

Mike Cobb's Gringo Life – Nov 2005

Dear Family and Friends,

Well it's hard to believe but another year has passed by. Our third in Nicaragua and the longer we are here, the more we are enjoying it. This continues to be amazing, because one hears about the honeymoon effect wearing off, but for us, the reality just keeps getting better and better. I guess the biggest reason is the people that we've met, the deepening of those relationships, and the new friendships that we continue to discover here. Nicaragua and its people have captured our hearts and we are at home here.

There is a downside to living in Nicaragua however. My oldest daughter, Amanda, has been captivated by the local customs and has progressed beyond what Dad thought prudent for a 5 year old. Last week she got her ears pierced.

Now in Nicaragua that's nothing. In fact, waiting until you are 5 is late in life to have this fashion statement made permanent with a hole in the flesh. Most girls have their ears pierced 2 weeks after birth, so Amanda was one of the few without. Considering that the general value system here is far more conservative than the US, this seems a fair trade off to me. Not that I was consulted, mind you. I know my place in the home. Fourth.

Lots of good things going on with the project. Our cobblestone streets are under construction and our first home is now under way. Sales are progressing way beyond my expectations considering the state of visual progress on infrastructure. Due to exceptionally heavy rains this rainy season, we are 105 days behind schedule. Oh well. The farmers are having a good year, and they need one. For an update specifically on the project, [click here](#) and you'll see all the latest photos and a brief write up.

Below you'll find the familiar sections and also a short piece describing my visit to a local tile and ceramic "factory" owned by my office neighbor, Jacobo Arguello. He and his wife, Maria, are excellent examples of entrepreneurs who are driving the success of the Nicaraguan economy by satisfying clients as demanding as Donald Trump. Enjoy the newsletter and let me once again encourage you to get on a plane sometime and come visit if you have not already done so. Nicaragua is a truly wonderful place and you have to see it to believe it.

Family Update

Other news from the family is that Emily is a real pistol. How 2 kids from the same parents, eating the same foods, and living in the same environment can be so different is a testament to all that is great and wonderful. Emily is in the stage where she loves to climb and has an incredible abundance of energy as most 16 month-old children do. The other day she climbed up the jungle gym in the back yard and got stuck on the top in the middle. Mom was scared. Dad was proud.

Emily also loves shoes, anyone's shoes, and is growing up faster than her sister, largely because of her sister. We know we are living in Nicaragua because her first word other than Mama, Dada, and her version of Amanda was "agua," Spanish for water. Her older sister is totally bi-lingual and bi-cultural. Dad is in big trouble.

Carol and the girls accompanied me to Mexico for a conference in October. I was tied up in meetings most of the time, but the place was phenomenal with 2 adult pools, a kid's pool with great water slides, 2 activity rooms for kids, pottery painting, and a theatre with a different dance theme every night. It was great.

Because of connections missed in Mexico City, we spent an extra night and thought we had missed trick or treating. Amanda was bummed, but understood the situation. However, because of weather, trick or treating was canceled and postponed a week and Amanda and Emily got to

go after all. Both wore their Sound of Music dresses and braided pig tails.

Amanda officially finished pre-school on Thanksgiving day. She now will enjoy a 2 month "summer" vacation and will enter in the German School in February. We decided on the German School because they actually teach in Spanish for the first 4 years and then in 5th grade switch over to teaching in German only. The American School is an excellent institution with over 1200 kids, many of whom are off to Ivy League schools each year. The reason we selected the German School was that we want Amanda to master Spanish and she will at the German School. She'll get an hour of German each day too. That's a bonus.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, we enjoyed a traditional meal of turkey, Mashed potatoes, green beans, and cranberries with the Longs. They invited their landlady and several of their neighbors to join us. One of the Nicaraguans, made the following comment and it deserves repeating. "You all are unique by having a holiday dedicated to giving thanks." She is right. We have so much to be thankful for and taking a day to reflect on it is wonderful.

Here's a quote I like:

"We are not judged by the number of times we fail, but by the number of times we succeed, and the number of times we succeed is in direct proportion to the number of times we can fail and keep trying."

-Tom Hopkins

That said, I will now tell a stuck in the mud story on myself. Carol and I continue to enjoy visits from property owners, shareholders and future clients. Occasionally we treat our guests to some off-road adventures and the Kelly visit was no exception. Glenn, Ruth and their 3 kids came to visit Gran Pacifica and because of the number of people, we broke up into two cars, in this case a boys car and a girls car.

Our contractors built a nice road to our swimming beach, but for some reason, I decided to follow an old farm road instead of using the new road recently built. We got stuck. Really stuck. Both cars, and both with 4-wheel drive.

While the men stepped out into the muddy road to do some pushing, the women stayed clean, cool and dry. We were hung up beyond what human strength could resolve. Glenn and his boys were great sports as we walked back to the construction site in the pouring rain to ask the backhoe driver to come rescue us. He did, but not before we were covered from head to toe with mud. The ladies car however had 5 clean ladies. Who said chivalry is dead?

New Gringos in Nicaragua: The insights of Kurt and Peggy Long

Nicaragua – the place where you can purchase premixed rum and coke in a can

A cold shower in Nicaragua is different than in the States, here it is @75 degrees versus 50-55 in the States

You can't write a check for cash here. If your name is not on the check, you are not getting any money

Nicaragua – the place where a new Toyota can be passing a 60's era bus that may be passing a donkey pulling a cart.

When you listen to some of the music on the radio in Nicaragua, you realize that there is no FCC enforcing rules

Nicaragua – the place where everyone has a friend who does exactly what you need

Finding a good map in Nicaragua is a bit of a challenge. Following some of the directions can be a bigger challenge – turn left by where the big mango tree used to be, then go to the old government building (which by the way has been gone for 30 years) then goAnd you wonder why drivers are so popular here