

St. Somewhere Times

What is Greg doing this time?

Most of my friends and family are not surprised that I am leaving again. Languages and travel have always played important roles in my life. The next step is to match those roles with my new teaching career.

Why Honduras?

In March of 2001, I attended a recruitment seminar at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). The weekend is set up to match international schools with American teachers that want to teach overseas. UNI has hosted the fair for the last 25 years!

In short, the whole weekend is interviewing and networking. There were about 125 countries represented over 650 teachers, portfolios in hand and dressed to kill!

As of the seminar, I was in my third week of student teaching. UW Oshkosh had us scheduled for "mock interviews" the week after the UNI fair. Interviewing at UNI would be a challenge for me, no doubt!

I am a storyteller but I will spare you the details of the UNI Fair. Suffice it to say, I interviewed with four countries (Sai Pan, Taiwan, Honduras, and Korea) over a two day period. Honduras was the best fit for me.

One of the most important influences on my choice was the Spanish language. The amount of people that speak Spanish in the U.S. is staggering! I have always wanted to speak Spanish, but the only way for me to truly learn a language is by immersion.

The second influence was Brent! Out of 650 people at the seminar, I bumped into a complete stranger that heard me mention Honduras. Brent had already taught in the school I was interested in (now he is going to Ethiopia)! What a small world! Voila! After a barrage of questions and a second interview with the Principal, I signed a contract to teach fifth-grade in **San Pedro Sula, Honduras**.

I didn't even know precisely where Honduras is. What mattered to me was the school. I picked a school that seemed to be the right fit. I am not sure, but I think a lot of the interviewees were really looking at geography. I wasn't. I was more concerned with the school system. I am confident that I can adjust to just about any culture and language if I give it a chance.

After I signed the contract, I looked at the atlas, read through the information given to me at the interview, and had a beer! Did you know, the second largest barrier reef in the world is off the coast of Honduras? Did you know Honduras is home to the Mayan ruins and tropical rainforests? **I didn't! But I do now!**

Aren't You Scared?

No. Most people that find out I am moving to Honduras tell me to pack a machine gun or a knife! If you read the material on the web, most of it can be down right scary! But, most of the fear comes from ignorance. No offense!

If you want to read up on Honduras I would suggest the Moon Handbooks, **Honduras: Including the Bay Islands and Copán** by Chris Humphrey. Remember, I haven't been there yet. I am no expert. However, Humphrey's book is the most informative and easy to read, so far. I will keep you up-to-date on available readings. For now, follow some of the links and read that book.

Addressing some Questions:

When are you leaving? August 7th or 8th

Do you speak Spanish? Uh, NO! Not yet!

How long is the contract? I signed a 10 month contract but I expect to be there anywhere from 2-4 years.

Who and what are you teaching? 5th Grade. My students will be Honduran host nationals. That means they will be upper-class Hondurans that have grown up in bilingual situations and have attended English speaking schools. Therefore, I will be living in Spanish and teaching in Spanish!

Where are you going to live? According to the contract, all of the teachers live in a housing community together. The apartments are fully furnished and the school provides transportation to and from class. If you look on the map, San Pedro Sula is in the North West part of Honduras. It lies about an hour's drive from the Caribbean Coast and two hours from the mountains in the West. I can't wait.

"I think my Church goes on Missions to Honduras every year!" I have heard this line so much. Either that or someone tells me about a local hospital that goes down there to give aid every year. It is no surprise. Honduras is a third-world country. Not only that, but it was devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998!

The good news is Honduras has more of a middle class than the other countries of Central America. According to what I have read, the other six countries have a small upper-class and an overwhelming lower-class. No matter what, it is not as safe as Wisconsin.

How much are you allowed to take with you? Not much. About 200 lbs. and another \$200 of freight. My brothers and friends are taking most of my stuff. Mom and Dad are taking my PEZ collection and my animation art. The rest will be sold or given away. Clothes, a laptop, and school supplies are what I am taking with me on the plane.

What can we expect from this web site? The best part about this site is I can include pictures of life in Honduras. I will try to write another Newsletter every month. Each newsletter will have some pictures, but most of the pictures will be in another section of the site. I plan on including a lot of links for information about the countries I live in, travel to, and people I meet.

I hope all of you keep in touch with me and enjoy this website!

-Greg Le Moine