



Peggy & Bob Townsend in San Gerardo de Dota visiting Donico Gallery

The first time our feet touched Costa Rican turf was January 2011 when we deplaned our flight from Michigan. There, we met up with fellow vacationers Don and Patsy Shaw from Colorado and set off for San Isidro de El General.

We commenced our drive to San Isidro in the late afternoon hours of January 1, 2011, on the ,À Mountain of Death,À heading to our rental vacation home. Yes, we drove over the ,À Mountain of Death! ,À That was an ,À exciting,À introduction to Costa Rican landscape, not to mention driving habits. We suspect it was lucky for us it was a holiday. Subsequently, we've decided the better route for the Americano driving the rental car, is along the coast. It does take longer, but from our perspective a bit less harrowing.

At that times in 2011 when asked why go to Costa Rica, the answer was obvious.→† My husband Bob and I reside in Michigan, and January & February in Michigan are typically gray, cold, and quite snowy months. In previous years, we made attempts to escape Michigan winters by venturing to the US Alabama Gulf Coast. However, we were somewhat disappointed as southern Alabama did not prove as sunny and warm as we hoped. Bob's internet research efforts and a bit of serendipity brought us to Costa Rica and a vacation rental home south of San Isidro in a barrio of San Pedro.

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I should interject with a sidebar for you readers that a lengthy trip to another country took real courage on my part. I love Michigan and am basically a very rooted person. When Bob and I married 42 years ago, we began our life together in Missouri after honeymooning in Mexico.



The Townsend's home in Rockford, Michigan, winter

(That, in itself, is quite a story!) At that time, Bob was employed by Wolverine World Wide (think Hush Puppy Shoes) and his territory included Missouri. We lived in Missouri for 8 years, had our first child Carissa Anne, and made great friends, but I never overcame my homesickness for Michigan. When Carissa turned four, my dear husband decided our life might be better spent in Michigan. When he announced we would return to Michigan to make our home, I cried so hard I got a nosebleed. I was on my knees thanking God. In August 1978, we returned to Michigan, and a year later our second child Ann-Marie entered the family picture.

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We lived, worked, and raised our daughters in Ada, Michigan, just outside of Grand Rapids in lower Western Michigan (about an hour's drive from Lake Michigan). Upon our retirement from the Amway Corporation World Headquarters, where we were both employed, we built a home in Rockford, Michigan, my husband's hometown. That is where and when we met Don Shaw, who later moved to Colorado and married the lovely Coloradoan Patsy Shaw. Obviously, we are very

good friends.

In Rockford, we have several acres of expansive gardens, ornamental and edible, and spend much of our spring, summer, and fall tending to the property.† Our girls, their spouses, and our six grandchildren are all close by and it is wonderful, blessed life.



Peg trout fishing at Truchas las Lago's

We are very well-traveled within the United States, including several visits to Alaska, but the idea of two months residence involving the use of a passport was a daunting undertaking for me. However, my consent and subsequent trip to Costa Rica has blessed us immeasurably. I

thank the good Lord for bolstering me to step out of my comfort zone.

Ahh, but I digress. Let's return to Costa Rica.

January and February 2011 were wonderful, exciting months for us in Costa Rica. In the company of t he Shaws, along with another couple from the states who joined us, we became enchanted with the country and, particularly, the Valle de El General. Here, at last, we encountered consistently very sunny and warm days. More importantly, we acquainted ourselves with a culture and a people who have won our hearts. It was so much more than we anticipated and the two months flew by at a dizzy pace.

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It is now January 2012 and we find ourselves once again in the Valle de El General, specifically, Santiago Springs. Ask us now why we travel to Costa Rica and the answer is because of the people. The people of Costa Rica swept us off our feet in 2011. The outstanding weather and scenery are added bonuses.



Bob, Peg, & Don hiking in Costa Rica

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Don Shaw in Santiago



Patsy & Don Shaw, Bob Townsend, Isaias Belcides & wife Xinia with nephew Justin visiting Monte Verde

