

St. Somewhere Times

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Damn the NFL! I cannot believe it. This year the NFL decided to cash in on more money in the internet realm. No longer can I log onto the net and listen to the PACK live. I would have to spend about \$70.00 just to listen. Screw them. I am in Honduras and I cannot watch the pack unless they are on Monday Night Football. (Right now the Pack is in the lead against the Eagles.....Go Pack!) The usual feeds are from other states like New York or Tennessee. Who cares about other NFL teams. This is PACKERLAND, Central America



Anyone Can Drive Anything Any Way

I am not joking about this. The streets here are rapt with danger! On an average drive to the mall or supermarket, you will see horse-drawn carts, Lexus SUV's, banana trucks filled beyond safe capacity, cars without any working lights, security trucks dressed up with lights like a police vehicle (emergency lights FULL on), a boy pushing a fruit cart, Mercedes with no-limit tinted windows, and white taxis held together only by tape or rope.

Yes, there are traffic laws. However, none of them are enforced. I rarely wait at a red light unless there is continual traffic bisecting the intersection. If the lights aren't working...even better. No cop or light crew is going to rush to the scene and ensure a safer intersection. (Traffic Rule #1) -The only laws are those of physics. If a big school bus with a picture of Jesus and Christmas lights is coming right at you on a three lane one-way, get out of the way. No one is going to give the driver a ticket. He is trying to cut down on his route time with a shortcut!

I went for a ride from San Pedro Sula to La Ceiba. First of all, you need to know there are only three main highways in and out of this city of 500,000. That makes for some heavy traffic on the outskirts of town. However, once you get into the country side, the dangers transform. Anyway, I was keeping Ron company on the three hour (each way) trip to the coast. We had to pick up some dive equipment that Ron bought from the Bay Islands. The trip there was pretty uneventful. The trip back was a white-knuckler, even though both of us have gotten used to this kind of travel.

It was getting dark as we headed out of La Ceiba in his in-laws' SUV. We turned up the 70's station as we slowly followed two fruit semis on the two lane road. (Talk about pollution. There are obviously no vehicle inspections in this country. If it runs it is legal. These two trucks were spewing out the smoke

equivalent of a plastic factory.) We would try to pass but that is difficult. Anyone behind us would pull out next to us and ignore Ron's blinker. (Traffic rule #2) The only person that matters is the one driving YOUR car. Like anyone, Ron hates not being able to see the road ahead. Ten minutes later we were tooling along at 55 or so.

It is difficult to say what the speed limit is. According to Rule #1 (above), we would speed up and slow down as we came upon obstructions. What obstructions? Many. For no apparent reason, there are teams of people riding bicycles or walking along the two lane highway in the dark. We don't know if they are coming from work, going to church, or simply going for a walk. How strange. However, they pose a real threat when you can barely see the lines on the roads.

Not only are the roads in poor shape, but the lines are rarely painted again. Why do you need to see the lines? Well, since there are no road signs, lines would be the only other way of knowing that the mountainous road is curving sharply ahead! Are you confused yet? If that isn't enough to keep your night attention, think about roaming animals. There are just shy of 8 billion dogs running around (an exact estimate!), horses or cattle grazing in fenceless fields, and any number of pigs, chickens, or iguanas to run over.

The final, and perhaps the most dangerous, of the night dangers is the drivers. Considerable mention needs to go to the school bus (chicken bus) drivers. There are so many buses competing for fares that they risk everything. It was pitch dark and Ron had just passed a truck. Two seconds later, a bus passed us in the oncoming lane! He had NO lights on! (see the bottom for another anecdote about bus rides).

All in all, the trip with Ron reminded me why I always ride the express bus instead of driving myself. If you are riding in a bus you can sleep and let the crazy driver get you there safely. According to Rule #1, the bus is one of the largest vehicles on the road and gets right of way. Sit back, ignore the road, and watch a movie!



Take a look at this guy. It goes to prove you can pee just about anywhere, anytime.

(at least he isn't aiming INSIDE the truck)

The F-word is Universal - I am sitting here at Ruby Tuesdays and I HAD to comment for the record. Some things are too much for me as a teacher. Being a teacher is always

thinking about being a role model and thinking about my students. No kidding. Not an hour passes in the day that some random thought of my classroom goes by. It might be while I am having a beer and wondering how many of my students have already been offered alcohol by a big brother or friend.

Maybe it is like NOW. I am eating and grading here because I wanted to let loose after a busy day, have a different atmosphere, and maybe even run into a babe. Anyway, the thought of my kids did not come from the papers I am grading. Ruby Tuesdays just played a rap song full of F this and F that! In a family restaurant! Now they are playing "Cleaning out my Closet" by Eminem. Holy schneikies! Yes, this is a Spanish speaking country, but the F-word is universal.

The F-word issue, more like the issue of kids and bad language, comes up when I go to the movie theatre. There is little or no regulation of who goes to see a movie. I see half of my students in any given movie. It is just NOT an issue here. No wonder my students have such bad mouths. Last year one of my students regularly told me to F-off. Granted, that kid has a plethora of psychological issues that stem from a bad family environment, but the lax issues of foul English in this country do not help.

All in all, businesses are out for money and there is no intermission from the public. The issues and values I teach in class are challenged every day. I take a stand on issues like this but I am not out to change the world! Nuff shared, nuff said!

Part of the Chicken Bus Experience



I had a friend that was doing field work in the mountain communities of *Yoro*. His trip to San Pedro Sula started with a two hour hike down the mountain to one of the many country roads leading to the highway. He would then hitch a ride on a passing pick-up truck to the highway. Once he got to the highway he would wait with a local crowd of people at one of the chicken bus stops.

Chicken buses stop for any single person that needs a ride into the city. The bus is a modified school bus. Basically, when a bus is bought in the States they take all of the seats out and weld the seats back in closer than they were originally. Each bus can then pack people in three to a seat and standing in the aisles.

The bus was packed when he got on, but that was normal. What he did not expect was on the mountain curve halfway through the 3-hour trip. Another chicken bus had pulled up behind them on the road. This posed a threat to my friend's bus. If the other bus got in front, it would be able to pick up any waiting fares first. That would mean loss of income. Before the curve, the other bus pulled in front of his bus and slowed down for the curve. My friend's driver decided it was time to forget the curve or the possible on-coming traffic. He pulled up alongside the other bus headed towards the curve.