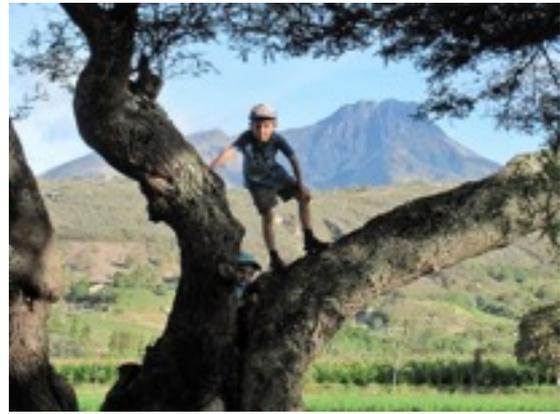


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Finca Consuelo, Santiago del Rey, 18-12-16

A gift late in life.

Thanks to Andreas' fear of being retired in Berlin and his engagement in developing countries we got the chance to participate in the ambitious government-financed public elite-university to be - now in its 5<sup>th</sup> semester.

The campus lies 2.5 km from the village of Urcuquí in the broad valley of the Andes, flanked by Imbabura and Cotacachi. The people work in agriculture, sustaining the family with a couple of cows, chickens and growing vegetables and fruit. Short and brown and industrious. They work hard, the streets are clean and they carry themselves straight and, for the most part, walk a lot in their lives, though the buses are good and, for us, very cheap - \$3 to Quito, and they go day and night along the Panamerican highway from Ibarra south to Quito ( about every 20 minutes) or north to Columbia.

Dear Friends,

The year nears its end and most of my American colleagues are flying home - a good incentive to write some letters.

The university has 3 more days on the student lecture calendar, then it is off to the families and holidays till January 9 when the exam period for this semester starts.

My contract ends on December 31<sup>st</sup> - as I don't hold the right certificates including a Master in English or ESL. On the one hand I feel sad, on the other I rejoice as work was very challenging and little energy left for other things. Also it did not help to improve my Spanish - so my giggling colleagues at the Christmas dinner yesterday I could not understand. I find this maddening and especially with a noisy background I have no chance. This situation occurs whenever I have to go to the bank, pay the utilities... frustration.



I have been lucky to get a late acceptance into a CELTA English course in Montanita on the Pacific coast at International House which I will start on Jan9-Feb10, so if I miss teaching too much I will have a certificate to show as an English teacher, instead of only 23 years of experience! I think I will enjoy meeting with colleagues (some to be), hearing about new teaching trends and being evaluated in class.

I am still holding the return flight to my last European flight, so on March 7 I will fly home for about 3 weeks and hope to celebrate my aunt's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 25, encountering my cousins on my father's side and seeing my grandkids. Klaus lives 40 minutes down the road along the Rhine towards Mainz. After that I will return and see what



the new semester brings. I would like to continue to teach voluntary German to my delightful students.

I'll take my time though before I will take up the offer to work somewhere else in the university - I thought I was quite good at what I did, maybe old-fashioned. A vague idea is to become sort of a welcoming lady, helping newcomers with problems, from schools to housing and some local sightseeing thrown in - maybe together with my friend Lila at the hacienda down the road here.

Another project is to really improve my Spanish - which will now have to wait till mid-February - and to travel in this country, the coast, the Oriente....

Next year will be another challenge. For the university, too, as we just got a new rector - of Mexican origin, but with an American university career who accepted this post to do something for Latin America. He is a prominent bio-mathematician and has done a lot of interdisciplinary work branching into Social Sciences. <http://www.yachaytech.edu.ec/en/connect/news/details/articulo/carlos-castillo-chavez-phd/>

As there are elections in February, it is not clear how the university will go on. We expect it to be an issue in the election campaign which can only start officially 1 month before the election date.

We have lived here for 14 months now, and it is a wonderful place. Do I miss the winters? No, I can live happily with this eternal spring.

We were lucky this year and 3 of our children plus my sister came to us where we had got to. Karl brought the family and stayed for a month.



It is raining more than last year and so the crops are almost growing as you watch them. I love all the fresh food and the friendly people - and I enjoy having help in the house and not cooking much, as it is good and cheap to eat lunch out.

We have few books - that I miss, but - thanks to Spotify - I get good music into the house and as for hiking - endless possibilities... It is a developing country, so things don't quite work as at home and the ants are always looking for leftovers in my house, but all that is minor.

We enjoy good health so far, Andreas still gallivants and life is a challenge that we strive on.

We wish that you are be similarly fortunate and hope you can share this season with friends and family -

I have been baking and crafting happily with some friends and students.

My love to you all, and as always, if you feel like visiting, you are welcome to share our paradise.

May there be less hunger and more peace in the world next year - but let's start with our neighbourhood. Let's follow Steve Jobs words and enjoy every day as if it was our last.

Photos: Robert(7) in our garden with Imbabura (4600m) in background. Karl's family and the two grandmothers in front of Cuicocha Lake at 3000 m altitude. Georg(4) in front of Condor Silhouette in Parque Condor. Philipp and Ceri attending a wedding in Bergen, Norway. Grandfather and Jost (9 months) in the Amazon region.

Karl's family and mother-in-law stayed with us for all of July.



Family reunion with Auntie Sabine, but without Mammi and Ricardo on Burg Ludwigstein, October 9/10, 2016.  
Top-left Mrs Rodriguez Ambrosio, aka Martina  
Top-right, everybody but the photographer Ceri, Philipp's Welsh girlfriend.  
Bottom-left Grandpa with his six grandchildren.  
Bottom right Klaus's family.



**Some words from grandpa.** Thanks to the mild climate I have taken up my old habit of swimming more or less every morning in the olympic pool of Ibarra. So far, after some 25 1000 m swims, the hope to rein into the barriga remains elusive, however the gasping for the thin air has somewhat diminished. It's just a 20 minutes ride between house and pool, which gives me a chance to listen to the radio news in Spanish; at least once the Renault folks have realized their promise to fix up the infotainment/navi system, which is completely broken. That has meant at times very scary drives in Quito, juggling the cellular phone, while dodging the hectic traffic. After just one year of driving the Renault/Dacia Duster, the synchronization of its 6 gear manual transmission is also damaged and the guarantee repair is always scheduled for the following week and now the next year. We are not quite sure whether this is just Ecuadorian "hasta mañana" mentality or whether they really want to dodge the cost. Commerce in general is at a rather low level due to the oil price and the political uncertainties, so the small companies are fighting for scraps.

**Learning Spanish.** As to the Spanish, there is only slow progress indeed. Yesterday I tried to ascertain with a Venezuelan colleague what "truce" was in Spanish. Despite Elisabeth good efforts teaching her as a staff member, her English is still rather limited. So my round about description what truce means and my specific suggestion "truega" did not ring a bell with her. The cellular then said it's "tregua", frustration all around. That example may suggest that I am struggling already on a higher level, but basic mistakes abound as well. I would like to talk Spanish with Elisabeth, but most of the time she pleads exhaustion or time pressure and so we converse in English or German. My administrative assistant Daisy is very patient with me so, if there is a enough time I send messages to the troops in Spanish, after she has done the necessary corrections. Generally, I am a very difficult student for hobby and professional Spanish teachers alike. I might ask "what is the adjective associated with impuesto(tax)" and almost invariable comes back the question "What are you trying to say?". That phrase in my mind always implicitly continues with a condescending "you little dummy!". NOOOHH, I do not want to say anything!, I want to understand and remember the grammatical connections!. So the correct answer to my original question would be "impositivo", which I had read somewhere in a news paper, but could not remember exactly.

**Web presence.** As I was nominated for some professional prize, I decided that I absolutely had to get myself a reasonable web presence to impress the selection committee members, who were sure to sniff around. In my past as German Herr Professor I used to rely on the help of some graduate students, who provided a basic set up, which I was supposed to understand and update regularly but never did. The web site development at Yachay is fraught with all the obstacles that hinder our progress in general. There is an internal department that is responsible for it, they employ some commercial company in Quito, the corresponding expenses have to be approved and processed by other internal departments, and finally, the almighty comisión gestora needs to approve of everything so that some corporate identity is maintained. In short it takes ages before anything appears, with some luck before it becomes a mute point altogether. So I bought a commercial site [www.griewank.wordpress.com](http://www.griewank.wordpress.com) and then migrated it to our old domain [www.griewank.de](http://www.griewank.de). There you can find some professional but also private and political stuff. Please let me know if you have any problem accessing it or if you find "offensive material by our community standards" as the robot assisted moderators state on blogs.

With best wishes for the new year

Elisabeth and Andreas

