out that one exclusive gift and souvenir shop in Puerto Jimenez is the sole outlet for her paintings (in 2006 there was another), and they can't keep them in stock, so fast do the tourists grab them up; so her signed paintings are turning up wherever tourists live who have visited Jimenez.

My next story is about a family at the other end of what is hoped to be an Osa biological corridor. The owner (no name here) runs a family tourist business, a waterfall and trails, near the town of La Gamba on the mainland near Piedras Blancas Natural Park – the eastern terminus of the proposed corridor. I will be rather brief about this one. The waterfalls are beautiful; the trail to get there is passably difficult if not beautiful; and the family also has a reforested plot and what seems to be a kind of classroom and open auditorium. The family members are warm and friendly and treated us well in 2004.

The most interesting part, however, is the owner himself, an insistent pusher of the project who put all sorts of pressure on individual members of our student group, as well as on me personally, to bring other tourists here. That would be okay, and entrepreneurship is certainly needed in the area. But we had come to visit the community of La Gamba - as poor a community as we have seen in our visits here - but he went to great lengths to insist that his family project was not part of La Gamba, even though the town is only a short distance away. When I asked him about another waterfall that our student group had visited the year before, he claimed not even to know that there was such a place. (I later had a chance to check with Jose Rogelio, our leader on the trip to La Gamba in 2003, and he verified that the other waterfall was on the property and under the management of another family.)

When we later visited with the leaders of the La Gamba community and enjoyed a lunch prepared by the wives in the town's community center, we found them to be almost unbelievably upbeat in spite of repeated serious setbacks over the town's short history of 25 years or so. This should contrast with other places we visited, where over half of the families had moved away - and in particular it made a sharp contrast with the "us first" attitude at the waterfall. La Gamba is named after the buttress support system of large trees in the area, and it is

entirely appropriate when attached to the people of La Gamba as we got to know them (two years in a row) at least slightly.

*Reflections?* Does any good come from my student trips – anything good that will help improve the lives of the people on Osa? (Note that I haven't included any horror stories; for a hint of those, see the *Guerreros* sketches above.)

Well, the first thing I should say is that the people on Osa, more every year, offer a warm *pura vida* welcome to me and the students. They appreciate my interest in coming back year after year, and they at least hope that they are helping naïve students get to learn more about what life is really like on the Osa Peninsula. What follows is one success story.

Brett Matulis (above I promised a sketch of him) is an amazing young man in many ways, but especially - in this context - in terms of his devotion to Costa Rica and to helping the people he has met there. Brett had made his first trip to CR with my group in January 2002. What made him stand out then was that, when the rest of the group went snorkeling off Caño Island, he managed to find the money to go deep sea diving. (He stood out in other ways as well, but that is one pole of a nice contrasting set.) Almost as soon as we got back to Delaware, Brett and three others who had made the trip came to see me about setting up an official student group to raise money for the poor people of Osa. Naturally I was delighted; the group - they called it Amigos de Costa Rica - was duly formed and registered with the university; and they raised around $700 in one semester. The next school year saw less success, but Brett hung in there and we met several times to talk about new and different fund raising possibilities. When he asked if he could come along in 2004 as my official Study Abroad assistant, I was delighted. We only got 16 students, and Study Abroad requires 18 for a no-fee assistant; but Quira was willing to subsidize him, and later he managed to get $1,000 from a special Alumni Association fund. The Quira part was because he had, entirely on his own, by now led not one but two student trips to Costa Rica, with them as guides. And he was likely to keep doing this even after he had graduated from the University of Delaware. (He graduated in 2004.)

As mentioned in the characterization of Manuel Bianco, Brett had gotten in touch with a craft importing shop in Newark
before the 2004 trip. There he had me help him with negotiations with Manuel, in Spanish, to set up a small export business, as
I mentioned. Finally, Brett wanted Amigos to continue and recruited new leaders from the 2004 group with a specific proposal
he thought would attract more interest back home. He wanted Amigos to buy a small tract of land that had been turned into farmland but that abuts a virgin forest, to reforest it with native trees (never to be cut), and to raise money for one tree to be planted at a time. In his naïve way, he said "People will want to come and visit their tree!" That may not happen, but students and others are likely to be happy to do their small part to reforest a part of Costa Rica, if only a tiny one. Later in our trips we have a chance to see the Children's Eternal Rainforest in Monteverde, which started with a simple effort like Brett's.

One last comment about Brett. When he came on his first trip with my student

group, he was a computer engineering major. After graduating and working a couple of years, he hopes to enter a graduate program in environmental policy. But the important thing, in this regard, is that my students come from a great variety of majors. Only a few have come from my philosophy department, a few from wildlife management and similar environmental programs, but the majority come from majors all over campus, from business to psychology, from English to sociology or communications. Experiential learning in terms of saving Costa Rica's forests can educate students with an amazing array of future careers.

Quite a few of the environmentalist students who have studied with me have been graduate students from my second department, the Center for Energy and Environmental Policy, and one would expect them to be eager. Here again, however, there is something special: they come away impressed with experiential learning and local activism.

I want to talk next about optimism for the future, but even in our limited efforts up to the present [2004], change may be visible on Osa. Corcovado National Park, according to Alvaro Ugalde, is still threatened, and this is even truer of the buffer zone that contains the hoped-for corridor that could save Corcovado. But along with setbacks and much poverty, there is already reason for hope. And the future could be even brighter.

A sort of appendix to this section: what reason do I have to be confident about the future on Osa?

What I have concluded is that what my role on the Osa Peninsula amounts to is to push one pole – the local development pole – of the sustainable development dyad. It's not that I think saving the rainforest is unimportant. I just think that won't happen, or won't happen in time, unless something is done, and quickly, to make sure that the local people on Osa don't see forest-damaging behavior on their part as necessary to survival. It would help if they felt the same way about the buffer zone around the virgin forest. And it would be even better if they could find a way to meld a positive attitude toward forest protection with their own efforts to make a decent living for themselves and their families. In this section, we have seen glimmerings of that, even now.
But will that continue into the future, possibly even increase? That's the focus of the final few paragraphs here.

I begin it with the group of "young entrepreneurs" that Jose Rogelio Vargas has gathered together, under the auspices of
the Avina Foundation. See: José Rogelio Vargas, Asociación de Emprendedores para el Desarrollo Responsable [association
of entrepreneurs for sustainable development, ASEDER] - jrovargas@racsa.co.cr - under their new website, www.aseder.org. There (in Spanish and English) the mission of the association is spelled out as involving "the development of sustainable
productive options, pursuing a business vision in which both men and women will benefit, along with their communities and the environment that supports them - including efforts to improve the environmental quality of the communities by means of the businesses undertaken by the members of the

group - where a secondary goal is to summarize the results of the project and spread the word about its successes."

The project is now [was in 2004] in a second stage, but what I report on here is a few of the outstanding ecotourism businesses that have been developed so far, with an interesting aside on one of them.

Here I use last as well as first names, principally because the individuals I profile have begun to advertise internationally; that is, they have established websites to invite foreigners to come to Costa Rica, to Osa, and to their establishments.

I begin with Merlyn Oviedo's Danta Corcovado Lodge, in the formerly poor district of Guadalupe outside La Palma (it can now be found at www.dantalodge.com).

The lodge is only part of the story. Merlyn's father, Juvenal, had reforested a hectare with about 25 species of trees. (Unfortunately, in some people's opinion, he did not plant only native species.) I followed him on a walk through the plantation, where he lovingly pointed out every tree species (most of which were unfamiliar to me because he used local Costa Rican names), and it would be necessary to have the experience firsthand to appreciate it. Unfortunately, the visitor would also have to have a better command of Spanish than I do to catch all the nuances of Juvenal's rapid-fire account of what he has accomplished. He also showed me the *palmito* (hearts of palm) plantation he has also established (and harvests all by himself) as part of a cooperative in Chacarita on the Interamerican Highway for sale throughout Costa Rica.

The lodge itself, which Merlyn designed and built almost entirely by himself, is stunning. It was constructed, by hand, of the wood his father had planted - not only on his tree plantation but in the forest surrounding the lodge. Our student group could vouch for almost every aspect of this project; we stayed at the lodge again in 2005, more successfully even than the year before, and again in 2006.

Merlyn now has a *novia,* Laura Frey, an American who fits right in with the family and helps run the lodge. [Later note: That ended when I visited again in 2008, when she left for 4 years of graduate studies in the USA.]

It remains to be seen whether or not international advertising on the Internet will pay off [I said in 2004], but I have heard indirectly that the lodge is successful and draws at least enough foreign travelers to make it a going concern.

[At this point I am going to do something somewhat unorthodox. I am going to drop this account for now, then pick it up again in section 8, where I give an account of the lodge as it is now, after Merlyn allowed me to retire here.]

A similar venture, Kobo Organic Farm (the "chocolate farm,"which also has a lodge), offers not only lodging but an unparalleled experience in the organic farming the title would suggest. (It is also advertised on www.soldeosa.com, tab "norte".) Owner Alex Retana has guided our students through the whole farm,

including cacao trees, but he also wants to teach local farmers the benefits of going organic.

Alex enjoys the support of his entire family, some of whom work with him in the lodge. But it is Alex himself who literally glows with the knowledge he has of organic farming - learned from books but more so from personal experience. He shows our students - and presumably other foreign visitors - every step of the trail around the farm, but more importantly the rows and rows of crops that he grows organically. And he gladly demonstrates how he produces his organic fertilizers and pesticides. This is what he wants to convince local farmers about, that it will be to their advantage if they too take up organic farming instead of using store-bought fertilizers and pesticides that do so much to damage the environment. [Another later note: Alex now has an Austrian wife and a small son.]

As the students and I walked Alex's trail, we saw a troop of white face monkeys, as we had seen squirrel monkeys around Merlyn's lodge every day. There is an abundance of wildlife all around both lodges, adding to their natural feel.

I should give Susana Matamoros - the oldest member of the original Avina group - a separate story. She had been a large part of my students' experiences for several years - until 2004. Except for the fact that she is a female in a macho culture, she was the de facto leader of the environmental educators for as long as she worked for the Tropical Youth Center of the Fundacion Neotropica. Now [2004, remember] she is simply one among the group of young entrepreneurs that Jose Rogelio has put together. Her project is a souvenir and organic plant shop along the road into Puerto Jimenez. It was finished and open in January 2005, and I stopped by but Susana wasn't there. Susana was also, at last report, in training to become one of the few female ecotourism guides in Costa Rica. She did come around a couple of times in 2004, and I met her two or three times as I visited local towns, but she had zero contact with our students even when she and they were both in the same room, in the Center's library. [Her Avina/Aseder project is now defunct, victim of repeated robberies when she wasn't there. She now works mostly with another group, MarViva.]

Avina has included other interesting projects. For example, Elia Gonzalez preceded Susana as one of the few female guides in Costa Rica - I heard from another guide from her home town of Drake Bay that she is an "excellent" guide, and "very agreeable." In the same rich end of the peninsula, Emilio Gonzalez (a cousin I think) does massages for tourists after their hikes into the forest. These two may not advertise internationally, but by now they are probably well known among the rich tourists at Drake Bay hotels and lodges, so I use their last names too.

Not all of the proposed Avina projects have been success stories. Among the failed projects was Katiana Becerra's proposal to start a school for Latin dance - planned I think primarily for tourists, since most Ticos, male and female, seem to have a natural flair for it. Though that project failed, I have run into Katiana a number of times in Puerto Jimenez, where she is the day manager of a popular Internet cafe and restaurant.

All in all, these Avina [now Aseder] projects (including others not mentioned) are an interesting set, some more realistic than others - and some genuine successes after just a couple of years. The project promises much for the future of the Osa Peninsula - so long without much hope for this kind of entrepreneurship instead of traditional farming. When I have probed, it turns out that most of the success stories involve help from parents and families, who seem to see that the future for these among their children does not lie in traditional Osa farming - which is often damaging to the forest. In some cases, it was a struggle to get the parents to agree, but in the success stories, they came around. [Aseder, I know now, in 2010, has become stronger, grown with a third group, and is now transforming itself into probably the most hopeful of all the projects talked about here in 2004.]

The details here are sketchy, as one would expect of promissory notes for the future. But for anyone who has been counting, here are half a dozen young people (most in their twenties) - and they represent more than twice that number if I were to list those not mentioned - who have (with help) launched themselves into very non-traditional careers on Osa.

If you add to these Aseder successes the hints earlier in this section on what is happening in Osa - for example, a fancy lodge in La Palma (Osa Palmas, not Danta), a proposal for a craft exporting business combined with a sort of Osa craft guild, two tourist waterfalls in one town, reforestation plots, and so on - things might look very optimistic. In any case, the situation is a long way from ten years ago, in the early 1990s, when the only hope on Osa was a life of grinding poverty, eking out a living on small farms - typically combined with threatening the buffer forest in a variety of ways (including cutting trees, as well as hunting and poaching).

I am, moreover, impressed with the change in attitude, as families support their young people - including females - in their search for new careers that will allow them to prosper while either doing nothing harmful to the forest or actually doing something positive to preserve it.

## 7. A CASE STUDY OF GLOBALIZATION: COSTA RICANS CONFRONT A MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION

I here offer - as an example of countering globalization in a successful challenge to a multinational company in Costa Rica in the mid to late 1990s - another account I once wrote about this struggle. [Original title: "Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica: A Biological Corridor Is Saved from a Wood Chip Mill in the Late 1990s."]

My case study focuses on saving Osa's biodiversity corridor, linking two national

parks, and there is an excellent study that tells the story, Helena van den Hombergh's *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce* (1999; see especially chapter 7, section 5).

Van den Hombergh's cast of characters is large and diverse. The struggle she focuses on is the campaign to prevent Ston Forestal, S.A., the Costa Rican subsidiary of the multinational paper company, Stone Container Corporation (based in Chicago), from building a wood chip mill — for exportation — in the northwest corner of the Golfo Dulce, which separates the Osa Peninsula from the mainland. The mill would have impacted a proposed biological diversity corridor intended to link Corcovado National Park with Piedras Blancas National Park (originally a separate section of Corcovado) in one of two ways. One path of the corridor would have run right past the mill. The other, a few kilometers farther north, would have been impacted by road building and the moving of large trucks and construction equipment. Either way, the corridor would have been effectively breached, and Corcovado would eventually have become an ecological island. (That may still happen.)

Van den Hombergh's story centers around the activities of the Asociación Ecologista Costarricense (AECO, ecological association of Costa Rica), aided by the Asociación para la Defensa de los Recursos Naturales y el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Peninsula de Osa (Pro Defensa for short: association to defend the natural resources of and sustainable development in Osa) and various international environmental organizations--Dutch and German, especially, but also including Greenpeace. AECO was a radical environmentalist organization which had already waged several environmental and anti-pollution battles in Costa Rica before this one; its ideology, van den Hombergh says, was overtly socialist and opposed to corporate capitalist depradations of the environment (and impoverishment of workers). Leaders of AECO in the Osa campaign included Maria del Mar Cordero Fernández and Emile Rojas--who were killed in a suspicious fire in San Jose just days after the limited victory over Ston Forestal.

Pro Defensa was a committee of locals promoted by AECO in 1993 to help carry on the public campaign.

Numerous international environmental organizations got involved, including Greenpeace --which sent one of its ships into the Golfo Dulce at the height of the anti-Ston campaign.

Several government agencies were directly involved. Principal among these was the leadership of the Area de Conservacion de Osa (ACOSA), the branch of the Sistema Nacional de Areas de Conservación (SINAC), under the Ministerio del Ambiente y Energía (MINAE), which had conservation responsibilities for the Osa Peninsula, including Corcovado, Piedras Blancas National Park, and the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve. (The Reserve included the area where the biological corridor was planned.) The safest thing to say about ACOSA's role is that it was ambivalent; the leaders clearly supported the creation of the corridor--and hence blocking the chip mill--but they were hamstrung by government policy, which favored development in the area. The political parties, including the Liberationist administration of the famed Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias,

straddled the fence between development and conservation.

In the end, it was other government bodies, the Controlaría (an agency overseeing public works) and the Defensoría (the government ombudsman), that tipped the scales against Ston Forestal.

Scientists were active on both sides of the debate, with the renowned biologist Gerardo Budowski championing Ston Forestal's plans for reforestation--although, in this case, that meant large plantations of gmelina, a fast-growing non-native species. Even Daniel Janzen, mentioned earlier as one of the saviors of Corcovado from the gold miners, at first sided with the reforestation plans, though he later came around to defend the biodiversity corridor idea.

Among quasi-scientific groups, the most important champion of the corridor was the Programa Bosques de Osa (BOSCOSA) of the Fundación Neotropica, which produced a valuable report spelling out the merits of the corridor idea. (Unfortunately, according to van den Hombergh, the authors hid behind a mask of scientific objectivity and would not go public, officially, against Ston Forestal. Still, the BOSCOSA report turned out to be decisive in a way.

The most important scientist in this case was Hans Hartmann of the University Blaise Pascal in France, who was called in to do an in-depth study of the biological impact of a chip mill on the Golfo Dulce. He proved beyond doubt that the impact would be devastating, not least on a coral reef in the middle of the gulf. More generally, the mill would have devastated mangrove forests on the banks of the gulf, all sorts of fish species, marine birds and mammals (including whales and dolphins), reptiles, and so on. The report, "Golfo Dulce 2000," produced by Hartmann and his team, turned out to be *the* decisive scientific report.

The locals who became involved covered a broad range, from AECO's Pro Defensa supporters to fishermen in the gulf, to local farmers and others lulled by the promise of jobs.

And of course, Ston Forestal cannot be left out of the story. In the early days, the company seems to have been committed simply to profit; later, it took on a "green" image, both in terms of idealistic depictions of the advantages of reforestation over further tree cutting for farms and an explicit company plan of environmental protection.

In the end, Ston Forestal lost and the mill plans were scrapped--leaving the biodiversity corridor still unofficial but a dream for the future. Or rather, Ston was merely slowed down: it was given permission for a mill on the mainland side of the gulf, near Golfito, where its operations were supposed to be less damaging--and would not directly impact the corridor. (At the moment, the chip mill is still not operating, and wood pulp is not being exported from Golfito, though another company is making pencils using Ston Forestal wood.)

What can be said about Earth Charter-type principles and their impact on this struggle [my focus in the already published version of this]?

Clearly the international environmental organizations were motivated by the highest principles--as was the case with AECO, the group of radical activists leading the campaign. On the other hand, Pro Defensa locals supported AECO as much to preserve jobs as to preserve the forest.

Government agencies, from the top down, remained ambivalent -- torn between the promise of development for Costa Rica's poorest region and conservation ideals -- right up to the point when the Controlaría and the Defensoría agencies acted decisively against Ston's plans. Probably ACOSA's local leaders were, at heart, against the chip mill plan, and to that extent supported conservation ideals; but they were hamstrung by government policies. And the two major political parties were, as usual, ambivalent.

The BOSCOSA project authors probably expressed the highest ideals of biodiversity -- and they were backed up by Hartmann's devastatingly negative assessment of the impact on the biodiversity of the gulf. But, perhaps because of the Fundación Neotropica's quasi-governmental status, they remained "scientifically neutral" to the end. And, as mentioned, other scientists took stands on both sides of the development/conservation divide.

In this case, Ston Forestal is perhaps the most intriguing actor. The company was, from the beginning, painted as the "heavy" by the AECO activists and their international environmentalist supporting groups. But Costa Rican officials, supported by scientists, always presented the company and its plans as environment-friendly. And, by the end of the campaign, Ston was promoting itself as a truly green corporation.

As in other cases, Earth Charter-type principles were clearly important, and AECO's defenders might even say they were decisive. But many other actors were involved, and their motives were decidedly mixed.

## 8. THOUGHTS NOW THAT I AM LIVING AT DANTA LODGE ON OSA

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1.

April 6, 2008 [email to Carlos, etc.]

Carlos, Aider, Alberto, Merlyn, Laura (and all my friends on Osa):

I'm writing this on leaving from Monteverde, which has always seemed to me to be the best example of forest protection in CR - until now. I think I have not given you enough credit for doing what you are doing.

I have a wonderful friend in Spain, Sara - I call her my Angel because she has helped me so much - and she has taught me that the future is now. It exists in our imagination. And it's our task in life to make it come true.

When I left Danta a few days ago, I wrote in their book something about how wonderful the lodge is now. But in Monteverde I
realized it is much more than that: Guadalupe is being transformed; La Palma is being transformed. From there visitors can go
to see monkeys in the forest near Kobo (as we did); they can see primary forest on Danta's trail; they can see Juvenal's tree plantation; and the list goes on and on, to Playa Blanca, El Tigre, Los Patos, even Sirena.

Monteverde remains wonderful, I won't deny that; nor Dan Jansen's work in Santa Rosa, or Tortuguero, etc. But La Palma and Guadalupe and Playa Blanca - along with Corcovado - are now a focal point for Osa that matches anything else in CR.

So the future is now, as Sara would say, and I watch with wonder as all of you make your dreams come true.

Thank you for letting me and my students be a small part of the miracle.

Your friend, Paul

2.

June 16 & 19, 2010: *Danta Lodge*

This is about what Danta Lodge means to me, now, without worrying about Merlyn's reactions - including to the *Osa: Where the Rainforest Meets the Sea* book that I gave him.

Nothing in this poor world is perfect, I've said often. And that includes Danta - even if Merlyn is sensitive about even the mildest criticism, even about having the least fault brought to his attention (especially if his workers have not done their job and brought it to his attention first). I just have to accept his sensitivity - and avoid criticizing whenever possible, without becoming fanatical about it.

The key is Merlin's - the other Merlin, the magician's - view that, in the eyes of the god(dess) within, there is neither bad nor good (without ever denying that, in our human perspective, some things are really so bad - or equally good - that they call for action, within our human framework). Clearly nothing in Danta is really bad - nor is everything perfect. So here action continues to be called for, and I will do my bit to improve on what is already (seems to be already) perfect.

Just a great place to live in the forest, and to use as a base for visits deeper into the forest.

A place devoted to proving that, even here in the forest, one can produce something close to perfection - and make quite a good living at it, for Merlyn himself but also for the local community, the local communities of Guadalupe and La Palma. (Guadalupe, such a sad place before, when my students visited here in 2002 or 3, with Susana as their mouthpiece for their interviewing.)

An important leg of the 3-legged stool of genuine sustainable development according to Cesar Cuello's model: conservation with development, but a development that actually helps the locals.

Clearly Danta Lodge includes all three; and clearly I have my place in producing a still better future.

3.

March 11, 2010: *Home*

The old saying has it that your home is where your heart is.

Yesterday, March 10, 2010, with respect to feeling at home, I received the best news I have received in a long time. Merlyn Oviedo, a good friend and the owner, builder, and manager of Danta Corcovado Lodge on the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica, replied to an offer I had made to him saying that he will build a small bungalow in which I can retire on those grounds that I love so much. Soon I will have a house in which to live out my life. It will then be up to me to make it a home.

My life has not been entirely happy in terms of homes, and that reflects my family background. Mom - that's the way I have always referred to my mother (while some of my siblings could never bring themselves to be so informal) - had lifelong problems about feeling at home, and I must have inherited my feelings from her. At something like the age of thirteen, she was uprooted from what had been her home all her life, forced to move to a worse part of a gossipy small town. She was bitter ever after, and she blamed everything on her ne'er-do-well father. She still called him Pappy, as did her mother, the beloved grandmother to us five children. But there was a difference in her tone of voice. Mom invited Grandmother (all of us did use that formal term for her, even to her face) into our home when her father died young. When Grandmother referred to her deceased husband as Pappy, it was with the warmth of love; when Mom used the same term, it always had a bitter ring to it. She seemed, at least subliminally, to be blaming Grandmother for not blaming Pappy for their many problems. For her part, Grandmother lived with us at least three quarters of each year, but her heart was bent on roaming. She spent the balance of each year with other offspring, and her real goal in life was to travel - and not just to the homes of Mom's sisters who had homes of their own. She told us kids that she wanted to visit every one of the 48 states of the USA, and when Alaska and Hawaii were added to the list, she just added those to her life goal. The homes in which Grandmother lived with us were always rented - sometimes happily (my very first memory is of being patted on the head over the back fence by the woman next door), sometimes tragically (we were forced from that home by the great flood that wiped out half of Louisville in 1937) - and Mom was always bitter with Dad over not providing the home of her own that she had hoped for from him, as her older sisters' husbands had provided for them. She did, finally, get her revenge. When Dad died young, leaving her a widow with children at the age of 40, his death provided her with a Railroad Retirement pension that by then was funded by the U.S. Social Security system. And, as if in a kind of irony, she lived out roughly the last thirteen years of her life happily enough in a small government-subsidized apartment paid for out of that pension. I wouldn't go so far as to say that she died happy (of leukemia), but at least she seemed to feel at home in that apartment in her final years.

My homeowning experiences were not all bad. In another irony, Mom

provided a few hundred dollars from her retirement savings to help me and my first wife Fran, with our young and expanding family to scrape together the down payment for the first home we owned. (Maggie would be born there.) But in these terms, my experience with my second wife Lydia - with whom my four offspring and I lived happily enough for 22 years in a blended family - was not so good. Though Lydia did eventually put her home in both our names, it was always clear to me that it was her home into which we had moved. And when she divorced me, she got the house.

My four years after that - living in Valencia, Spain, and nearly dying of a pulmonary embolism - were happy enough. But it was again clear that I was living in someone else's home. Tanya, whom I called my adopted granddaughter, said (and she clearly meant it) that I could live there the rest of my life if I wanted to. Still, I felt depressed. Now Tanya is unhappy over my decision to leave, but I hope she will eventually come around to seeing that - like Mom - I need a place to call my own. I will, technically, be renting from Merlyn; but he is building the bungalow for me.

I also have something I never had before to get me through this experience. With the best friend I have ever known, Sara the Egyptologist, I managed to get over my depression. She too was unhappy to see me leave Spain, but I can hope that, like Tanya, she will come to accept this decision as best for me. And one way Sara has helped me is by getting me to accept for myself a kind of Ancient Egyptian spirituality. As I look out the window at night in Costa Rica, I'm overwhelmed by the brilliance of the stars against the black night sky; and the brightest of the stars is Sirius, clearly visible off to the left of Orion. The Egyptians did feel at home along the Nile, but they felt that was only a reflected home, with the real one in the heavens. And for them Sirius was the heavenly dwelling of Isis, as it was also the sign of the lifegiving flooding of the Nile. Sirius is also known as the Dog Star, the brightest star in the constellation that was seen as the big hunting dog of the blind giant Orion (for the Egyptians, Osiris), as that constellation "died," so to speak - bitten in the heel by Scorpio, which arose at the same time Orion disappeared - only to rise again after a few months, along with Sirius-Isis. These heavenly goings-on were seen as the guarantee of the perpetual cycle of life and death and resurrection. And now I can watch them every night with singular clarity as I learn to experience the incredible diversity of life in the tropics.

Danta, incidentally, happens to be a principal gateway to Corcovado National Park, which has half of Costa Rica's biodiversity, which in turn has around five percent of the total biodiversity of planet Earth. What a place to feel at home in a loving, life-giving universe!

[After moving into my cabin-palace 9.22.10]

4.

September 25, 2010: *Reflections on Living in My New House*

Every house I've ever moved into - Old Mill Manor, Bent Lane, Compton, 21st Street, Monroe, Van Buren, Maggie's, Massanassa - has involved some initial adjustment, large or small. So now is no different.

It is a little disconcerting that Merlyn chose to move me in here before the roof leaks were fixed. But I can understand his anxiety to get me out of his hair in the lodge itself. (He hasn't yet succeeded at that, until I get my computer connection issue cleared up.) And I'm sure he was sure that I was anxious to make the move.

You bend a little, accept a little - as long as it's not intolerable. Maggie's, for example, always involved living on the edge - because of Fran's unrelenting hostility.

Here people generally - Maggie, Bill, Sara . . . - and even more the locals are convinced that I should be ecstatic. And I am, though it's a muted feeling. It hasn't yet really settled into my consciousness.

Last night, for example, when someone (Merlyn?) chose to fire several shots around 7 PM, possibly at animals, but also possibly
at unwanted human intruders, that was unnerving. What will I do, out here in the open 30 meters from what is, after all, not just my entrance but a public lane, if a gang of robbers show up and demand that I open the door? (Ivan's experiences, according to reports, would suggest that it is inevitable, probably sooner rather than later.) I have no plans to buy a gun, even to shoot only blanks. What I decided during the night (I actually fell asleep promptly, as if I had no fears) was that I should defy them, not open the door, and crouch down low in the guest bedroom, with both entrance doors locked. If they shot their way in, ruining the front door lock, I would at least have a minute or so - and could hope their shots alerted someone in Danta. Maybe Juvenal. Preferably Merlyn with his gun - or the guards. In the end, I thought, if I die, I die. And I fell asleep.

What about animals? My current fear, with respect to the outdoor bathroom in the middle of the night, is not of a terciopelo but
a boa up high in the timbers supporting the roof. Likely? Probably not - though not out of the question either. Spiders? There are no poisonous ones here. A scorpion? Another possibility; I can just hope against that one. In general, I have almost nothing to fear under this heading.

Loss of electricity? It happened as I was writing this. Torrential rains, making it almost impassable to get to the lodge? Even flooding right up to the porch level? Again, not out of the question. But things to just take in stride. That's living here on the frontier in Osa.

But why so many negatives?! It's a house. And I'm living in it. For all practical purposes it's my house. And I'm living in it in the middle of the jungle. At the very doorstep of Corcovado National Park.

And what a house! Way too big for one person - for just me. It's a palace, I've been joking. But it's no joke. A whole family could live here - more than comfortably.

And it's beautiful. It's spectacular. It's jaw-dropping spectacular. Every design detail - down to the last detail. Everywhere you look, East, South, West, North. Something to catch the eye, the eyes. Something to rejoice in, in the sheer beauty.

Something - a place - to live in. To enjoy the sounds of the birds from morning to night. Every day so far a pair of toucans singing away - as I always loved at Neotropica. Monsoonal rains this morning, but still the raucous sound of our local scarlet macaws starting their day. And dozens of other birds - some right through the night. Night herons? And frogs and katydids and crickets. And . . . Who knows what other animals? I may, gradually, get to know some special sounds; but no matter, it will still be magnificently alive. A living forest. A living rainforest. A super-alive tropical rainforest.

And who would ever have thought that I would some day by the master of all this that I survey? (Merlyn's yes, but he is treating it as if it is mine.) I would never have thought it - not in my wildest dreams.

But then I never dared to dream. I just started with negatives - as in this screed. I lamented not having a home of my own, never dreaming about what my home would actually look like. Four walls and a roof, yes - with at least one window to look out of. I had become so accustomed to my small room in Massanassa (though that too was in a big house, with a decent view out over the Albufera) that my vision was constricted. Limited.

Now Merlyn - for whatever reason he chose to do so - has supplied me with a dream, a dream house. In the jungle. At Danta!
As it will take me weeks, even months, to get used to my place, I feel especially blessed that Sara will be my first live-in visitor in the guest bedroom. Now there's a person with imagination! To make up for the lack of color in my images. In my drab dreams.

Probably within a couple of months, it will all filter in - and I will be what I should be, happy to be alive in my new house that Merlyn built. Merlyn the magician.

5.

September 26, 2010: *How to Turn My New Place into a Meditation Space*

From the beginning, I have referred to my retirement spaces (plural), and especially this one that is supposed to be my last,
as a "hermitage" (or hermitages). And the idea, in my mind, has always been that I expect to live out my final years in relative isolation from people. That's not so much a choice as it is an inevitability. I recently recalled Grandmother's lament, less than a year before she died at age 94, "I have no one to talk to!" She had plenty of people to talk to, there at Aunt Emily's; what she meant was that she had none of her old favorite people to talk to. They had all died off, leaving her

alone - and lonely. Referring
to my retirement spaces as hermitages has the advantage of making my situation voluntary, a choice - thus less like being abandoned by others.

And Sara has repeatedly echoed Merlin: in an Isis loving universe, it should be impossible ever to feel abandoned. Hence Merlin's "flow" as a perpetual opportunity to find that "quiet space" that is already there within me. Don't think flow; think riding the crests of all the waves of times (plural) in a perpetually available Now.

And here in my jungle home, every Now is incomparably filled with Life. "Sit on the porch and listen to the grass grow." Here, sit on my beautiful porch (or inside my beautiful cabin-palace), and be aware of growth on every side, all around, literally under my feet (or seat). Life never stops growing. And life in a tropical rainforest involves perpetual growth, incredibly luscious growth all around - from sky above to earth between my feet, from mountain to ocean (here only a short 6 kilometers away), rivers and smaller streams, everything and everywhere teeming with life that insists on bursting forth, that literally cannot be contained. The birdsong that fills the air. The gurgling of the Quebrada La Palma. The perpetual swaying of the tall trees (even when there is not a group of monkeys making the branches crash as they jump from one to another). The insects - ah yes, the insects! There is never a silent moment, day or night - and if that is your wont, you can find a colony of leafcutter ants to watch their perpetual motion.
And the smells! Here people don't worry about body odors (even though, to us North American gringos, there is a lot of BO on all sides, say on a crowded local bus): they just blend into the overwhelming and constant symphony of odors all around - some smelling like rot, yes, but overall just the smell of chlorophyll, of exuberant growth pure and simple.

And here life is also punctuated, now and then, by an earth shake, a "seismic event," from the tiniest tremor, barely perceptible, to a full-fledged earthquake, say of 6.0 on the Richter scale. I haven't yet experienced that in my new home, but I have before, several times, at Danta; and it's inevitable. Orogeny, the uplift of a mountain chain, is as irresistible a force here in Costa Rica (more so, they say, on the Osa Peninsula) as any other aspect of the incredible biodiversity of my new home - and final resting place, I have decided.

Never a dull moment, and an infinity of opportunities to be alive to life in abundance.

6.

April 22, 2010: *What I Want Here*

Thinking, during the night, about Robin Weintraub's approach to consulting with Merlyn, I had doubts about my own motivation in wanting to live here at Danta. Trying to avoid Robin's you-need-a-plan approach, I wondered what Merlyn, *now*, wants to do with Danta. And I wondered about Alberto's and

Endemico's goals - beyond just making a living, in that third aspect of what "sustainable" means in the sustainable development slogan. Clearly Alberto now needs a way for himself to make a living.

And in that context, as well as in the context of my attempting to help locals learn English, I had doubts about my own goals.

Do I just want to retire here, and if so why here?

Do I want to help local people - including Merlyn - make a living, or a better living?

Shouldn't we all be doing it because we love the forest?

And even more to protect an endangered forest? (Endangered by tourism, and even eco-tourism, as well as in other ways.)

I thought about my long term devotion to activism here in Costa Rica in the pursuit of that admittedly vague goal - as well as the many activist groups here that I might join up with: save the jaguars - or the mangroves - or create a wildlife corridor from Matapalo to Carate, and so on.

And so on.

Then I also thought about Sara wanting to come here to see my "niche." Will she find me all wound up in activist causes? Or just enjoying nature? (I listened to the sounds of the night - finally hearing an owl and thinking I heard some animal on foot outside my window - and realized that my anxieties are mostly just that, rather than realistic fears related to realistic dangers.) Or will she perceive me as still seeking a spiritual fulfillment?

The real issue is how to combine those various things, to see my efforts as - in Dewey's phrase - "religiously" motivated, inspired by inspirations coming from Mead's hoped-for "consummations." I still need to live in the present, to see nature here as one with nature everywhere, and to see life as fed, nourished by the non-living fire of the expanding-from-a-Big Bang universal center. (Or nourished by a LaViolette-Aristotelian sub-quantum set of kinetic forces "alive" in everything that unfolds in the universe. See my essay, "Imagine," which I placed at the beginning here.)

I need to keep my feet on the ground, as Sara says, where "the ground" here means a fantastically alive tropical rainforest. But
I also need to do whatever I do as coming from myself as inspired *to work with others to solve our social problems* here. I need my "economic" or material base - like everyone else. But I also need my emotional ecstatic base. And I need for my intellectual and justice-oriented activism to be just as inspired (in ways that are obscure and unpredictable) as those other two bases need to be.

In the words of Joan Larkin's Glad Day today, I need to accept what I'm doing here as good enough - even if it's not perfect. In everything, I need to remember that an Isis loving universe accepts me (and others) as I am (as we are, even in

our mistakes) - "because our Mother Isis welcomes this as part of the creativity of the universe."

7.

May 14, 2010: *Nature Speaks to Me at Danta*

This was supposed to be a question: How can Nature Speak to Me Better at Danta? And it segued into redoing how the heavens - in Naydler fashion - regulate life on earth, with the subtext there, about Nature more generally than just the stars doing the regulating. Thoth not only as calendar maker, but as noting the return of the ibises as co-incident with the flooding of the Nile and the return of Sirius (Isis).

How does nature (I deliberately don't use a capital) affect me here? And how can I become more attuned to nature - or Nature - here than is the case now?

I suspect I had in mind, at least subliminally, Sara's admonition before my trip last year to be more sensitive to inspiration, to viewing nature as more like Nature in a spiritual sense than simply the natural world around me - especially the forest, however spectacularly beautiful.

I was surely also thinking about my Merlyn-related question the other day, about why he - and I - want to be here. What is it that we want to *contribute* - beyond merely helping others see what they would not otherwise see, beyond helping them to see more?

And for my answer to that question for myself (not, clearly, for Merlyn - or anyone else in the community here), I clearly had in mind activist efforts to "save the rainforest" (or at least protect it better) or to halt species loss - for example, with respect to jaguars and other large cats, and, now, the mangrove (specifically, beyond the rainforest in general).

But I was also being anxious about that being a "merely temporal" effort, in the language of Chopra or Tolle. Something like
the self (lower case) as Self (inspired). Activism, along Dewey's line, with a (non-denominational, non-sectarian) "religious" dimension. Inspired activism to save the rainforest, or avoid species extinctions.

And, as usual, I was tempted to try to do something - at least to meditate, or to do so better - in order to bring about inspiration. Rather than, as the spiritualists suggest, just "let it be," let it come to me in some inspired way.

Finally, to be truthful (and fair to myself), this very exercise - as an unfolding of a dream-like fugue state last night - was already inspired. Bes had helped me to "interpret my dreams in the morning."

8.

July 14, 2010: *Moonlight Nights at Danta*

The first time it happened, I was startled - so much that the guard (then everyone he told about it) laughed at me. I was returning from one of my many nightly trips to the bathroom. (Before my house is built, I have to use a shared bathroom.) The light was so bright I thought it must be near dawn. When I went to examine the phenomenon, there was someone sitting on the bench at the end of the porch, and I nearly jumped out of my skin. I hadn't yet learned that there is a guard that roams the grounds at night.

And it was closer to midnight than dawn. The guard wouldn't have needed a flashlight or searchlight that night. Even I could have walked around the property - maybe even the trails - with no more than the light of the moon.

I checked on the Internet the next day, and sure enough, that night the moon was full.

So the next night - and the next and next - I was ready for it. And I gloried in the fact that never in my life had I seen the light of a full moon nearly as bright as dawn. And I wrote Sara about the wonder, speculating that it must have been like that in ancient Egypt as well.

When the moon had ended its waning nights, I experienced the opposite. Nights blacker than I had ever experienced - as black as deep inside a cave when the guides turn out the lights on tourists.

Well, I had experienced that once before. With my first student group at the Tropical Youth Center of the Fundacion Neotropica, in 1999, we did a night hike. And the guides turned out their lights, and had all of us do the same, when we were sitting on the platform that overlooks the creek above the center. Black as night. To coin a phrase. Black as black can be, to coin another. Like inside a cave.

I was startled then too.

Now I've come to expect the phases of the moon as they are experienced so vividly here on Osa. Another marvel of nature.

I went so far as to suggest to Alberto that he train the guides here to look up at the sky as well as around them in the forest or on the trails. Nature is everywhere here. Vivid everywhere here. In the starry nights against a velvet black sky. In the phases of the moon.

It *must* have been so in ancient Egypt (and elsewhere in the Near East - indeed, throughout the world) when our forebears learned to read the night skies. I've gone so far, as well, to speculate that even pre-hominids - back to the beginnings millions of years ago - were as startled, then entranced, by the night skies as I had been that bright moonlit night.

It could go even further back, to chimpanzee groups and others of our

ancestors. It is a sight so vivid - a fully moonlit night - that it would be hard for any higher mammal community to miss it. And be startled by it. Then rejoice in it.

Just like me.

9.

April 18, 2010: *Awake with the Sun*

I used to brag about waking up at 8 AM - or even 7 - in Valencia. Here it's 6 AM every morning - except when it's 5:30. There's just something about waking up with the sunrise.

No alarm clock needed. When the glow before sunrise starts, the birds start to sing. There is plenty of noise during the night - crickets especially, and cicadas, along with the incessant bullfrogs, and an occasional owl - but there's something different about the birdsong that greets the morning sun.

So I choose to join them, though it's all so natural that it hardly seems a choice.

It helps, of course, to go to bed early as well. Normally I'm in bed, and trying to fall asleep, not long after 8 PM. The crickets and cicadas and other insects provide the soothing nighttime symphony.

The point of all this is that it seems natural to follow the natural signs of day and night, to find yourself in synchrony with natural diurnal and nocturnal rhythms.

Synchrony. A Greek-based word meaning timed-with, keeping time with, or keeping time to, or ordering life by natural signs: day and night, rainy and dry seasons, seasons for planting and harvesting (and rejoicing over a good harvest), natural times to be born - and grow or mature - and to die.

The ancients knew. They lived by natural signs - and died when "the time came." But they also believed that life follows death; they believed in new life, in resurrection, in eternal cycles of death and rebirth.

Why was that? It seems to me that it was because they watched the heavens - carefully. Not only the angle of the sun in the sky determining how hot it is at different times of the day, differing at different times of the year - with slight variations even in the tropics. But here in the neotropical jungle I have learned to appreciate, as never before, the cycles of the moon. It really is brighter - almost like dawn - the whole night long when there is a full moon. And it is very nearly pitch dark when the last sliver of a moon disappears - before a new moon rises. More natural signs.

And the ancients watched the heavens all night long as well - and over long periods of time. They learned early on to

distinguish between wandering planets and the "fixed" stars - which are only fixed relative to the changing patterns of the planets. The fixed stars are not really fixed. Orion disappears for months, as does Sirius, the brightest star in Orion's "big dog" companion constellation. Only to reappear soon enough - and regularly enough for the ancient Egyptians to correlate the inundation of the Nile with the rising, the reappearing, of Sirius.

And Fraser tells us that for many "primitive" tribes (he was a prejudiced colonialist), certain constellations in the night skies told them when a king had to die. Or to rise again, as with Osiris (their Orion) for the ancient Egyptians. And with the rebirth of Osiris - heralded by Sirius as Isis - came the life-giving inundation of the Nile.

We "scientific Moderns" (and I capitalize because many others do, giving the term a certain haughtiness) make fun of astrology - and of course modern newspaper hososcopes are silly - but the ancients went on to track all the movements of the planets, and they had a background scene against which to do so: the Zodiac. That amounted to the calendar by which they tracked the heavenly motions.

But they knew more: they devised a scheme for tracking periodic changes in the zodiacal months - eras actually. And the proof, for Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, is that peoples all over the world were traumatized by changes in eras. They had to recalibrate (we would say) all the planetary motions as they played out against the background of a new world age. We know that they did so at the end of the Age of Aries and the beginning of the Age of Pisces - for us, the transition to the Christian Era from the pre-Christian era - but there is ample evidence that they were aware of earlier world changes, Taurus to Aries, Gemini to Taurus, Cancer to Gemini, and so on. Once they got that far, it was clear to them that it was a perpetual cycle through all the zodiacal ages, to start all over again as it had been going on since time immemorial. Literally since before time!

"As above, so below," the Greeks attributed to Hermes the "thrice wise." The ancient Egyptians had their god Thoth (who may have been the model for Hermes) to play the same role, to set the measures - in word and number - by which to characterize, quite literally, "everything under the sun" (and the moon and the stars, fixed and "wandering").

We can't return to ancient ways of seeing things, but we would be well served to find ways to link astrophysical time to physical time, to "set our clocks" in terms of light-year-events as well as in terms of vibrations at the subatomic level. In some sense we do that, going back to the Paleolithic and beyond, to the very beginning of life on earth, and of the earth as part of our solar system as part of the Milky Way and so on.

All I am saying, in the end, is that all that history, that geological past, that prehistory all the way back, influences our times of planting and harvesting and celebrating harvests just as much as it did for the ancients.

We just need to become more aware of it, with appropriate awe about the

(seeming) eternity of it all.

10.

April 8, 2010: *Rain in the Rainforest*

There is something beautiful about rain; even majestic here in the tropical rainforest. Great sheets of water falling from the skies, thundering on the roofs . . . as well as the canopy. Majestic. Now there's an interesting word. Like Her Majesty the Queen; here Mother Nature. She doesn't walk majestically through the forest, to the pomp of the strains of Pomp and Circumstance. It's more like cascading, like a powerful mountain stream tumbling over rocks, over high cliffs. She sweeps clean everything in her path, picking up debris, even boulders as huge as buses as the river runs pell mell downstream.

Majestic. Or His Majesty. As the King roars out thundering commands. Here I come. Get out of my way. Make way for the king! Again a flood, nothing soft or tender. Even fearsome.

But rain is also sweet. Sweet water. The liquid that brings life. And not just after a dry spell - though it is especially nourishing then. Here the rivers run into the Golfo Dulce, the Sweet Gulf, the Pacific Ocean bay that is half as salty as the open ocean. Rivers feeding not only the incredible diversity of the plants - and animals - in the rainforest; they also feed the Sweet Gulf itself, that is, ultimately, their source in the eternal rain cycle.

And rain is also soft - even when it's a hard rain as in a tropical downburst. Water is, as liquid, always soft - even though in a cascading waterfall or a river rushing fiercely down a mountainside soft water can become a mighty force. It can wash away tons of dirt and mud and rock; it can move mountains. Still, rain - water - is always by nature soft. Even gentle. Caressing. Soothing.

Comforting. That's the way I prefer to perceive rain. Comforting. Of course it is also sweet. It is also majestic. It is powerful and majestic and sweet and soft all at once. But for me it is, at bottom, comforting. I love the sound of rain on a roof. Of rain high in the canopy even when it only sneaks through to the ground in small rivulets running down leaves to - finally - reach, and nourish, the ground and the plants (and animals) that live on the forest floor. It comforts me. As it must comfort the forest. (And not, as I said, just after a dry spell.)

Rain is comforting. As water it's not just the universal solvent; it's the universal thirst quencher. It brings life - together with the sun, of course.

Into each life some rain must fall, goes the old saying. Thank God. Thank the gods!

11.

May 20, 2010: *Alone in the Jungle with Rain*

I used to worry in Massanassa about being home alone with nothing to keep me occupied. Now I need to think about the same thing here at Danta.

Merlin says life will just flow, that we shouldn't try to control it - to speed it up or slow it down or even fill it with busy-ness. But it's clear that it can, in that case, flow extremely slowly - that minutes might even seem like hours.

In fact, however, life has a natural rhythm of its own; and that is especially noticeable here in the forest. The issue then is to adjust my rhythm to that of the forest - or, Sara would say, to that of the spirit, or spirits, or "energies" of the forest. And it is clear that Nature is, so to speak (and using the capital), careful or cautious in the expenditure of energy - though we may not be aware of that, say, with the extraordinary speed of flight of a hummingbird.

And Chopra says that, if we "listen" or become aware of or pay attention to our bodies, they participate in this natural pace of the universe, of Nature. Our bodies naturally tell us when we need to rest . . . or to nourish ourselves . . . or to relieve ourselves of toxins of one kind or another.

And since our bodies are ensouled (Aristotle), even ensouled in a 100% human way, what they should tell us should include telling us about "natural" emotional rhythms as well as purely physiological rhythms, but even more about natural rhythms of our "higher powers" of loving, being just, enjoying friends, thinking prudently, meditating, contemplating - including contemplating the natural world and all the natural rhythms above.

A snail can tell me about slow motion, as can the "eternal return" cycles of the celestial bodies. The dive bomb of a falcon or
an eagle in pursuit of prey far below - or the speed of a lion pursuing a fleet gazelle - can enlighten me about speed, as can the almost instantaneous path of a meteorite burning up as it enters the atmosphere, or a lightning bolt. And, between these extremes, there are examples of moderate speeds - or slownesses - say of an agouti hopping, so to speak, along the forest floor, or of the orbit of Venus, less than but approximating that of our planet Earth.

Equally, then, I can discover "natural" rhythms for my emotional reactions - some slow (like a "slow burn"), some fast as instant jealousy, some moderate; and also for my habits of all kinds, whether controlling or moderating (sometimes speeding up) those emotions, or pursuing love or justice, or prudently studying science or the arts or even theology or spirituality.

Chopra and other spiritual writers - perhaps Tolle more than others - seem to suggest that thinking, the Ego, almost naturally tends to violate these natural rhythms, to dwell too much in the past - rehearsing pains or pleasures - or in the future, trying to plan ways to enhance pleasures and avoid pain. They say that we need to control Ego-driven tendencies, all the way to finding a timeless space (so to speak) in meditation. And there must be some truth in these admonitions.

But I see no reason why we should worry excessively about whether ruminating over past pains (or pleasures), or carefully planning, say, an upcoming trip, should fit normally within our habits of using our higher powers. Surely we all do have bad habits - at every level of our powers - that we need to work on. But equally surely we have the power, to to speak, to do that work. And meditation, however good for our souls (and bodies), can fit in well with these other uses of all our powers.

I may "naturally" worry about too empty hours, as I may, by temperament, be lazy or cautious about starting projects - or bringing them to a timely conclusion. But I can also learn to habituate myself to while away empty hours productively (at least more productively than before), even learn to just "listen to the grass grow" (especially with the vegetation all around me here). I can moderate emotions and passions that are too fast, slowing them down. I can get up to speed when the opposite is the problem. I can consult with others - if no other way, then by Internet (when it's working) - when I'm unsure about things or projects. And, above all, I can be confident that something deep within me will inspire me to make good use of my time - alone in my forest cabin or not.

And rain or shine.

12.

September 26, 2010 (b): *On Living with Molds and Fungi*

One of the first things you learn living in the jungle is that fungi, molds of a thousand varieties, are among the most important life forms. If you're allergic, get used to it. There is no escape. They grow everywhere.

In and around and on your food.

On your clothing and goods; they especially love leather. Some of the most colorful molds I've been victim to in these 6 months were growing on my best Land's End belt - repeatedly. Wipe them off, and they'd be back the next day. Lysol them. Same result. Deciding I had to do something about the molds or throw away the belt, I finally decided to wipe off the mold, drench the belt in Lysol, then hang it up to dry on the clothesline (under a plastic roof that creates a kind of hothouse atmosphere). There! I thought. That should do it. But when I went back to check the next day, the belt was literally covered end to end in the most colorful - and beautiful, I had to admit - set of molds yet. But I didn't give up. I wiped off the mold as carefully as possible, in every nook and cranny. And - miracle of miracles - the molds have never come back.* (On that belt.)

But if the molds love anything as much as or more than leather, it's paper. Especially as in books. Supposedly there's a solution, leaves of Bounce intertwined among the books - and papers. Unfortunately, so far I have not managed to discover a supermarket here that sells Bounce. A theory untested. And the mold and mildew advance apace.

To continue the inventory: in and around and behind the walls, not exclusively but especially of wooden walls. Quite a challenge here in my palace built entirely out of wood. Raw wood.

And all the places and things mentioned are non-natural: human invasions of the tropical rainforest. So take a walk outside, and keep your eyes open. It's not even necessary to do the trails around Danta. Just walk down any path. And you'll see an immensity of varieties of fungi. It sometimes seems as if the trees we love so much - not to mention plants, including flowers - exist mainly to be repositories for the growth of molds and fungi and lichens. I can't verify this, but I have read that even the animals have their complement of molds.

To live in the tropical rainforest - I conclude - is to live surrounded by mold. Get used to it. Or leave. There is no third option.

*Until I wrote this!

13.

September 27, 2010: *Flowers*

Here on Osa - for that matter, throughout Costa Rica, but more so here - flowers are so ubiquitous, and so florid (!), that you tend to forget about them within the wild exuberance of the rainforest (in CR, forests more generally). I remember when my students of English used to come for lessons, and were trying to list all the things they would see on their way to Danta, I was surprised when they listed flowers. There are no gardens on the way, I thought. No. There are better-then-gardens on every side - all around, above and below, in and on the trees, along the hedgerows, at the edges of lots and forest patches. Everywhere.

I'm not and never have been a gardener. Geri once showed me how to transplant new store-bought flowers. And Lydia was rarely patient with my lack of knowledge, and poor memory for names, of common flowers. But here, no matter. There are, here at Danta, Heliconia flowers of a wide variety, but the rest? You'd never know by me what the names are. But even the best US gardener would be taxed to come up with the names of all the flowers he or she might see in a single day. Know which ones flower in which season? Hopeless. There are no seasons as such here; only wet and dry. And the flowers - whose names I will never, probably, get to know - grow as abundantly during the wet season, even in the heaviest of monsoonal rains, as during the dry season. Probably, I suspect - though I could never tell you yes or no - more during the rainy season.

Outside Alajuela there is at least a mile (certainly kilometers) of *viveros* lined up next to one another, one after another after another. We would say greenhouses or nurseries, for ornamental trees as well as plants. As far as you can see, or drive by. Farther than the eye can see. To and in and around the town of Garita. While enjoying the sight, I wondered why? Can't people just plant and

grow flowers - and flowering shrubs and trees - in their yards? In their patios, inside or out? In window boxes? Wherever? And of course they could - if they had not lost their *campesino* roots, their native Tico connection to the soil. (It pleases me that there are so many *viveros*, probably for many their main connection to their country roots.)

In my North American gringo opinion, Costa Rica is one gigantic garden. That was the first thing I noticed as we drove south through the Talamanca highlands on the way to Osa in my first visit here in 1998. And the experience has been repeated ever since, on all sides as you escape from the Central Valley in any direction you choose. Yellows and purples and blues and reds and pinks - every color imaginable. On trees. Along roadsides - even those that suffer from car and truck exhaust emissions day after day. I'm tempted to say, *everywhere*; above and below and all around on every side.

But, as I began here today, you can tend to forget. There is such exuberance. Such ubiquity. That it's all too easy to take the flowers - and flowering shrubs and trees - for granted.

A pity. Stop and smell the roses! And every other plant or flower. Be like a hummingbird!

14.

September 28, 2010: *Singing Toucans*

One of my all-time favorite sounds here in the jungles of Osa is that of a pair of chestnut-mandibled toucans serenading one another. In my private cabin apart from the students in the old days at the Fundacion Neotropica, I used to describe one particular toucan - it sang as if on schedule every afternoon about 4 PM - as my pet.

I don't know enough about bird calls to know whether this one is a call or a song or what. But it thrills me every time I hear it.

Often a pair set themselves way up high in two trees, about 50 to 100 meters apart, and one does most of the singing. Occasionally I have seen a related behavior pattern, as the two come together after the serenade, and one seems to be feeding
the other.

Today it isn't 4 PM, just a break of sunshine after a rain squall around 2 PM. Once I was serenaded by a whole flock - high up
on a hillside opposite the Montaña y Rio social center near the mouth of the Rincon River, where the road veers off 5 kilometers to Neotropica. I think I was waiting to catch an early bus there, probably headed for Puerto Jimenez. Somehow I remember being all alone, with no student or staff member sharing the experience with me. But toucans also showed up, most mornings around 10 AM, for the students as well as myself to hear - and often see or photograph - at

Neotropica.

I often laugh at attempts by authors of bird books to capture bird sounds in words. Here Les Beletsky, in his *Travellers' Wildlife Guides: Costa Rica,* for once doesn't make the attempt. (Richard Garrigues, in his *Birds of Costa Rica*, does make an attempt; he also contrasts it with the "dry, froglike croak" of the keel-billed toucan found in other parts of Costa Rica.) But Beletsky does cite a local name, *Dios-te-de* (God give you), which is surely an attempt to capture the sound as it would be heard by a Tico. (Garrigues: *tee de, te de, te de* is close enough to that.) It's raspy, tinny, loud, and incessant. But it's music to my ears whenever - and wherever - I hear it.

One more joy of the tropical rainforest - and of my new life in my cabin-palace at Danta.

15.

October 20, 2010: *Scarlet Macaws*

I have, as I said, this special relationship with toucans (specifically, chestnut-mandibled toucans here on Osa), but I'd venture to guess that far more visitors here are thrilled to see scarlet macaws.

In other countries they're called guacamayos, but here it's scarlet macaws. *Lapas rojas.* (There's also another macaw in Costa Rica - the "great green macaw" - most commonly found around Tortuguero National Park in the northern Caribbean, but it's less colorful.)

When I was here in 2008 with Matt Albright, a former student from the 2006 group returning like me on a nostalgia trip, I once had to wait 10 minutes for him - we almost missed our bus back to La Palma from Puerto Jimenez - while he got the perfect photo of a pair of scarlet macaws.

I have dozens of my own photos of them, taken at various times over 12 years of visits here. I mentioned early on in this book my first visit to Sirena in Corcovado National Park in 1998, where we arrived to the sound of over 50 mating pairs. (Many have since ventured farther inland, to other parts of the Osa Peninsula.) I only managed to get a good photo of a trio in flight on that occasion - though I tried hard for more good photos, of them squabbling in the trees or taking off for short flights to return more or less to the same spot. (Knowing that didn't help me to get good photos, they're so well camouflaged in the trees, in spite of their brilliant red, blue, and yellow colors.)

Here at Danta, when I first arrived in March on this visit that turned into a permanent stay, there was a trio that showed up around the lodge from time to time. Now I see just 2 regularly. Experts tell me that the third must have been a juvenile, and he or she has probably now found an opposite number with which to mate for life.

And I have, now and again, seen up to a dozen along the road from Guadalupe to the La Palma cemetery.

Most of the guests say they should be so lucky.

In the Monteverde Reserve or at the quetzal research center in San Gerardo de Dota, the prize sightings of birds are of the officially-named "resplendent quetzals." And there are also "magnificent frigatebrds" - another name found in the bird books - and they can occasionally be seen on Osa. (They're common at Drake Bay, and from Uvita north along the Pacific shore.) But here on Osa the most magnificent birds - I'd dare to call them resplendent as well - are the scarlet macaws.

Their squawks are heard all the time at Danta, and when tourists actually manage to see a pair, they are always thrilled beyond words. Well, not actually, they usually break out in a stream of superlatives. "So beautiful." "So colorful." "So big!" And on and on and on.

Maybe somebody should officially rename them magnificent scarlet macaws, or resplendent scarlet macaws.

16.

October 21, 2010: *Parrots and Parakeets*

Anything interesting to say about them?

The most obvious thing about them - complained about regularly by my students at Neotropica - is how noisy they are. Squawking noisily every morning.

And mostly invisible, because they are so well camouflaged against the leafy backgrounds where they hang out.

Except in flight. Very early on I learned that they fly in an odd fashion: always in groups, and undulating up and down as they fly overhead.

There are - including the scarlet and great green macaws - almost 20 species in Costa Rica; about a third of them on Osa. Ones that I have actually seen, over the years, include mealy parrots, white-crowned parrots, and red-lored parrots, as well as parakeets too numerous to count. (Their flocks seem to me to be generally larger than those of the parrots.)

Especially if we include in the group the macaws, parrots are obviously a large part of the poaching trade here in Costa Rica, and of course the illegal pet trade in the USA and other countries. Except for the macaws, which are endangered, the parrots continue to exist in great abundance. Some are endemic, either to Costa Rica or Costa Rica and Panama - or even Costa Rica and Central America more broadly.

Beyond that, I have little to say about parrots and parakeets - except to agree with my students, and recent tourists here at Danta, about how noisy they are early in the morning.

17.

October 21, 2010: *Birds of Prey: Hawks, Eagles, and Vultures*

As a very, very amateur birdwatcher back in the USA (and even more of an amateur here in Costa Rica, especially when birdwatching with a super expert like Aider Santamaria), my most favored sightings have been of hawks and eagles soaring high above. They are easy to see - sometimes even to identify correctly - and they just hang there in the sky for long periods of time.

Here in Costa Rica, vultures are literally everywhere: circling, circling, circling. Mostly turkey vultures and black vultures, but occasionally you will be lucky enough to see a king vulture - usually high in the sky (where I always need someone like Aider to help me recognize it), but occasionally even feasting on the ground. The other vultures back off, waiting their turn at the carrion.

From my very first visit in 1998 on, I learned to appreciate the vultures. On that first visit, I even got more good pictures of them than of scarlet macaws.

Costa Rica has a wild abundance of hawks - some visitors from the north, including from the USA, but many full-time residents as well. More than 30 species depicted in flight by Richard Garrigues in his book, *The Birds of Costa Rica.* Most common on Osa, as the name would suggest, is the common black hawk; but roadside hawks are also common. Along with laughing falcons, other falcons, and various caracaras. My favorite sightings have been of white hawks (that, he says, is also Aider's favorite species). I have also seen more than one swallow-tailed kite; once, with Alberto Herrera and former student-returnee Matt Albright, I saw a pair trying to raid the nest of a pair of scarlet macaws. Among eagles, I have only been lucky to see the ornate hawk-eagle. And few, even among experts, claim to have seen the endangered harpy eagle - though it is alleged to still exist on Osa.

I did have one interesting sighting of vultures at Danta. There had been the smell of a dead animal all day, and as if on schedule, at dusk, a trio of vultures landed in the trees across the Quebrada La Palma right in front of me. The next day some tourists walking Danta's trails reported seeing the skeleton of a large iguana, picked clean.

As back in the USA, so here on Osa, it is a pleasure to watch a hawk or an eagle soaring high above in circles, looking for prey far below. I might say I enjoy the vultures just as much, but they are so numerous that, if one were to stop and watch them circling every time it happens, that's more or less all you'd do all day every day.

18.

October 21, 2010: *River Birds, including Ibises*

One of my more memorable experiences in my months here at Danta in 2010 happened one afternoon when I was sitting on
the dining deck to look out for animals. I was startled to see a trio of white ibises fly downstream over the Quebrada La Palma that flows through the property. I was even more surprised when they landed in the trees right in front of me. And I was even luckier: I happened to have my camera with me - and got several excellent photos.

Seeing ibises here on Osa was not new to me. Every year as my students and I went up the Rio Rincon - literally upstream, as we crisscrossed the river repeatedly, almost 30 times toward the Los Patos ranger station - we would see flocks of white ibises. Roseate spoonbills, as well.

But to see them right from the platform at Danta was unexpected. (I haven't seen them here again.) It was early in the rainy season, and the stream was high. But it was still nothing like the broad Rio Rincon.

There are other birds you see regularly over the Rincon - especially at least 5 species of kingfishers, from the large ringed kingfisher (16 inches) to the tiny pygmy kingfisher (5 inches). These are not limited to big rivers like the Rincon; and I do see them at Danta now and then.

I was surprised, on my first visit to Costa Rica in 1998, to see sandpipers and similar shorebirds along the banks of the Rincon.
I have actually seen more of them inland, on rivers, than on the beaches of Playa Blanca or Puerto Jimenez - though they are highly visible there too. There are also upland sandpipers and other larger wading birds.

But for me that sighting of white ibises over the Quebrada La Palma, right in front of Danta, was especially intriguing. Ibises are special in Egypt - signaling the flooding of the Nile every year - so that reminded me of my friend Sara the Egyptologist. And of course I immediately sent her an email message about their visit to us here at Danta.

19.

October 21, 2010: *Small Colorful Birds on Osa*

In my limited experience - though often enough in the company of world champion birders in the USA - the first prize is the most unique. A species never documented before. A species thought to be long extinct that somehow reappears. At the very least,
a new bird for the "life list" of an experienced birder.

But beyond those truly extraordinary experiences, most experienced birders seem (to me at least) to prefer birds that are small, colorful, distinctly marked or with a distinctive song - the most common favorites in the USA being the spring-migrant warblers. They flit a lot, are tiny, and are generally difficult to see in the first place, so that when they are seen - and properly identified both by markings and by song - it's almost always a thrill, even for the most experienced birder.

And many of those spring warblers in the USA winter in Costa Rica.

When I first came to Costa Rica, and even more so when, a few years later, I came back on a trip just for birdwatching, it was generally said that there were in the range of 660 species that could be seen here. (Our group, with some of the best birdwatching guides on Osa and in Monteverde, identified over 150 in just one week.) Now this year (2010) the count is up to at least 880. It's not that those 200-plus newly listed birds had never been here before, nor that all represented true newcomers to Costa Rica. Some are genuine newcomers. Some have been newly identified. Some species have been split into two or more categories. But whatever the reason for the discrepancy - within 10 years - there can be no question whatsoever that Costa Rica is now, as it was recognized to be earlier, a birdwatchers's paradise.

And here as in the USA in the spring, warblers are treasured sightings. Richard Garrigues says there are more than 50 North American "wood-warblers" (he calls them) that show up in Costa Rica; here, he adds, they rarely voice more than a "chip" sound, as opposed to the warbling that accounts for their name in their breeding grounds - often the USA. That, of course, makes sightings more difficult here, where there are no bird calls to help the birder out. Here it's the markings, the colors, the typical movements that the birder looks for - with great difficulty among so many other birds all around, almost everywhere that there are warblers in abundance. (With maybe a third exceptions, that's pretty much everywhere in Costa Rica.)

Here I'd like, instead, to highlight a few species of smaller birds that are especially noteworthy on Osa.

First, most colorful and most common, are tanagers - especially what they used to call scarlet-rumped tanagers when I first came. (The subspecies on Osa is now called Cherrie's tanager.) They are as common around Danta as robins in the USA. The female is, as often, duller. But when a tourist sights one of the males, which happens often, he or she will almost invariably utter a gasp: "They're so beautiful!" And they have cousins, including gorgeous scarlet tanagers (common enough in the USA as well), blue-gray tanagers, and others that aren't actually called tanagers - blue dacnis and green honeycreepers - as well as a favorite of many Costa Rican birders, the golden-hooded tanager.

Then there are the beautiful cotingas, yellow-billed on Osa (so like the snowy in the northern Caribbean), as well as the turquoise cotinga.

And the equally beautiful tityras, most common on Osa being the masked and black-crowned. My former student who chose to return with me in 2008 and 2009, Matt Albright, learned to be a super bird

photographer by displaying the patience it took to photograph both of them, with a point-and-shoot camera (admittedly a good one, but the patience made the difference), on the same day on a road near Danta. (On a hike one day, he also got a remarkable photo of a purple gallinule, beautiful but not one of the small, colorful birds I'm emphasizing here.)

Or the manakins: both the blue-crowned and the red-capped are common on Osa. The red-crowned were literally as common as sparrows (in the USA and worldwide) at the Fundacion Neotropica center where we stayed every January for 8 years.

Nor should I forget the ever-present flycatchers: many species, some more colorful than others, including the social flycatcher, the great kiskadee, and the tropical kingbird.

With well over 800 to choose from (half on Osa?), I could go on and on - and on, and I haven't even mentioned hummingbirds. (There are 3 species at Danta, many more - Garrigues lists more than 15 - on Osa or in Corcovado.)

But you get the idea.

20.

October 23, 2010: *Monkeys*

I don't want here to slight the monkeys in Corcovado - all four Costa Rican species: spider, howler, white face, and squirrel - but I want, in this piece, to emphasize monkeys around Danta. And here, because they're the ones seen most often around the lodge, this will be mostly about the tiny squirrel (*Mono titi*) monkeys.

It's not that there aren't other species here. In April, for a few days, a solitary white face monkey showed up - even vied with the *titis* for some highly prized fruits in a tree (*mamon chino*) right in front of the reception desk. Later, probably the same one was joined by 2 or 3 more white face monkeys, and they showed up in a variety of trees on the property, especially along and over the creek.

And howler monkeys howl, in the distance, almost every morning at 5 AM - just for 10 or 15 minutes. One morning recently,
I thought I could figure out where the howling was coming from, and it seemed to be near the Los Patos ranger station in Corcovado. Before, I had thought the sound was coming from the La Tarde area in the mountains above Danta - and Juvenal seconded that.

But the *titis* are the prize show around Danta. In 2008 and 2009, Matt Albright and I saw the whole group of about 40 on a regular basis. (Daniela Solano - more about her below - the local expert on *titis*, agreed that 40 is about the right number.) Almost

as regularly, Matt and I were able to get good photos of them, occasionally extreme close-ups.

When my former student returnees were here at Danta at the beginning of March, they reported seeing the *titis*, about 4:00 every afternoon, all around their bungalows in the forest. One day they invited me to share the spectacle, and sure enough there they all were, playing around above and around the bungalows.

They don't, however, come around just in the late afternoon. Some tourists and I this year have been able to watch the troop moving in front of the dining platform - sometimes right to left (as if heading for a night's rest near the bungalows), sometimes left to right, seeming to head out to do their daily foraging.

Juvenal says their favorite time to visit, when there are ripe fruits for them to eat in the trees near the entrance, is early in
the morning. And I can confirm this since moving into my bungalow: one morning recently, at 5:30 I woke up to hear them squabbling fiercely on the ground right in front of the house. Daniela says they had probably found, and were feasting on, a nest
of termites. (She claims that their diet is mainly insects, not fruits.)

I repeat, though, that they come around at all hours of the day. Not at predictable times, but that makes it a special treat for
the tourists when they are lucky enough to see the spectacle - which often lasts for 15 minutes or more. And a really good show, witnessed by many, was when the mamon tree was in fruit right in front of the lodge.

The best show of all I had waited for a couple of months to see. Next to the dining platform I had been watching a banana
tree sprout a full "hand" (as they say here), and after I had watched for close to 2 months, it fell under the weight of the ripening bananas. I was sure there was going to be a monkey feast. There wasn't one immediately, but after a few days the whole troop showed up - some even watching from the nearby bridge for their chance while the others, all on the ground, were gorging themselves on the bananas. A lucky tourist couple were there at the same time to see the show; they happened to have their super camera with them at the time; and they documented everything.

The *titis* at Danta, to put the matter simply, are a fun spectacle - for most visitors to see.

21.

October 22, 2010: *Danta's Caiman*

There's only one here. It arrived with the first steady rains at the end of April, when the *laguna* filled up. This "lake," as they call it here at Danta, is a smallish

offshoot of the creek that runs through the property, the Quebrada La Palma. In the dry season, it's just a depression near the bridge that leads to the trails from the dining platform. But it fills up during the rainy season.

Our resident "spectacled caiman" - Costa Rica's most commonly-seen version of an alligator - is smallish, about half the size of alligators I have seen in the Everglades in Florida. But this one at Danta is the star of the show for night hikes.

The tourists are also entranced (frightened?) by tarantulas. The ones here are fairly large, all black, hairy spiders - unlike the more colorful ones I've seen in the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. Also occasionally by snakes - even venemous terciopelos a few times. And by various large insects that come out mostly at night.

But the caiman, which hangs out near the mouth of the laguna where it connects with the creek, is what all the tourists exclaim about. Its eyes are the most visible part of the animal at night since caimans here tend to be all black.

It's eery, they say; even scary.

22.

June 15, 2010: *My Fears of a Terciopelo*

We have had one scare about terciopelos since I returned to Danta March 21. Andrey was doing a night hike with a Tico couple and they encountered a terciopelo, eating a frog, near the eating platform (comedor). The Tica of the couple had her camera with her and got a good photo of the event. On subsequent night hikes, with other groups larger or equal in size, Andrey reported having seen it (likely the same one) again, just on the other side of the comedor bridge; and some tourists walking the trails alone reported similar sightings in more or less the same location. A day or so after the snake-iguana event (and photo), Juvenal said one of his horses had been killed during the night by a terciopelo - and he added that he had seen a big, fat one right in front of his house. (He later changed that story, saying it had only been a false terciopelo.)

Meanwhile, at exactly this time, the noisy bullfrogs stopped making their sounds all night in the forest, and the pair of toads that had been visiting the lodge every night disappeared. I was sure that natural instincts were telling them to be wary.

I had read that terciopelos bear live young - often dozens at a time - and I remembered Aider's warning to the students when they encountered a young one on the path to the ocean at Sirena: the young are the most dangerous, because they still have their full complement of venom and are more likely to be aggressive.

I was pertified, sure that the fat one in front of Juvenal's was a mother possibly about to give birth to dozens of young terciopelos, all highly dangerous. Including to me.

No one else here seemed to be worried; cautious, yes, and once I saw Patricia the cook carefully checking the edges of the platform walk that leads to and from the kitchen with a flashlight while claiming to have seen both terciopelos and coral snakes there.

The one serious piece of confirming evidence was provided by visitors coming back from the Guaymi Indigenous reserve. They said their host had told them that the only serious threat they experience in their homes comes from terciopelos - which can be aggressive in ways the tourist guidebooks deny.

I read the accounts in the Costa Rica serpents books in Danta's library, and they warned tourists to be cautious and not step too close to one by accident - but nothing more. One other piece of evidence I picked up there was that the venom isn't to attack, or even to frighten, humans; it is simply one device that snakes have developed evolutionarily to assure themselves of food - their prey normally being small animals, whether mammals or reptiles and amphibians, which they kill by poisoning before they eat them. Their venom isn't toxic to themselves.

Why was I so afraid? Certainly there is room for caution - and I didn't go near the trail, where the tourists (and Andrey) said they had seen one, during that period. But my panicked reaction seemed more clearly to be a reflection of that primitive fear of snakes that affects many people - and is in turn reflected in Freudian dream interpretations. Either people around here don't share that near universal reaction (though they are cautious), or else they have quieted their fears by becoming accustomed to the near-constant threat.

My fears seemed to be related to my general temperamental timidity, my fears of anything new or different - including snakes in a new environment and other animals as well. (My night-bathroom-trip fears focused especially on large cats in addition to snakes.)

A perfectly natural phenomenon - venomous snakes - and thereby as beautiful as any other natural phenomenon. Along with an all-too-human exaggerated fear. Perhaps enhanced somewhat by my general temperamental timidity.

23.

October 20, 2010: *The Animals of Corcovado*

Everyone who visits Danta, then enters Corcovado National Park through the Los Patos ranger station, has one goal in mind:
to see as many animals in the wild as possible in a short visit. (The same is true for those who enter from Carate, or by boat from Drake Bay, by small plane directly to Sirena, or any other way.) Felines, from jaguars to pumas to the

smallest cats, *tigrillos*; to
all 4 monkey species (spider, howler, white-face, and squirrel, *Mono titi*); to tapirs, anteaters, sloths, and on and on. I have a plasticized card for tourists that includes about 65 species of mammals (not counting whales and dolphins, among sea animals), and that comes nowhere near being the full count. No one, even the most seasoned naturalist or park guard, ever sees them all. But they (we) want to see as many as possible.

In my first 6 months living at Danta this year (2010), one family from Seattle with 2 teenage boys, who *really* wanted to see them all, came closest. (See below, under sketches of Danta's guests.) And they carried several cameras with various focal length lenses - more than anyone should ever try to lug along on the hike - so they got a lot of pictures. But even they saw, and photographed, only a fraction of the animals that live in Corcovado.

One sign, put there by the group Aseder (above), says there are 175 (?) mammal species, but the truth is that no one knows.
Then add in the reptiles - crocodiles, caimans, a great variety of iguanas - and frogs. And the spiders and tarantulas and other insects large enough to see without special scientific equipment. And the birds - yes the birds, close to 400 species in Corcovado - and fish, and on and on and on. INBio has something of an inventory, but even that is not complete.

And this is not a zoo. These are all animals in their wild habitat.

If there is any place on earth with greater biodiversity, it would be hard to imagine. And harder still to visit. One section of Corcovado is closed off to all but certified researchers, but the least seasoned ecotourist (like me) can visit the park - with difficulty, admitted. And can see many animals - especially if one has a good naturalist guide.

This is the goal. The mecca.

And Danta is one of the best entry points.

24.

July 17, 2010: *Guests at Danta March-July 2010, I*

Ah yes, the guests at Danta! It would be impossible, with my memory, to recall them all. So this first cut will touch - lightly - on only the ones that stand out best in my limited memory.

First of all, my own group at the beginning of March: Laura and Doug Stephens (she now Bies), along with spouses Brandon and Corinne Lack; Molly McKaughan and her daughter Samantha; Karin Burghardt and her (other) Brandon . . . what a wonderful group to start my trip with. And they were fascinated by the bungalows at Danta, and the monkeys on the trails; everything here.

Then there was the young couple from the transportation engineering department at UC Davis, she in publications and he
doing road planning investigations - so appropriate here in Costa Rica! What I rember best about them - other than that we had wonderful conversations about everything they did, or wanted to do, here at Danta - is what a perfect example of a Jewish princess she was (actually from New York City originally, where her mother still lives, and they talk every day), and even more so when Merlyn discovered that she was pregnant and wanted to limit her activities for that reason. No way! And of course she complained about everything, even while saying Danta is perfect.

Then there was Robin Weintraub, another Jewish princess, "volunteering" to turn Danta into an upscale ecolodge and wrapping Merlyn around her finger.

And the tall, athletic pair of males who first said they were Swiss, before we talked a good bit about language and I discovered that one was Dutch and the other Belgian - though he let slip something about his Serbian name, which led me to conclude (correctly, I'm sure) that it was Les Beletsky and probably his illustrator on a scouting excursion for the next version of the ecotraveller's guide to Costa Rican wildlife. (I told him he should send a copy of that to Danta - he didn't blink, nor give a hint
that he understood - and I proceeded to order a new copy for me from Amazon.)

The Belgian trio - especially Sonje who arrived alone before the couple - with whom, together with Robin, we went into Sirena by boat from Drake: they were fascinating, talking about the weird politics of Belgium and Sonje handing out naturopathic remedies, and the wife of the couple (who had seemed to me before to be rather dull) turned out to have wonderful spotting abilities at Sirena. Sonje also had interesting tales to tell about her little village outside Ghent, where she got the local countess to come out of her castle and meet the villagers. (And there was another young Belgian female here at the same time, working with Daniela painting the new clinic in Guadalupe - I could never remember her name then and can't recall it now - who backed out on making the Drake to Sirena trip with us, because her Tico boyfriend of many years, talked with by phone in San Jose, said it would bust their budget.)

And Richard of the Nature Conservancy (who told me they are pulling out of CR, after arranging the purchase of many plots of land in Piedras Blancas park), along with Alejandra of the Corcovado Foundation (who proudly told me they had paid for the new Los Patos ranger station, along with other amenities for Corcovado, including paying for more rangers when Alvaro Ugalde was directing ACOSA). Both of them have been back more than once, separately.

Apparently Daniela, who is an occasional neighbor visitor (and sold me the small refrigerator for my house-to-be), does work for Alejandra and her foundation - but complains that they don't pay much. Daniela is working on a project - it seems not to have funding yet - following the local squirrel monkeys. Also, recently, her father - an education professor retired 10 years ago from the University of Costa Rica - showed up with a fascinating couple from Argentina, he a psychoanalyst and she a "poetic" photographer, who might well once have

been one of his patients! Talking with her, with her Argentinian Spanish accent (that I find so difficult to understand anyway), was an interesting chore - as she, along the way, told me more about Patagonia than I was prepared for.

Also recently there was the pair, Mel an extension agent and Sean (or Shawn?) a graduate student in the UC Davis agriculture college (the foundation stone, so to speak, of UC Davis, as the agricultural campus of UC Berkeley). Sean had a story, or a project, for everything, often stated loudly in his bold but imperfect Spanish, to anyone who would listen. His most interesting personal story was about how he had become disabled when working for the Sacramento police department, when one of their German shepherds turned on him during a chase, and ripped right through his thigh muscle. His wife is Mel's daughter, and the whole family, when they left here, were going to spend a week in a rented house at Matapalo Point. Mel also had many stories to tell, about his visits throughout the world as an extension agent, but he was most memorable for his love of wine.

Then there were the big groups. First the group from a United Church of Christ in Salt Lake City (pointedly identified as not Mormons), who were returning to finish up work - this time doing the window bars in Merlyn animal designs - for the new clinic.
I'm not sure what they had done on earlier trips, but it must have been a lot. Merlyn arranged a fiesta for their last Saturday night here, which was a big success. This group came with Jose Rogelio and his Ruta Verde company - that guide group's biggest group ever, Rogelio told me.

The second group, just last week, came from Western Washington University, and were led by professor Troy Abel. (He deserves a story all to himself.) They apparently had also done work, on prior trips, for the new clinic, not to mention doing the GPS maps of the Danta trails. They came with Alberto as chief guide, under the umbrella of Endemico, and set out from here, by tractor early in the morning, for what seems to have been a memorable hike to Sirena. (Merlyn will have to tell me more about their adventures.)

Just a sample, touching the surface, but "You get the idea," as the saying goes. And literally everyone just loves Danta.

25.

July 19, 2010: *Guests at Danta II: Seattlans*

The other day, in my first attempt at remembering Danta guests, I completely forgot the wonderful family from Port Townsend. What brought them to mind - later - was recalling how one group had listened to my little coterie of English students while they practiced their conversing. It finally came to me - I'm not sure whether during the night or early this morning - that it was that family. The incredibly talkative mother, some sort of medicine-related technician, her almost taciturn (but interesting when he did talk) veterinarian husband, and their daughter and son. The daughter (Chloe, I think) was older, almost as

taciturn as the father,
but also interesting when I had worked to draw her out: about to go off to college - ultimately to study medicine - at the U of Washington, a soccer player, and on and on. The son, younger, only spoke when spoken to, but was bright and cheery as could be. What they remind me of now is how much better prepared for Osa the people from Seattle have been, relative to almost any other tourists here at Danta in these 4 months. All have come well prepared, with lots of hiking experience - even in the mountains of West-Central Washington State, the Cascades (but often also elsewhere), the right gear, and so on. And incredibly positive attitudes.

An even better example were the family from Seattle proper (I seem to remember from the Northlake area) who had been here earlier. Another group of 4, but with 2 sons, about 17 and 13. They were all 4 Minnesota-nice. They had so much gear - including special packs just for the many cameras they had brought - that they had to leave most of it here in Danta as they headed off to Sirena. And they had planned super well. They would hike up the Rincon to Los Patos, then spend the night in tents there before heading off the next morning on the long hike to Sirena. The best possible plan, in my opinion. And they would spend 3 nights in Sirena, with plenty of time to see all the animals they could, including photographing them as well. It happened that Ayder was at Sirena at the same time (I think with the National Geographic crew photographing sharks in the Rio Sirena), and when I saw him
a few days later he bragged about pointing out an oppossum to them. When they came back for their gear, however, the older son, most eager of an eager family, said they had seen - and photographed - all four species of opposum! And every other species of animal people normally see - though neither sharks nor crocodiles. They didn't stay here long enough, on that stop, to show off their photos, but I'm absolutely confident they went home with something close to a National Geographic set of animal pictures of their own.

And then there were the students in the Western Washington group. Their professor, Troy Abel (mentioned in the previous essay), an incredible planner of a group leader (with the help of Alberto as an Endemico guide), had made sure they had everything - literally everything - that they even might need on their long hike to and extra-long stay at Sirena, and on to Jimenez utimately by boat. But what impressed me, in the context of this report, was how many of the female students in the group (the majority by about half) were experienced hikers, in the Cascades especially. One young woman in particular came up to me the night before they were to leave - at 4 AM by tractor (2 tractors, actually, and one was nearly an hour late) - worried about whether she could make it and asking me if I had any advice. I tried to reassure her, but I was myself reassured when she added that she had done the Cascade mountain hikes many times. She would have no problem on the Los Patos to Sirena hike - might even think it was much more of a breeze than Troy had warned them about.

Danta will be lucky if it can continue to draw from the Seattle area. The Western Washington group will certainly return. And I can hope, through Endemico, to add to that.

July 24, 2010: *Danta Guests III: J and Jeremy*

I heard him almost as they were leaving the parking lot: "We're from Arkansas." Then "It's John, but they call me J" - partly in Spanish, to Deivin. They came unexpected, so no cook for dinner. (Knowing that, I had already eaten my 2d meal - lunch - at noon.) But they didn't mind, especially not J, the father, who said they had eaten lunch late, and it would make no difference to him if they didn't eat again; the son, Jeremy, however, was ready to head into La Palma when dinnertime came.

It's all fresh in my mind as I record this practically *in vivo*. J turned out, immediately, not to be an obnoxious Arkansan, but
a genuinely nice man, taciturn but at the same time talkative when asked. Jeremy was, as one would expect, the perfect son, speaking only when spoken to; an Eagle Scout in every sense of that term. One thing he hoped to do on this trip was earn a long-delayed merit badge for hiking - two assignments, 10 miles and 20 miles, each within a single day. And Los Patos to Sirena, tomorrow, will only serve for the ten-miler. (In fact, there may be no opportunity left for a 20-miler in Costa Rica; but no problem, Jeremy said, he can walk the 2 miles to the highway - off there in the Ozarks - 5 times out and back.)

They have already traveled an incredible road here in CR, from Cahuita (Jeremy earned a scuba diving merit badge in Puerto Viejo) to the Rio Pacuare for a 2-day rafting trip to Siquirres, to Sarapiqui and the Fortuna waterfall (swim in the pool at the bottom) and Arenal (no lava flow in spite of cloudless vistas), then the back way to Monteverde, over the new bridge (Taiwanese) to the Nicoya Peninsula and the Nosara area, passing by Puntarenas to pick up the coastal highway to Uvita, where they got in a 12-person launch at Marina Ballena National Park and went by boat to Caño Island - enroute seeing both whales and dolphins up close - and did scouting for the famous indigenous spheres (*bolas*) and found one, Jeremy said, bigger in diameter than he is tall. Here a day earlier than planned (problems scheduling the Sirena entry permit), for a Sunday trek by horseback to Los Patos, the Sirena hike (10 mile badge), 2 nights at Sirena, then out by way of Carate. (I told them tourists have been reporting more animal sightings near La Leona than in Sirena.) And in their 3 remaining days they may visit Don Lulo's spectacularly wide waterfall
up the mountainside between Dominical and San Isidro, along with a stop at Cerro de la Muerte at the highest point on the Interamericana. (I think I have omitted stops, because they said they also tried but failed to see the Irazu crater.) And they may
do Playa Blanca and sea kayaking today (at my suggestion). Impressive.

A father-and-son experience, they said.

J continually refers to "Jeremy's mother" or "your mother," never using the word wife. He is originally from Texas, trained as
a marine engineer - a mechanic on ships - at A&M; then spent a dozen or so years in the Bahamas, where he apparently met the mother of his daughter; they

picked Arkansas and the Ozarks in particular as a nice place to settle for the daughter's schooling - and to give birth to Jeremy. J said they don't exactly live on a farm - once did truck farming for local markets, but stopped when J had to go back to work on shipboard to pay for the daughter's education at Hendricks College, a Methodist school, he said. The daughter now lives in Dallas, but either J didn't say much or I don't remember much of what he might have said about her: females apparently are an important but mostly silent part of J's life. She is from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Amish country - but she's not Amish (or even Mennonite, as we talked a bit about life around those parts).

Really nice people. The "salt of the earth," as people used to say back in Kentucky.

And clearly nothing like the rube that, in my anti-Arkansas prejudice, I had feared when I heard J say, loud enough for me to hear 100 meters away, that he was from Arkansas.

27.

July 27, 2010: *So Many Dutch*

There have been so many Dutch visitors at Danta in my months here that I almost despaired of doing an essay on them - even when, yesterday, an American asked a group of them to summarize the Dutch character. (They couldn't.) And they have arrived from all parts, from Friesland in the far north, along with nearby Groningen and Drenthe, all the way to the spur east of Belgium in the south. So I have decided to focus on a (somewhat) representative sample. (It will, naturally, be more weighted toward those here most recently, because my memory is such a sieve.)

Probably my sharpest memory, though, is one of the early ones: the young Dutch female who arrived with a new-found German friend, equally young, from Jimenez, where they had first met, at the instigation of the enthralled-by-everything woman from Portland, Oregon. Each had been here already the better part of the 6 months each had allotted for a stay in Costa Rica, one mostly on the Caribbean side, the other the Pacific. But both had wanted to visit Nicaragua as well, and they left from here, together, to travel from San Jose by bus to Managua. The young Dutch woman, my focus in this paragraph, was from near Utrecht and had just finished her undergraduate studies, and was taking a break before returning to do graduate study to become a tax attorney. She has a boyfriend in Holland, and was a little bit embarrassed by the attention she got, one night, when they (and 2 Dutch couples here at the same time) went off dancing at the Playa Blanca bar with Merlyn. Her most remarkable characteristic was, literally, her character. She was so much fun, so exuberant (not to mention attractive in her Dutch blondness). I teased her about the contrast between being something of a party girl and a (future) tax attorney, but she took it well - with a laugh as for everything.

At the opposite end of the time spectrum, there was the equally blond and

characteristically Dutch young woman here this weekend with her school principal husband. She too was great fun, almost as enthused about everything as our Portland friend
(of Portland Humane Society fame), and clearly the social leader of 10 Dutch tourists here at the same time. She had studied environmental policy (including a semester in a small college in the far north of Minnesota above Duluth) and works as the organizer of environmentalists in the Dutch national park system, which she said is mostly made up of private land holdings. She and her equally interesting husband bike everywhere they can. Though almost as much fun as the first young woman (above), she complained when I told her they wouldn't actually get to see the Guaymi reserve, but only one representative. "You know how critical we Dutch are," she said. (I didn't know, from firsthand experience here - though I have heard about it in movies and books.) But her most remarkable characteristic was her warm relationship with her husband, who had waited patiently back in Drenthe while she spent 6 months studying in the US. A wonderful example of a Dutch couple. (Apparently no children, in the new Dutch fashion.)

The two of them made a nice contrast with another Dutch couple here this weekend. She a school administrator like the husband above - an assistant principal in a school near Utrecht, she said - her husband the electrician for a whole group of schools, including universities (he told me when I pulled it out of him), all around Utrecht. Probably just as fine a Dutch couple, but with none of the other woman's sociability, and ethusiasm almost totally controlled.

Though there were actually more Dutch tourists earlier (than this set obviously on summer vacation), I will end with another couple here this weekend. He was - I overheard him say once, and verified in person - from Suriname, she originally from Aruba.
With her family, she had traveled a lot, beginning in the USA - from Miami to Los Angeles to Banff in the Canadian Rockies to Niagara Falls (probably Canadian and American) - and I'm sure she started, early in life, to be the wonderful 300mm-lens photographer that she showed herself to be here. He said he knew where he stands in the great scheme of things: if she had to choose, it would be her camera! They live just outside Haarlem. He, however, was interesting in his own right; not only about his native Suriname (he is clearly Caribbean in appearance), but about his current life. Now retired, he teaches leadership wherever he can find an audience; and not from textbooks - he said he elicits the leadership skills of his audiences "from within themselves." I strongly suspect a religious slant. They were off to San Vito and the Wilson Botanical Gardens for 2 nights, a nice ending for their 4th visit to Costa Rica - which they said they like because it is so tranquil and inviting, in the midst of its natural wonders (the equal, they said, of the much larger Suriname, where seeing nature is more difficult).

A representative sample (for me, if not scientifically so).

July 28, 2010: *A French Family from Nantes*

They had quite an adventure, this French family with 2 daughters, around 11-12 and 15-16. Stuck the whole night with Mariano and his Guaymi family - and Andrey! The Rincon River - where its tributary, the Pavo, enters it - was too high for a return hike through the river. And the current was too strong, with the unceasing, and fierce, rains all day. So they stayed the night. Possibly the first tourists to do so in Mariano's newly-built lodge.

Communicating with the family had been difficult earlier. Only the mother speaks English. But she did tell me that they are from Nantes on the west coast of France.

And this morning it took Andrey to get it through my thick head that they had had to spend the night there. When I went back to talk with them while they were still breakfasting, they said it wasn't all bad. Electricity. And beds to sleep in. And they were fed dinner as well as the expected lunch. Quite an adventure, she admitted.

This family is, unfortunately, fairly typical of the French visitors here at Danta. There have been at least a half dozen groups
or couples (one group of about a dozen, with 2 Tico drivers-guides, one of whom had learned passable French, just to work with French tourists), and few have been comfortable speaking English. Almost none have spoken Spanish. And nearly all have displayed that French reserve - which foreigners take for haughtiness.

Someone here at Danta is going to have to learn at least a little French if they are going to keep coming. And they probably will. They seem to enjoy the place as much as all the other tourists, in spite of language problems.

And this family even had a nice adventure.

29.

August 9, 2010: *Danta in August 2010*

What a surprise! July, almost full the entire month, was already a surprise. But I had known in advance, from Alberto, that there would be a large contingent here from Western Washington University in the middle of the month; and I guessed - correctly - about other groups, in spite of persistent rains.

However, August, I worried, might be different. Even worse rains. And no big group scheduled. But I was wrong. I checked the reservation list the other day when no one was around, and there will be only 3 days the rest of the month with no one here but me - and the way couples have been dropping in unannounced already this month, that could change.

The difference is the European tours. From Germany. From Belgium. From the Netherlands. Summer vacations, and people choosing the natural beauties of Costa Rica rather than the beach at Benidorm in Spain, or the Mediterranean Sea beauty of the Greek Isles. And the tour companies in Europe - which must know about the rains especially on Osa - keep sending them. Package tours, yes, but with amazing (to me) variations. Nearly all seem to begin with Tortuguero, where by way of the canals by boat they get introduced to the marvelous animal diversity of the country. Some go from there immediately to the major tourist destinations of Arenal or Monteverde or the Nicoya beaches. But others follow down the Caribbean side to Sarapiqui or the Pacuare rivers (rafting the latter) or Puerto Viejo and the nearby Bribri indigenous reserve. All the ones I'm talking about end
up here at Danta, but then leave - if not through Los Patos and Corcovado to Sirena and La Leona and Carate - either for San Gerardo and the quetzal center near the Cerro de la Muerte (death peak) or Uvita and the Whale Beach National Park. And those who, instead, arrive from those stops tell us that they have seen quetzals at San Gerardo, or whales - and dolphins - at Marino Ballena. So they're practically guaranteed to do the same.

And the persistent rains - often enough monsoonal? One Dutch woman summed it up for the rest: "That's the price you pay for all this green."

So for me a nice surprise. And I always enjoy chatting with the tourists - the Europeans perhaps more than the Americans, but those too.

I think, actually, my favorite pair were Americans: the father and son from Arkansas who were here for a parental bonding adventure. I wrote about them in a separate essay ("J and Jeremy"). But the Seattlans have been wonderful too (and not just the Western Washington group - see "Seattlans"), and also - my favorites among the Europeans - the Dutch (see "So Many Dutch").

September should turn out as well!

30.

June 21, 2010: *Book Knowledge [Juvenal]*

The contrast between book knowledge and "knowledge on the ground," so to speak - in evidence everywhere - seems sharper on Osa than anywhere else I've experienced it. I just showed Juvenal the book, *Osa: Where the Rainforest Meets the Sea*, and he wasn't even mildly interested. He was busy showing off the lodge to two Spanish-speaking strangers (from where?), and it was all about this wood or this trunk used in construction and how it had been done - as, years ago, he had proudly showed me his tree plantation, without a single species name, without *any* English names, just his own Costa Rican vocabulary learned in years living here. Merlyn, on the contrary, the other day praised *Osa* in lavish terms: "the best book ever." Father and son. Father who knows everything - literally *knows* everything - by feel, by experience. Versus son, who worships his father's knowledge - and makes good use of it - but also has a smattering of book

knowledge, of knowledge of design, and so on. And both of them versus the endless line of biologists and ecologists and environmentalists - and, today, experts on environmental tourism - who pass through Danta. Some of them praise field knowledge too, but they are all, like me, primarily book knowledge people. Some as writers. More as readers, or researchers - sometimes as administrators.

What makes the contrast so striking here is the fanaticism, the near-worship with respect to knowledge on the ground, in the field, from experience. And I am in awe of it.

But, as with *The Tapir's Morning Bath*, science - even ecological planning - is turning those field-knowledge experts into old fogeys like Juvenal, a dying breed.

What a pity! How can we manage - as with the Pusol School Museum project that my friend the historian, Luis Martinez Sanmartin, works with near Elche in southeastern Spain - to not only honor but preserve that knowledge?

I could ask Juvenal, and his friends as well, to write down tree names - they could then be checked against book knowledge,
or the tree plantation in Costa Rica web page I saw the other day, Finca Leola - but they would be loathe to do so, or would have difficulty doing so, certainly in English. Better, as with the student-interviewers at Pusol, to do oral history type interviews - preferably with a tape recorder (and a translator capable of dealing with the local Spanish). And it's not just tree names. For example, I think of Luis Angulo the other day, who said he lived for 15 years near the summit of Rincon Peak, and who knows a lot about the headwaters of all the local rivers, on both sides of the continental divide on the peninsula. Or the gold miners. Or the hunters.

I will always be a book knowledge person, but I admire - and would like to find a way to preserve - knowledge on the ground as well.

An important leg of the 3-legged stool of genuine sustainable development according to Cesar Cuello's model: conservation with development, but a development that actually helps the locals.

Clearly Danta Lodge includes all three; and clearly I have my place in producing a still better future.

31.

September 5, 2010: *Bathing in the River*

What a delight to hear the children - Mandy's two, Justin and Sofia, Merlyn's niece and nephew - splashing in the river! (In the USA we'd say the creek; here it's technically the Quebrada La Palma.) Singing out joyfully. Laughing. Splashing. Having a ton of fun. A reminder of everyone's childhood - and that

seems to be true in every part of the world, no matter the culture.

And now Robin Weintraub - as part of her plan for Merlyn to upgrade Danta into a first class eco-lodge - has suggested damming the creek at the righthand side of the bridge in front of the dining platform, to create a natural pool for swimming. Merlyn already had his workers clear the spot - actually spots on both sides of the creek. And naturally he added his own idea, to build a platform for afternoon drinks and animal watching beside the pool.

Will it work? Will the kinds of travelers who come here want to cool themselves off in the river? My guess is yes, especially in the hot months from January to April (even into May - almost half the year and the full extent of the high season).

I have no idea how Merlyn will do it, but he's a design genius. And probably already knows, in his mind, what it's going to look like.

My guess - a second one - is that a natural pooling of the river water will, soon enough, turn into an actual swimming pool, though Merlyn would make sure it will be natural, "rustic."

How that will go down with the real residents here - the animals, including water birds and fish and Danta's resident caiman - is something that remains to be seen.

All of this may change things, but it seems to me that Merlyn thrives on changes. Every year something different. As I've said before, improving on what is already near perfect.

And there's no doubt, in my mind, that the joy of guests splashing in the stream will be almost as happy a sound in the future as was that of the kids today.

32.

July 16, 2010: *Guisselle the Cleaning Lady*

I don't know Guisselle's last name [I later found out: Qintero Jimenez], any more than the others, but she is probably the person I feel closest to here in Danta. She is also the maid, making the beds for the tourists, and she takes great pride in keeping the beautiful hardwood floors immaculately clean, as well as doing up the towels and top sheets on the beds as flowers and swans. And she is faithful as can be - here at 7 AM every morning that she's allowed to work or when she's not off visiting her boyfriend.

Guisselle has been here at least since Matt Albright and I got to know her when we were here in 2008. And I have come to know a fair amount about her in that visit and this when I'm retiring here forever. Her current boyfriend is at least 5 years younger than her 28 years, and he does the same kind of work at La

Leona Ecolodge near the Carate entrance to Corcovado. (La Leona is owned and managed by a friend of Merlyn's from the first Aseder group.) He is also determined to have kids with her - he has none now - while her 3 were all fathered by the same previous boyfriend-husband. I know the youngest daughter fairly well since she has asked me more than once to help her with English homework. And I met the other 2, a son and another daughter, at last year's La Palma festival. As far as I can tell, the 3 live with their father in La Palma, while Guisselle lives with her mother and at least one sister practically next door to Danta.

The younger daughter is painfully shy, as is Guisselle herself. The father, Guisselle has told me, was relentlessly critical of her when they lived together and had the 3 kids. He said she was good for nothing. But I suspect that her lack of self-confidence goes back a lot farther in her life than his citicisms. Maybe her mother is as critical as the kids' father.

Like Silyn (yesterday's story), Guisselle is pretty. Her face shows some Indigenous characteristics - at least the features of the poorer classes here on Osa - but that adds both to her intrigue and to her beauty. She also has a near perfect body. One day she showed up in a top that read, "Pretty as a Princess, so If the Name Fits . . ." Every morning she shows up in - and fills out - a different solid-color top, the colors seeming to reflect her moods. Guisselle also loves to dance, but only when her boyfriend is in town. She occasionally visits him at La Leona - complaining, when she does, about the cost of the tedious trip - and she always comes back glowing.

For me, Guisselle is almost a model (pun intended) of the dutiful, self-sacrificing young women here on Osa. I'm sure she has no career dreams beyond having at least one child by her new boyfriend - possible future husband? (The qualification is needed because his family - she has told me - disapprove of her, though that problem seems at least temporarily to have been worked out.)

But there is also hope for Guisselle - certainly as long as she keeps her job here at Danta. I recently happened to bump into her
on the road to Danta, sporting a brand new hot pink bicycle. She has also been sporting stylish jeans lately. When I asked her if her boyfriend had bought the bike for her (or, I was thinking, at least helped pay for it), she bristled. Too poor to bring the kids to the festival, or complaining about the cost of trips to La Leona, Guisselle nonetheless seems now to be doing okay financially. I assume her mother has approved of the expenditures, and, as I said, as long as she keeps her job here . . . (Merlyn, by the way, seems to be quite happy with her work, even depending on her to keep the floors clean and the rooms and bungalows in order.)

The all-too-common story here, for young women (no matter how pretty or otherwise attractive), but with promise nonetheless.

[Addendum in October: The new boyfriend dumped her for another young woman, and she promptly fell in with a gringo, Willy, who has property near Lapa Rios in Matapalo. But that seems not to have worked out either, as someone warned her that Willy loves to jump from one bed to another. One

visiting Mexican, in a MarViva filming crew, fell instantly in love with Guisselle, and said he wanted her to join him in Mexico - and she loved that illusion for a few days. The upshot of all this? That lots of men - including me - find Guisselle attractive, but it doesn't seem likely that she's going to find a permanent mate anytime soon. I do know that Guisselle has a sister, Gloria - almost 18 and with a baby - who lives in the house with her and her mother; and that her oldest daughter, Alejandra (I think), a 13-year-old student in La Palma, completes the all female-household (not counting the baby, who is male).]

33.

October 22, 2010: *Danta's Cooks*

If I have a warm spot in my heart for Guisselle the cleaning lady, I have an equally warm spot - as one might expect - for Danta's cooks. For 6 months before moving from the lodge itself into my new home, they fed me - overfed me - regularly. (After my initial visit in March with my former student returnees, I had to cut back to just 2 rather than 3 meals a day; I had gained several pounds in just a few days.) And even now, when, according to my agreement with Merlyn, I'm supposed to be doing my own cooking, they still come to my rescue fairly often.

Though for special occasions there are more, I will concentrate here on the 4 who are here most regularly - and who have helped me out the most.

First Patricia:

I mentioned her once before here when talking about snakes. The cooks arrive early in the morning - when there are lots of tourists, as early as 4:30 AM - and they often leave late at night, long after it has gotten dark. Once, as I watched, Patricia went up and down the platform between the kitchen and the dining platform, shining her flashlight along the edges into the small bushes. When I asked, she said she was looking for snakes - and had seen not only terciopleos but coral snakes there (both dangerously venemous). I didn't know whether or not to take her seriously, but she was serious - dead serious.

Patricia is now my steadiest provider of *gallo pinto*, Costa Rican (Tican) rice and beans. I won't say I would starve without her handouts, but I learned to love *pinto* (for short) on my first visit to Costa Rica, learned how to make it myself, and have survived on it from the USA to Spain as well as here on my 16 prior trips - not to mention this 17th trip. For Ticos, it's a taken-for-granted basic. And so it is for me. What you combine with it - eggs for breakfast, chicken or other meat or fish for lunch or dinner - doesn't really matter.

Patricia always has a worried look on her face (not just when she fears the presence of snakes), but she is among the most cheerful people I have met in all the 77 years of my long life. And that's not just with me, but with the guests. And she regularly takes food to Juvenal, Merlyn's father, in his house next door to my bungalow.

She says she came here only recently, from Grecia ("the cleanest city in Latin America," they brag) to join her mother. She has at least one sister that I know of (having met her in an English class I occasionally help out with), but I know nothing about the rest of the family.

I did discover, a couple of months into my stay in the lodge, that she is newly pregnant. And the obviously proud father-to-be is Victor - about whom I will be writing in the next essay, about workers at Danta.

Next, Marisel (I'm pretty sure that's the correct spelling):

Marisel was here when I arrived. Always as helpful as Patricia - though not as uniformly cheerful - including to my students in early March. I remembered Marisel well from 2 years ago - 2008, when I came back, after an absence of a year, with 4 former students - and I remembered her especially as an excellent cook. Merlyn had taught all the cooks well when he switched from having his mother as the cook to hiring young women from the community.

Marisel was obviously pregnant at the beginning of my stay, and she disappeared after a month or so. Only to return after the allotted 4 months off to have her baby. She now nurses the baby here - Ricardo, I learned by mistaking his name at first; he is usually brought here either by the father (I haven't learned his name) or by Michel (spelling?) an 11-year-old older daughter, typically from a neighboring house. That's where Sofia lives, the first cook I knew here back in 2005 or 2006. She is Marisel's sister and the wife of one of the principal carpenters (Yiyo) that I will be chronicling below. (As far as I have been able to figure out, Marisel seems also to be the sister of the other chief carpenter, Millo. It's a tight-knit community.)

Marisel's biggest help to me came when I was planning a party to celebrate the opening of my new house-bungalow. She literally took charge, making up a list of all the items she thought I should buy. (I ended up choosing some different items and eliminating some of her favorites, but she accepted the changes with grace.) I would, without a doubt, never have been able to carry it off without her, given how recently I had moved in and my budget limits for that reason.

Then Teresa:

Teresa helped me a lot with the party, too. She sold me plantains, then cooked plantain chips for the refried bean dip as well as the *ceviche* - a Costa Rican delicacy made with raw fish (which Cristina had made). She also fixed the yuca, after she and Patricia had told me where to buy it and sent me off to do so. Neither she nor Patricia came to the party (Marisel did, bringing the baby), though she pointedly asked me if her daughter Andrea was invited. (She was.)

She is a gold mine of wisdom about the community, though she is not part of the closest close-knit group.

She has 3 daughters, the oldest of whom has given her a granddaughter (I think; it could be a grandson). The second, Andrea, was one of my first English

students (along with Silyn - who has her own profile here). The youngest is Odalis, who came along with Andrea to English classes at first - but is shy and timid and disappeared soon enough. Teresa once told me that when she is here to cook, Andrea can't go to school because she has to take care of Odalis. As I mentioned, Andrea did show up for the party, bringing along Silyn (her cousin, though I don't know the exact connection) and several other teenagers, who didn't mix - but were reported to me to be sneaking rum when no one was looking.

Teresa is also the mother of Deivin, who will be profiled among the Danta workers. He once reported to me how tired he was from working on improving the family home. (I say family, meaning where Teresa and the 2 younger girls live, and apparently where he too lived before moving in with the Peace Corps worker in La Palma; apparently there is also a non-resident father in La Palma.) It took me awhile to find out exactly where it's located, but the house is one of the nicest in Guadalupe - and shows all the work being done on it.

Each of the cooks has a breakfast specialty or two, which you can look forward to when she is cooking. One of Teresa's is a very delicious *empanada*, a corn tortilla stuffed with goodies I wouldn't even venture to guess at.

Finally, there is Elisa:

Elisa lives practically next door, has a husband who is the guard who patrols the grounds 4 times every night, and is the mother of Paneco (see his profile), Merlyn's handiest handy helper in all practical jobs.

She is also part of what seems to be the community council in Guadalupe, not to mention a person who is often on the telephone while here, calling (I suspect) a broad circle of friends. If I need information about anyone in the village, I know whom to ask.

If I recall correctly, her specialty for breakfast is 2 corn tortillas covered with a spicy hot tomato sauce. I worry about heartburn when she serves that, but I never got it (the heartburn) in the months I lived in the lodge.

Elisa was supposed to help out with the cooking for the party, but never showed up. (Paneco showed up for the party, with bells on - as we say in the USA.)

Elisa's daughter Jenny, who is married, sometimes helps out in the kitchen when there is a really big crowd of tourists to feed.

An interesting lot, and, as I say, I had to work hard at not getting fat (fatter) on their cooking in the near 6 months I lived in the lodge. Theirs is Tica country cooking at its finest (abetted by the range of international food cookbooks Merlyn provided from the outset), and could definitely put pounds on you if you ate everything they serve up.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention that at Danta every lunch and dinner includes a

delicious - and fattening - dessert. And each of the cooks has her own specialty in that department as well

Yum!

34.

October 24, 2010: *Danta's Other Workers I*

As complex as Danta Lodge has become - from a beginning with only Merlyn and his mother, then Merlyn, his mother and then-*novia* Laura Frey - it would be difficult to list everyone who works here. As with the cooks, I will be selective.

But every list would have to begin with Merlyn's most regular sidekick, Paneco - officially Isai Vanegas. (For particular reasons, here I do know last names, if for no other reason because so many of the workers now have their own Facebook page.) If Merlyn can do literally anything around the lodge, Paneco is nearly as omnicompetent. Merlyn has trained him well. And clearly Paneco was - still is - a quick learner. When there is new construction - and that seems to be all the time - Paneco immediately grasps not only the broad outlines but every last detail. Similar for repair jobs. And he then typically transmits everything to the construction crews (next essay), when Merlyn himself doesn't do that. Then he often also oversees the construction, goes on trips (not always just to La Palma and the Almacen or all-purpose store and supply house there) to anywhere anything is to be purchased or acquired, and delivers the materials to the construction site (which might be in the forest with the bungalows). But the reason I start with him here - rather than under the construction crew heading - is that Paneco also sometimes serves as waiter in the *comedor*, greets visitors at the front desk, and even serves occasionally as a guide for tours (among other chores too numerous to mention). Merlyn seems to have almost blind faith in him. As I said under the cooks heading, Paneco is the son of Elisa, one of the cooks; also the stepson of Juan the night watchman.

Next (arbitrarily) I will list Deivin Alvarado - already mentioned as the cook Teresa's son. Most often the waiter for the dining platform, Deivin also serves as receptionist, detail person on small jobs (identification signs for trees, for example, or information posters to be placed around the lodge) - and occasionally even a construction crew member. Fiercely loyal and obedient to Merlyn, Deivin is nonetheless also my best source of information when no one else is (no one, perhaps, except Guisselle the cleaning lady).
Deivin also often pesters me for precise English translations of Spanish words, in his effort to learn English - not just well but correctly. (Even though he now lives with Laura the local Peace Corps worker, and hopes to at least visit if not move to the USA, he seems to prefer to let her practice her Spanish rather than converse with her in English.)

Andrey Gonzalez is the most regular of Danta's tour guides - and is learning English more rapidly than Deivin in doing so - not only for night hikes (mentioned elsewhere here) but also into Corcovado National Park and to the

Guaymi reserve. He has been enrolled by Merlyn in a government-offered training program (INA, national institute for apprenticeship) for guides, and is justly proud of what he is learning there. (Paneco is a certified guide for the Southern Zone, Merlyn for the whole country; I believe that Andrey will only become certified for Osa.) However, Andrey is as big and strong as an ox, and very often he is called upon to help on construction projects as well.

Carlos Campos is Merlyn's most trusted helper in the office - also running errands - probably because he is a student in a distance learning program with a focus on ecotourism management, and Merlyn is trying to get Danta certified under more than one heading. Carlos also regularly answers the telephone, including to make reservations for the lodge, and greets guests. Finally, he also laughs a lot, seeing something funny in literally everything. (I seem to confuse him as old sober sides, but I'm working to get on his better side.)

I could obviously go on and on - Juan the night watchman (mentioned a couple of times), Jairo who is here on week ends only because he hasn't yet finished high school, a man (name unknown to me) who is, now and then, hired just to cut back vegetation, and so on.

And there is one last worker I will mention here: Victor the handyman. He takes away the kitchen refuse, manages the horses for horseback tours (that means he goes along), and just generally does a lot of the dirty work around the lodge. I will give him more space under the next heading, construction workers.

35.

October 26, 2010: *Danta's Workers II: Construction Crew*

Miyo and Yiyo:

Miyo is a big, burly, powerful man who can, literally, wrestle construction pieces - whether huge timbers or tiny screws that require a power tool to insert - into place. At first I thought he was the crew chief for construction on my cabin (which, as I have said numerous times, turned out to be a palace even though rustic in style).

Then, when I got anxious about when the project might be completed, I started visiting the site every day, and I quickly discovered that there was a second crew chief, just as surely in charge. That was Yiyo.

Miyo and Yiyo are brothers-in-law, each married to the other's sister.

Yiyo has what appears to be a congenital defect in his right hand, which diminishes its utility. But no matter. He hammers as forcefully, and as accurately, with his left hand as anyone with the full use of both hands.

Miyo and Yiyo. A team. Capable of not just overseeing but doing the actual building of my palace in less than 5 months.

A masterpiece of Merlyn's design. I won't describe it in detail; just the aspects that required special (rustic) skills on the part
of the builders. The windows of the two bedrooms include the usual rectangular openings, but they are filled with crisscrossing branches of a particular tree chosen for the purpose, then backed by wire screening, both to keep out mosquitoes and to create a kind of see-through wall. On the other side - kitchen and great room area - the same motif extends all the way up to the high peaked roof. When I first watched the construction of the walls there and they stopped at waist level, everything seemed to me unbalanced. But that was just until I watched in sheer amazement as the workers filled the top half with the same crisscrossed branch walls all the way up. Airy walls to a high ceiling around all the sides except the two bedrooms (with their similar windows), with the same breeze-through characteristics. A masterpiece of design - everyone who has visited has agreed.

But equally a masterpiece of Miyo's and Yiyo's construction skills.

I haven't discovered where or how they learned to do this sort of rustic building, but once Yiyo told me, when I asked him, "We've been doing it forever. We just picked up the skills we needed as we went along." The two of them have Merlyn's complete confidence when it comes to implementing one of his designs, no matter how much novelty each new design contains.

Paneco:

Mentioned earlier as Merlyn's most trusted assistant and right hand man when it comes to practical matters of whatever sort, Paneco is often also the crew chief of all other crew chiefs - in addition to being the principal go-for, driving off here or there for construction materials. He is also the principal electrician. I watched with amazement when he installed the rustic light fixtures (made of coconut shells) in my house; he stood precariously on a ladder held by someone else when he could, but when necessary he also clambered up on high cross beams or stood on the "branches" of the see-through walls. Like a monkey. Literally. When I asked him whether he worried about working with electrical connections (too often live, for my fearful-of-electricity tastes), he just shrugged it off, saying "No problem."

Victor:

Another worker mentioned earlier, as the all-round handyman doing the dirty jobs around Danta, who also manages the horses for horseback tours (and goes along on the lead horse). Victor is also (as well as being the father of Patricia's baby-to-be) the chief construction assistant, handing things to others or holding them. In fact, however, he has come to be more, learning to be a competent carpenter in his own right. And he has been as kind to me as Patricia, especially when I was moving in and some last-minute details needed to be attended to.

(Early in the construction project on my house, there was another assistant, Jonathan. He was the other worker who handled the horses and went along on the lead horse for tours - as well as holding things and helping out with the

construction crew. But about halfway through, he disappeared; and I don't know why.)

Andrey (again, this time as construction worker):

I already mentioned, when talking about him as the lead guide - especially for night hikes - that Andrey also helps out with construction tasks. And more than just occasionally. As soon as my palace was completed, Merlyn started a veritable building boom: a bamboo structure to serve tours, right in front of the reception desk, as well as two new bungalows in the forest. (There are rumors that there will be still more projects before the high tourist season starts.) The office for tours involved a good bit of bricklaying - well, precisely, laying cement blocks then covering them with a stucco-like cement facing. Andrey started the very first day as a bricklayer's assistant, but he quickly became an expert bricklayer (cement block layer). And because he is tall and strong as an ox (like Miyo), he was called upon to work high up in the superstructure tying together the long pieces of bamboo that hold up the roof. I haven't visited the work sites for the new bungalows in the forest, but Andrey works on them as well.

Workers around Danta are clearly multi-taskers.

Juan Carlos:

He was new to me, and showed up at the start of the tour building project - as the master bricklayer. (His wife substituted for Guisselle the cleaning lady for at least one week, and, when I asked her, she said his normal job in construction around La Palma is as a bricklayer - probably most often cement block construction.)

Along with Juan Carlos came 4 or 5 other construction workers new to me. All together - that means with Andrey and Miyo helping out - they got that job done in almost exactly 2 weeks. But all of them, including Juan Carlos, seem still to be around, so undoubtedly they are now working on the new bungalows. I suspect that those too will be completed in record time - before the next tourist high season.

A master designer. And master builders as well - in a rustic style.

36.

June 13, 2010: *Obsessive Career Fantasies*

Last night I lay awake obsessed with fantasies about using career dreams to motivate my English conversation students - and most especially Silyn - to learn more rapidly by focusing on words and phrases and conversations related to a possible future career, as Pablo Largaespada had suggested for himself Friday. But the obsession wasn't just about learning English; it was also about getting them - all of them - to think about the future, to motivate them in other ways as well.

I only put an end to the obsession by observing what was going on with myself in this fugue: it was, at least to a significant extent, all about me and my "career," so to speak, for the next three years here at Danta.

I fantasized about big projects, such as a story about Danta, possibly centering on Juvenal, his life here, and how it had unfolded into what Danta is now, including its relation to the Guadalupe community. Or a similar story about Aider, including his family and where he finds himself now (or might fantasize about a different future).

But when I caught myself, I toned things down, recognizing that in fact what I am doing now - here - is only short essays, little sermons. So I thought - was inspired? - about just accepting that, and focusing on small sermon essays. I could do one or two about people here, yes - whether Silyn or Juvenal (and Merlyn) or Aider (an update) - but the key point would be to relate everything to the book about my Costa Rica experiences. So that would mean essays about Nature as well: plants and animals and seasons and
even the skies at different seasons. (For example, the velvet night skies and clearly visible constellations in early March, or the
moonlit nights as bright as dawns in late March, versus the totally dark and rainy nights now in June - even though we're about to enter another full moon phase.)

37.

July 15, 2010: *Silyn*

I don't know her last name. I may never know it. That's the way it is here in my chosen home on the edge of the jungle. First names, but no last names.

Silyn showed up one afternoon, knocking on the door of the room I'm temporarily using until my new house is finished. She and Andrea. They said they wanted to learn English, and asked if I would teach them.

Andrea is a daughter of Teresa, one of the cooks, and sister, along with little Odalis, of Deivin who works here in Danta. She and Silyn, they told me early on, are cousins, so I do know that much. And Silyn lives - without parents - in Guadalupe in a house I discovered when I saw her there one day as I passed by in Pedro Bigotes's taxi. Once she brought along a sister's young son - tried to ignore him, as much as possible, though clearly one sister had left him in her care. There is also another sister in the house, possibly with another small child - but no adult males.

Silyn also told me proudly, one day, that her grandfather lives - equally proudly (and alone, I think she said) - in a house by the Rincon River by the Guaymi Indigenous people.

In short, Silyn is a mystery.

The pretty face of a born model. Slim. A good dancer, as I discovered when Merlyn put on a fiesta when the religious group from Salt Lake City (United Church of Christ, not Mormons) had finished the new windows for the new clinic in Guadalupe. Also clearly interested in one of the gringo boys from that group. But not interested in getting married or having a child of her own - so she told me when I probed about the young charge she had brought along that day.

A mystery.

So why do I choose to write about her?

It comes under the heading of this group of essays: careers. And how I chose to get my young volunteer students (several others joined Silyn and Andrea later) interested in conversing - by getting them to think about their futures, possible careers. Learn some related English vocabulary; fit the words into phrases of their chosing; then turn those phrases into conversations.

Silyn illustrates how it didn't really pan out the way I hoped. First she said she wanted to be a hotel owner, like Merlyn. Then just a nature guide for tourists. Most recently, an English teacher. And, when one day she showed up with a make-up kit and practiced on the other girls - and I asked her pointedly - she was determined not to be a model.

Again, in short, Silyn has no idea what she wants to do with her life - though she is now in her last year in the local high school. Possibly go to college? Maybe. Become a mother, as she has so far (surprisingly) avoided, with or without marrying the father? She says definitely not - though that seems clearly to be the most common fate here.

Of all the "careers" she has put on as possible futures, she seems best suited to teaching English. She has learned better, and more quickly, than all the rest - even while being undecided about her future.

SO, after six weeks, Silyn is still a mystery. As is her future. And that of most of the young people I have met around here. Celia,
my friend Ayder's daughter (just 15), says she wants to go to the university to become a female guide. Guisselle Bianco clearly has a future as a painter - this fall will even have two international exhibitions, in Italy, of her paintings. But they are the rare exceptions. More usual is Anita, Guisselle's (third) younger sister, who already had a baby at 16 and may or may not end up marrying Bernie, the father, however engaged he remains up to now.

It's possible that Silyn may escape this fate. And maybe my English conversation classes can help. But it's still a mystery.

38.

October 28, 2010: *Daniela Solano Rojas*

Daniela is almost Danta's nearest neighbor, living with her husband Roberto

just beyond Juvenal's tree plantation, and she visits me here now and then. (In one sense, Yiyo is a nearer neighbor, living with his wife Sofia - Danta's first hired cook - across the road from the tree plantation.) In 2009, Daniela was Merlyn's suggestion as a consultant on local properties for sale, when my former student Matt Albright (mentioned often here) was thinking about purchasing property near Danta. (She had good ideas, but nothing ever came of it with Matt.) This year she sold me a small refrigerator for my house long before the house-palace was completed. Recently, as mentioned in my accounts of Danta's guests, her father - an education professor at the University of Costa Rica, who retired about 10 years ago - stayed here rather than with her, though as I recall they ate together in her house several times.

Daniela is working on a project (which seems not to have funding yet) investigating the habits of the local squirrel monkeys. She has told me that she also does work for Alejandra of the Corcovado Foundation, but she complains that they don't pay much. (Her husband Roberto, as best I can tell, is something of a computer expert, doing accounting and planning - it seems mostly on a hit-and-miss contract basis.) And she has shown up - and been outspoken at - every save-the-environment group meeting that I have attended since settling in to retire here at Danta

But what Daniela is best known for is as Osa's most outspoken gadfly with respect to environmental issues. She seems to be
the prime mover in the Coalicion Sur (Southern coalition - but meaning mainly Osa and the ACOSA conservation district). She is also a regular on Facebook, making caustic comments not only about but to governmental figures who earn her wrath by stupid pronouncements they make, or worse, policies they promote or defend that are harmful to the environment.

Recently she has established (and asked me to help her with) a local environmental group for Guadalupe teenagers, calling
it the Saimirii. (The *Mono titi* is officially *Saimiri oerstedii.*) Like the Fundacion Neotropica center's (largely failed) effort with youngsters reported on earlier here, the idea is to get to them young and instill in them a love for and appreciation of the environment.

I profile her here at the end of my Danta people list as just one example of Danta's contacts with other activists on Osa (in addition to the Aseder group - including Merlyn - profiled at the end of section 7).

Without saying more in detail, I'll just end this by noting that Merlyn frequently offers Danta as a meeting site for a wide variety of local groups.

## 9. LESSONS FOR THE WORLD?

When I ended the first version of "Small Steps" with this section, it might have seemed to the reader to be the wildest - and most unlikely - kind of boast. But now it follows on the more optimistic ending of section 6, on my work with the people on Osa; and even more so on the story of the battle with Ston Forestal (I have used this case study elsewhere, but it fits in well here), with its optimistic "Tico way" ending.

Some would say the recent history of Danta Lodge - as detailed in the preceding section - also offers reasons for optimism.

In any case, the idea here is really to test the claim - often heard in Costa Rica but elsewhere as well - that Costa Rica's conservation efforts, and in particular its efforts to preserve its amazing biodiversity - is an example for the world.

I will be concluding that, if so, it's a symbolic example rather than actual leadership - which naturally falls to much bigger countries such as the USA, Germany or the Scandinavian countries, Russia or Brazil, or even China and India. "Some leadership!" Many will say. But in my mind there is no doubt that if there is to be genuine political leadership in the international conservation effort, it is much more likely to come from some yet-to-be-enlightened bigger countries than it is from tiny Costa Rica.

That said at the outset of this section, Costa Rica does have something to offer, and the story might best be told in terms of the record of the second Oscar Arias presidency of Costa Rica, 2006-2010.

Arias's attempt, in his second term, to integrate Costa Rica into the First World global economy in my view sets up a nice contrast. The Little Guys find success with the Big Guys on their own terms, versus the Little Guys join the Big Guys. Still the highest ranking among countries in the developing world, versus the one now ranking lowest among the countries of the so-called developed world.

Any lessons to be learned from the Costa Rican experience - I said in the original "Small Steps" - are likely to be mediated by international environmental NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Danesa, the Danish government's environmental ministry, for example, had a huge impact on the area of the Osa Peninsula where I have worked. At the Tropical (Youth) Center of the Fundacion Neotropica, the mark of Danesa's work is everywhere. When Danesa broke off with the Fundacion, its agents continued to work on many of the same projects throughout Costa Rica as before. To extend this example, Cesar Cuello, whose efforts were chronicled earlier here, continued after his own break with the Fundacion to oversee these projects. But this tenuous connection did not last long, as the Danes moved on to work in other parts of the world.

The scope of Danesa's work today - under the heading of environmental consulting - can be seen on their website (www.mst.dk). Did the Danes learn any lessons in Costa Rica that they might be carrying with them to these far-flung enterprises? That is the sort of question I deal with here.

Another NGO that was active with the Fundacion Neotropica is the Nature Conservancy. I noted earlier that they published *Parks in Peril*, which includes a chapter on Corcovado National Park (much of it based on work of Cuello). TNC (their usual acronym) is still active in Costa Rica [later, 2010, noted: they may be leaving], especially in work on biodiversity corridors. But Costa Rica is now only a very small part of their worldwide effort; see their website: nature.org. Under the heading, "Where We Work," they list Asia Pacific (e.g., Indonesia); the Caribbean; Central America (they mention the Maya Forest in Belize where it borders Guatemala, not Costa Rica); North America (chapters in all 50 states); and South America (including the Galapagos Islands).

Again, what might they have learned from their Costa Rica efforts?

When it comes to Conservation International (see www.conservation.org) - also active in Costa Rica with the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor - the story is different. They have always worked in many parts of the world. Current locales listed under the heading, "Conservation Regions," include South America (Brazil, the Guianas, the Andes); Asia-Pacific (where they start their list with Melanesia); and Africa (West, Central, and Southern Africa, as well as Madagascar) - in addition to Central America.

Hotspots (see section 3, above) gives several nods to Costa Rican initiatives in its chapter on the Mesoamerican hotspot, so presumably the authors think Costa Rica has something to teach other countries.

Presumably these and other environmental NGOs are following in the wake of tropical deforestation worldwide (among other threats to biodiversity). Data on timber production can be seen online at www.itto.org. However, according to the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), their offshoot cuts timber "sustainably": they say that, "The ITTA that eventually came into operation [involved] no conventional commodity agreement. It was, in reality, as much an agreement for forest conservation and development as for trade. In effect, it preceded the concerns which featured in the 1987 Brundtland Report and at the Earth Summit in 1992 and its trade components were as much instruments for tropical forest conservation as ends in themselves."

However, I have to agree that it is not only NGOs that have learned from Costa Rica. In my introduction, I mentioned another philosopher interested in Costa Rica, David Crocker, and how he makes a case for "insider-outsider cross-cultural communicators" - and provides one example with strong Costa Rican links, sociologist Paula Palmer of the University of Colorado, who now runs Global Response (www.globalresponse.org) but who earlier spent well over a decade working in Costa Rica - among others, working with indigenous peoples. Presumably she thinks she learned much in Costa Rica that helps her now with the Global Response network.

Earlier I referred to the book by Helena van den Hombergh, *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce* (1999). Talking about warriors might suggest that there must have been winners and losers in the campaign to stop Stone Container/Ston Forestal from building a chip mill on the northwestern corner of the Golfo Dulce, directly in the path of the proposed corridor linking Corcovado National Park with Piedras Blancas National Park. At least you might have thought that at least the parties fought to a draw. But that's not what Van den Hombergh reports (as we saw in section 7). After a campaign lasting several years; after the intervention of Greenpeace and other international NGOs along with some internationally-recognized scientists; after Costa Rica's national ombudsman had decided in favor of the environmentalists (including local activists); and after a law guaranteeing a healthy environment for all Costa Ricans - after all of this (and more) you might assume that Ston would simply be declared the loser (whether its managers agreed or not). But that's not what happened. The process continued for a couple of years, and during that time Ston was provided with another plot of land across the Golfo Dulce in a less environmentally sensitive area. The company had to meet new environmental restrictions, but doing so allowed them to boast about how environment-friendly the company had become.

Many people concluded - as I reported in section 7 - that "This is the Costa Rican way. No one should be declared a loser."

And under the heading, "The Conflict as a School for All," Van den Hombergh details at length how all the many parties involved in the campaign against Ston - from international to local activists, from women's groups to local farmers, from international to national NGOs, from scientists to government officials in Costa Rica - all these groups had learned how to deal with a campaign against a powerful multinational corporation. The effort was ongoing, but government functionaries had to learn how to implement the new legal requirements, including better environmental assessments. Even Ston learned, including how to deal with conflict within Costa Rican culture; and (as I said) the company could actually now parade itself before the world as a "green" company. (See *Guerreros*, pp. 320-325.)

Of course not everyone was satisfied; indeed, it could be said that no party to the conflict was completely satisfied. But it was "the Tico way."

So what lesson for the world do I personally draw from this? Clearly Costa Rican culture cannot be exported to other parts of the world. (See, as one example, Christopher Baker's Moon handbook, 4th ed., pp. 88-89, on the uniqueness of Costa Rican culture.) But there is much to be said for a democratic process that attempts to be fair to all parties, even those otherwise considered the "heavies" in a conflict.

But, in the end, is this more than a symbolic lesson, a twentieth-century version of the Battle of Thermopylae, a small army defeats a much larger one because of its bravery?

In his second administration, Arias clearly wanted more. He wanted Costa Rica not only to join the global economy, but to lead in areas such as carbon emissions trading, reforestation, and so on.

But can the country actually do so? The carbon fixation by new tree plantations here would barely make a dent in the fight against global warming.

Symbolically, however, as a leader among less-developed countries, it might even shame some larger countries into action.
(Vain hope, I admit, but still a hope.)

And reforestation? Slowing the rate of deforestation by, say ten percent a year, in Brazil would make a bigger impact than any reforestation envisioned for Costa Rica by the Arias administration.

Symbolically, again, as a small country offering itself as an example to larger countries (like Russia, for example), Costa Rican reforestation might have an impact. (Choosing Russia might have been a bad choice on my part.)

And so it goes.

It is not necessary to make things either-or: either a small less-developed country with many exemplary projects or a new arrival among the so-called developed world displaying the same set of successes. Arias might say that even as a new entrant into the global economy (or a small country now playing a bigger role than before), Costa Rica could be just as exemplary if its people still thought of themselves as "one with the little guys."

But what I would conclude is that, either way, or in both ways, the lessons are likely to be more symbolic than anything else.

And that's no small contribution.