

Honduras

Sent: Sunday, January 27, 2002 11:55 AM

Subject: ronin in Honduras

thought I'd send a missive before going incognito on the island of roatan. rumors are that email there is dodgy. even this one is hit and miss--welcome to the third world. seems that scuba is the thing to do there: "when in roatan, do what the roatans do." will try to explore the moskito coast of nicaragua, if there's a boat available. if not, will have to pass through the capital. if you're like me you have no idea what the capital of Honduras is. I had to look at a map and I'm still not sure how to pronounce it: "tegucigalpa." so much for geography. how about history? I think we should just leave these people alone. first it was the conquistadors, then such business enterprises as the standard fruit company (now chiquita bananas), and just when the people are getting it together, there's an onslaught of Pentecostals and evangelicals from the U.S. I heard one today saying "we got three more." she was referring to three recent baptisms. enough history. how about scenery? now that's worth mentioning. from the Mayan ruins at Copan took a bus that pulled through some stunning sights: rolling green mountains with a mixture of palms, pine and bamboo. now on the Caribbean coast, I'm in Tela, a town that gives poverty a new dimension: a stark contrast between the squalor of the town and the simple beauty of the ocean and the jungle.

there is still much humor to be had here, but I'll put that in the next edition. here's something I wrote while waiting for a bus in Bethel Guatemala: the school is empty the children walk there's talk of learning but it's only talk. the sky is empty it's sometimes full those people worship they always will. I dream of sunshine see only rain and watch the people and see their pain. but it's not so bad it never is the poor get poorer with wealth within. but that's my hope if it's just me then there is no hope from simplicity. the children walk their parents talk caged parrots squawk I walk my walk.

Sent: Friday, February 08, 2002

Subject: life as a fish

breathing underwater is both good and bad. it's good because it means you're in a world that belongs to beasts that defy imagination: a moray eel, for example, has a big green face, sizable teeth and attitude. however, on earth we are at the top of the food chain, but when we enter the world down under we become part of another food chain where we are not necessarily on top. scuba tip: don't wear flashy jewelry or eau de sardine cologne, in spite of the great beauty of this place, a reality check is in order constantly, after all, this is Honduras. where shootings do occur, but they're usually just local dudes duking it out. you may have noticed that I've switched to being a yahoo. the technology_ of hotmail_ doesn't make it to the island of roatan. by the way, this is where Captain Henry Morgan and numerous other bucaniers hung out, the spirit of piracy continues.

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Since I can't say when this email will "conch" out little reef humor) I'll end now with a short ditty seems It was the most popular part of the last mail): the poor little puppy just wants to play and he wants to play the same game as yesterday, he cares not a bit about this or that--but he is a tad pissed about the cat. you see the cat's a touch older and about twice as fast, so the little pups moves are always outclassed. but he cares not a bit--he's right into it. and the cat? well she just likes it alot because any old time that pup's a free shot. so he takes his hits and is just into it. the spirit of youth is what its about the cat and the dog are just playing along... to a rhythm that's as short as it is long.

so with that I'll sign off for now; "keep and letters coming in." catfishdownish



Sent: Saturday, February 16, 2002 12:44 PM

Subject: in search of mosquitos

Thought I'd send a line before heading down the moskito coast. Us time to get off the gringo trail to see what can be seen. notably, the spanish didn't even bother conquering that area. the guidebooks are sparse on advice, but I'd like to share a couple of quotes. the lonely planet says "mosquitoes and sandflies are a major irritation; bring insect repellent..." not very helpful advice.

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"as the place is so remote, and accommodations and transport are relatively unstructured, a working knowledge of spanish is important here." more helpful, but common sense. I found a more dated entry from "sea routes to the goldfields" written to assist those going to thecaliforniagold rush in 1849: "chagras (panama) is a village of huts in the midst of a swamp. the climate is very unhealthy, producing bilious, remittent and congestive fevers... the swamps, stagnant waters, reptiles etc. render walking across next to Impossible. it is dangerous to camp out, as it will soon prove fatal. avoid sun, keep within doors during the day, do not touch oysters, wear flannel next to the skin day and night, avoid spirituous liquors and be off at the first opportunity." now that guide book gets to the point, but flannel sounds like a bogus option.

As always, I found the most helpful advice In "the hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy," which, by the way, summarizes planet earth as "mostly harmless." after reading the following, I've only packed a towel: "a towel is the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker can have, partly it has great practical value--you can wrap it around you for warmth as you bound across the cold moons of jagan beta; you can lie on it on the brilliant beaches of santraginus v, inhaling the heady sea vapours; use it to sail a mini raft down the slow heavy river moth; wet it for use In hand-to-hand combat; wrap it around your head to ward off noxious fumes or avoid the gaze of the ravenous bugblatter beast of traal (a stupid animal, it assumes that if you can't see it, It can't see you); and of course dry yourself off with it If it still seems to be clean enough. "more importantly, a towel has immense psychological value. for some reason, if a strag (strag:non-hitchhiker) discovers that a hitchhiker has his towel with him, he will automatically assume that he is also in possession of a toothbrush, soap, tin of biscuits, flask, compass, ball of string, gnat spray, space suit, etc. the strag will then happily lend the hitchhiker any of these or a dozen other Items that the hitchhiker might accidentally have 'lost', what the strag will think is that any man who can hitchhike the length and breadth of the galaxy, rough it, slum It, struggle against terrible odds, win through, and still know where his towel is clearly a man to be reckoned with." and so finally I got some good advice. towel and all, I'll head down through la mosquitia, with none other than shakespeare's "all's well that ends well" in hand, with that in mind, what could possibly go wrong? until the next, catfishaway

DESIDER. #DA

/something desired as essential/

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste and remember what peace there may be in silence, As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons Speak your truth quietly and clearly,• and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant- they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit If you compare yourself with others you may become vain and bitter- for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time Exercise caution in your business affairs for the world is full of trickery But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love,' for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is perennial as the grass Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield yourself in sudden

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misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars,, you have a right to be here And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should Therefore be at peace with god, whatever you conceive him to be, and whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it Is still a beautiful world Be careful Strive to be happy

Max Ehrmann 1927 11872-1945)



Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2002 6:34

Subject: Desiderada: Centra Version

Greetings from the moskito coast, can't talk long because email is difficult at best. more details, perhaps, later, but landscape is outstanding (pine forests--where I had expected jungles) and very hard travel. travel legs are intact, but pedalling legs slow--must pedal an exercise bike to power this, even worse, it has a hill program. just want to share the following, while travelling I pull out desiderata from time to time and learn something new about what I should be focussing on. for example, "go placidly amidst the noise and haste and remember what peace there may

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be in silence." or "avoid loud and aggressive persons, for they are vexations to the spirit." so while having some idle time in Puerto lempira, I thought of a few more inspired by recent experiences: let's call it the central american version of desiderata: if you have a chance to swim with dolphins, do so; they will teach you more than these words.

show kindness to those who are hungry, as they--animal or human--need your help, when it snows, make snowmen, or if the snow isn't sticky, make snow angels. if you have time, make both. go to places you think you should avoid, and eat food you think you might not like. do not be afraid of technology, but use it only for what it is--neither animal, vegetable, or mineral. expect the unexpected. but if you don't, befriend it. strange things always happen--this is the way nature unfolds. when you can make this part of your life. plant a tree. and pat a dog on the head--you'll both be better for it.

when you feel like crying, do so; as it is what separates us from and connects us to all living things. laugh at all opportunities, because it is contagious. look to the stars, as the great mysteries of life are spelled out, somehow, there. and get to know some constellations; in times of trouble, they will be your friends. boredom is nature's way of telling you you're not looking into things deeply enough.

nature is a great teacher, so be in it as often as you can. plant another tree and find a cat to feed, when in doubt about what is right or wrong look to the way nature works, for its rules are as old as the hills. many people interpret the world to suit themselves; trust your own judgment. be yourself.

plant another tree. you both have a right to be here, work at being healthy, but allow yourself to be happy, find a friend.

well that wraps it up. the legs are getting tired and I see another hill program on the horizon. off to bluefields friday or Saturday (in Puerto cabezas today), until the next