



As one of the main writers for this newsletter different folks have suggested that I include my story in this first edition. So how in the world do you tell about yourself without seeming to blow your own horn? For me, blowing your own horn has the same sound as running your nails down the chalkboard. Yet on the other hand shouldn't we be able to humbly share our life, our story in an uplifting way? Being able to share our testimony of God's goodness in our life and the mercy He has bestowed as we journey here?

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Don't people only read Biography's of famous personalities? First of all let me say that I, I ain't no Donald Trump or Jim Clayton, and I'm wondering who could be interested in reading the story of a kid from the jungles of southern Costa Rica. But here goes,

Pulaski, Tennessee was where I was born, but in 1980 when I was 5 my parents moved to Costa Rica as self supported missionaries. We moved to an area called San Vito and it was there that I learned how to swim, get into trouble at school and fall off of runaway horses. My dad (Donald Yoder) got into the dairy business there and was one of the pioneers of the homemade cheese and sour cream ,Äö√Ñ√∫natilla,Äö√Ñ√∏ that Mennonites in Costa Rica are still famous for today. I still remember having to milk a dozen or so cows by myself before heading off to my first day at school.



The house Nat's father built in 1980 for \$800

Life was tough back then for a growing family starting a new life in a different country and establishing a livelihood, and there were some very lean times. The memory of my twin sisters and I eating yucca patties for breakfast, yucca sticks for lunch and yucca soup for supper stays with me. Also strong is the memory of the time my sisters and I had to stay at my great uncle Gerald,Äö√Ñ√∫s place for three months before my last sister Gloria was born, as dad and mom had to stay close to a larger hospital in San Jose in case of an emergency (thankfully times have changed and San Isidro now has a first-rate hospital).

Even though it was tough, some of my best childhood memories are from that time. Probably because of all the fun I had with my cousin Roger who was about my age. Many times we rode with Uncle Gerald as he took his John Deere tractor to pull out buses that were stuck in the mud on the main road to San Vito. Roger and I were young and full of shenanigans, doing things like catching an old rooster and throwing him in a mud hole so we could give him swimming lessons. Since we couldn,Äö√Ñ√∫t afford spurs we would drive nails in the back heels of our rubber boots, and that just drove our horses,Äö√Ñ√∫ bananas! We loved to get our dogs to fight to see who the champion was. We weren,Äö√Ñ√∫t mean at heart, just full of farm boy fun. Then every year from September to November we were the same age and we would wrestle and race until we were blue in the face.

In order to save pennies for a trip to the U.S. to see my grandpa,Äö√Ñ√∫s, my mom and sisters

baked banana cupcakes and I would go into town and walk up and down the streets until I sold out! For two years we did this and sometimes I even had to wear a pair of my mom's shoes as all I had to wear were rubber boots. I was pretty proud of my selling capabilities, but looking back I'm pretty sure that people bought the cupcakes so I would get out of the way. (I believe I need to figure out how to get in the way again!)



In 1986 the family moved back Lynchburg, Tennessee and I ended up finishing school there. During the summers I worked for my uncle on a carpentry crew, contributing to our family's meager income from a small dairy farm. My dad couldn't wait until we could again return to Costa Rica, so in 1989 we sold the little dairy farm in Tn. and packed everything we could in suitcases and moved back to San Vito. Soon after we moved back, dad was ordained to the ministry and was asked to move the church to the town of Santiago, Perez Zeledon. I was sick of all the moving and especially now as I was eighteen and just falling in love with a girl in San Vito. I didn't have much (any) say in the matter back then and we moved to the San Isidro area.

We continued the livelihood of milking cows, baking and going to the feria (farmer's market) in San Isidro to sell our products. I did this for a couple of years and when I turned 21 I started taking our 1974 Nissan pickup to San Vito every couple of weeks to see the girl I had fallen in love with! Meanwhile I had borrowed \$13K to buy a farm of 17.5 acres right beside my dad's farm in Santiago. The farm had belonged to my girlfriends family several years before and it had a small house on it, I had decided I had had enough of milking cows, so I planted four acres in coffee.

In December of 1996, at 22 years of age, I married Carmen and we had lots of fun making our own furniture and fixing up our little house that her dad had originally built in 1980. In 1998, two years after we were married, our financial situation looked pretty bleak so we got on a plane with Paula, our three month old daughter and moved to Sparta, Tennessee. There I worked for my Uncle Kevin for several months before we started our own construction company called Deck Masters. God blessed us abundantly and it wasn't long until we were paying off our farm in Costa Rica. The construction business in Tennessee was growing fast and developing into larger construction until finally in 2003 we purchased 37 acres in middle Tennessee and developed it into a 42 home residential community called Fawn Forest.

God blessed us with two more children while in Tennessee, Laura and Josh. So if you ever happen to drive through the Fawn Forest development you'll find that the internal roads are named after Paula, Laura, and Joshua.

Although we were very happy in Tennessee we just couldn't shake the unexplainable feeling that God was calling us back to San Isidro, Costa Rica. For some time I struggled with the decision but in the end I realized that above anything else in life I want to do God's will. So in 2006 we sold the construction business and our home and loaded our belongings and

the family in to a 24 foot box truck and head for Costa Rica!

We are blessed to be back in Costa Rica, but there were some serious adjustments we had to make upon returning. During the eight years that we were gone, San Isidro had transformed from a small town in a bustling city. The once sleepy coffee town way up in the mountains had been discovered by Costa Ricans and North Americans alike and we found new shopping plazas, restaurants, college campuses and of course, more homes being built.

Today if you ask me what I do I wouldn't know how to answer. I feel like a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none. I am part of a non-profit group that distributes Bible-based literature in Costa Rica and Panama and we are active members of a Christian church in southern Costa Rica. My coffee farm is in full production, growing for the CoopeAgri grower's cooperative. But what I love doing most is helping folks who are interested in or are contemplating a move to Costa Rica. A move within the U.S. can be a life changing and daunting task, and it can be even more so moving to a different country. While there are a lot of honest people around here that are willing and ready to help newcomers, there will always be a few that might try to take advantage of a foreigners' limited knowledge. I suppose the same thing could be said about any major city in any country but I'll keep doing my part to make sure that people in this neck of the woods are treated in an honest manner.

### **A few more words about Nathanael Yoder (From a friend)**

Nat Yoder is a friendly and unassuming man who does NOT like to blow his own horn. Nevertheless we think it is important to recognize what he has accomplished: After his return to Costa Rica in 2006, Nat was able to draw upon his knowledge of construction and land development when he began working with a friend who had opened a mortgage brokerage business. It was here that he learned the ropes of dealing in real estate in Costa Rica, gaining a valuable working knowledge of the legal requirements for buying and selling property and the things people should be aware of when purchasing.

Being industrious by nature, Nat also saw other business opportunities in the area:

In 2002 Nat and Leland Ulrich started Javataza LLC as a way to expand the family Costa Rican coffee operation into the U.S. market. Today Javataza exports gourmet quality coffee to the U.S. and has its roasting plant and offices in Grandview, Texas. [www.javataza.com](http://www.javataza.com)

In 2007 he joined Leland Ulrich and Cornelius Yoder in the formation of Hacienda Lecona, a land holding company and Lecona Real Estate Company. (Lecona being an acronym for Leland, Cornelius and Nathanael) [www.leconarealestate.com](http://www.leconarealestate.com)

In 2008 Nat purchased a small hardware store in the nearby town of Buenos Aires. It was also in 2008 that he found several other large tracts of land that he thought would be suitable for development. Through the partnership with Leland and Cornelius the land was purchased and developed into a planned community offering affordable home sites with grand views of green valleys and the surrounding mountains. Santiago Springs is the name they chose for the development and you will find it to be an attractive community in a cool mountain climate that has a tranquil park-like setting with easy access over good roads. [www.santiagosprings.com](http://www.santiagosprings.com)

As Nat puts it, "Land development is what makes me tick, and now I am back in the heart of development and real estate. Back where I belong in Costa Rica!" Judging from the twinkle in his eye we don't doubt him a bit.



*Nathan*