

It's Time for a Fiesta!



Stolen, Stripped, Recovered, Stripped More by Police, Recovered from Police, Rescued from a Swamp, Given to Mechanic, Now She's Back to Me!

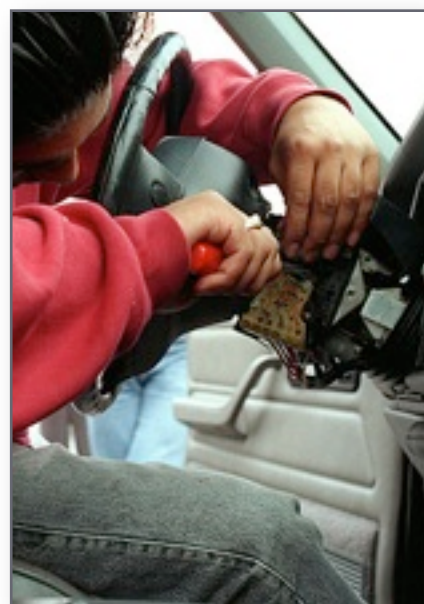
This may not be the final chapter. This is probably just another chapter in the life of my car before I leave Venezuela. And what an episode it is. The car is back.

First the good news. There are four tires, a sweet motor all tuned up and humming, and the air conditioning works. It took one hour, yes one hour, for Joselyn to get me copies of my license plates. (things are different in VZ)

Like I already mentioned, whatever the thieves didn't remove, was removed by the police and the impound lot. The car looks great on the outside. I just purchased a new jack and tire iron. Had it washed and put on new wheel covers. It's the inside that is crazy.

Imagine everything except the seats and windows being removed. Sitting in the car I noticed a lack of: mirrors, electric window controls for the front windows, sun visors(!), the stick shift knob, stick shift apron, the plastic around the emergency brake, the roof light, the knobs for the door mirrors, the plastic side panels running along the front doors to hide wires, speakers, stereo, the two piston brackets that keep the hatchback door up, and the damn horn. I could go on. But I have to start laughing. It is still surprising there are windows, a windshield, tires, and wheels. Finally, I was lucky they didn't remove the computer. I would have called it dead right then and there!

Values of cars, in dollars, hold their value for many years here. The idea of putting humpty back together again was two fold: I can sell it for something instead of just losing \$7,500 and I have to have the freedom of a car in this country. Wish me luck. It is now street safe, according to VZ standards. Did I mention no break lights?



Every little detail item that makes up the inside of a car was stolen either by the thieves, the police, or anyone that paid the impound lot enough to look the other way during the 6-8 weeks between the theft and putting the car on the flat-bed tow. SCHEIÐE!

McGuiver It!

This country is absolutely frustrating and surprising, when it comes to car parts. The heart of it all is government. There are so many restrictions on cars and parts being imported. It's just not easy to get new parts. (unless you steal mine)

Everyone either IS a mechanic or KNOWS a mechanic. There are so many little shops here you get dizzy trying to remember where you went for a specific part or service. Each shop specializes in something.

Most cars are poorly maintained and "McGuiver-ed" (remember that TV show where McGuiver can make a bomb out of a stick of gum and a lady's purse?). Here is an example:

When I first bought this car, I know the oil had never been changed. I was at a little shop having the fluids changed and the filter replaced. The guy went under the car to change the oil. Nope. The oil pan bolt was sawed off. Solution? The oil guy called an old man. Said old man showed up in 10 minutes with a solder hooked up to a car battery on a dolly. Said old man soldered a new bolt head onto the old one. The old one specifically was needed because it was designed for that oil pan and had a unique o-ring. The soldered part allowed the oil guy to unscrew the pan and change the oil.

So, car parts. The good news is Car Part Alley. That's what I call it. Every piece you need is in some little shop along Car Part Alley. Everything. Although, they may not have your specific part or offer a cheap Chinese mockery. It's hard to find USA parts. Remember Raquel? My first VZ car here? When her brakes went out, the mechanic had new ones MADE.

I have a secret weapon for my war on stolen parts. Ruben. He comes through for me. Ruben has found a LOT of stuff. This will be the true test. Can he do it? We'll have to see. As always, if he can't find it, I'll pay some Venezuelan to "McGuiver" it.

The Job Is Out There!

Preparation Starts Early

Actually, I am usually prepared to move on to a new job. My documents are all digitized, the website updated, and my annual fees to recruiters paid up.

Job hunting never really stops in international education. I ritualistically read the *The International Educator* quarterly magazine online and (head bowed down in embarrassment) I still pay annually for the ISR website. ISR - International Schools Review - is sometimes called "GTAF - Get the Admin Fired" or "TNEOT - There's Nothing Else Out There" for learning about International schools. The idea is to be informed and keep a bag packed, just in case something happens (in the country, school admin, or your position).

My preparation started right away. The decision to leave was announced early in September. That same week I began the process of signing up for Job Fairs.

Job Fairs - The Sure Thing

Over the years, I have been to four Job fairs. It makes sense when you understand most contracts are for two years and this is going on my thirteenth year of overseas teaching.

I attended the UNI (University of Northern Iowa) three times and the ISS (International School Services) one time in Bangkok. This year, I have booked for the ISS fair in San Francisco during the first week of February 2013. There is a longish process, which might miff you the first time.

You sign up online with a username and password. The online application is extensive and takes up to 2 hours (if you have all of your documents handy). I suggest having all of your documents in PDF format and reduced down to less than 200kb each. You will need an updated resume, a small picture, your certification, 3 letters of rec - including your current director for sure, and a link to any multimedia. (I always have a current video made and ready to link.)

Before you start the process online, most of the job fairs require/offer a place to paste in text for an introduction letter. Some of them have a template. Others just offer pre-emptive leading questions. Download the template and compose the letter before going back online to start the application process. It is easier if you have all of your information and "artifacts" ready to go. It limits the amount of online time. Don't rush it and compose anything online.

Go through all the online application steps. Double check your information. Triple check the information. Then have a friend look at it and catch any errors. Long applications are draining and present a lot of opportunities to make simple mistakes with dates, for example. I keep all of my information out and ready to access throughout.

Pay to Play

After the online application is done, the job fairs have your information in a format friendly for their database. But they won't add you to the database or let you use the database for research until you pay. So pay right away. Usually, in about 24 hours, your account is good to go.

Access to Schools

Paying for a Job Fair is not just about attending the fair. In fact, the most important aspect is access to the job postings and International School information sheets. This is where you can research and find the contact information for schools and directors.

Some of the job fairs are up front and require you to attend the fair if you are going to be in their database. However, if you are transparent and up front, they can and do allow you to sign up without meaning to attend. I usually sign up for two fairs and attend only one. BUT, I make it very clear within my introduction letter if I will not be at the fair.

Communication is Vital

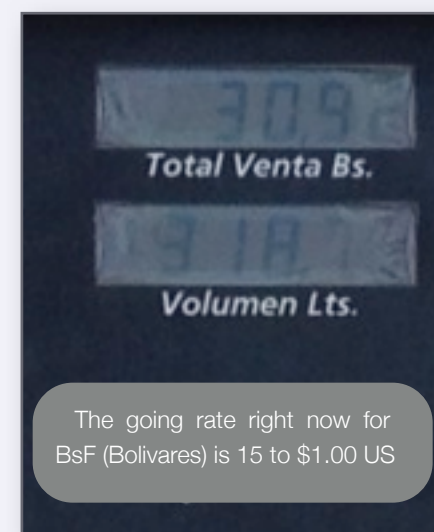
If you are serious about finding a new position, you have to start communications right away. Use the database of the job fair (and TIEonline) to research the positions that are tentative. Find the schools. Learn the names of the Directors. Keep a good record.

Send out letters of intent and introductory letters in emails to the recruiting addresses of the schools you are interested in. Make sure you are clear about your intentions. No matter what, agreements are binding. The International Education field is a rodeo every year. Administrators that are looking for a new position are planning two (2) years ahead. In turn, directors and their recruiting teams are looking to fill next year's positions starting in October.

What's Up with Me?

No leads yet. The AASSA recruiting fair is going on this next weekend in Atlanta. I didn't plan on attending because AASSA is an early annual fair for only the Americas (Mexico, Central & South America, Caribbean). But I did pay for it and get into the database. There are one or two schools I would like to be a part of in South America, but I have already sent out emails. Maybe I'll hear from them, maybe not.

I have been sending out emails (CV, Video, etc. attached) to about three schools a week for several weeks now. First I research then I apply and send. I don't want to "shotgun" a lot of schools. Am I being too picky? Snobby? I'm not sure. Keep your fingers crossed. The Job is Out There...Somewhere.



Do The Math!

This is almost embarrassing to explain, but mind you...the culmination of many other things evens this out.

The picture above was the most recent time I topped off my boat at the marina. According to the math, 319 Liters equals 84.5 US gallons. 31 BsF is roughly equal to \$2.30 at a 13.5 BsF/\$1.00US rate comes out to about \$.02 per gallon.

Do you see now, why I had to buy a boat. It hurts me not to go out in my boat on a weekend! Truly. Unless I move to Saudi or Kuwait again, there is little or no hope to have such gas prices in my lifetime again.

The cost of everything else makes up for the cost of the fuel. I paid \$20,000 US for the boat originally. After defoliant, motor repairs, a boat slip by my apartment, and a new bimini, I will have sunk another \$3,000 into the boat. That means I go out every weekend either once or twice if the motors are working. The motors are 1998 Evinrudes so they take a bit of oil.

The best part of having this boat is inviting people to go out to the islands or do a nighttime sewer-tour (a canal tour to see the million dollar homes and yachts). Some of my Venezuelan friends had never been in a boat out to their own islands before. It is cost prohibitive and they previously didn't know anyone to give them the chance!

St.Sometimes

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATOR

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I'll Miss These Colleagues

This is my fifth international school and the teachers here are fantastic. Some of my colleagues in the past have been outstanding teachers, but this school has the highest quality en masse.

I learn a lot from going into the classrooms and observing. This is a great staff:

Matt Judd- 6th grade teacher formerly in 3rd. His demeanor with his students is always patient and funny. They love him because he is organized, knows each one thoroughly, and he uses a lot of technology.

Scott Munroe- A tough HS teacher that specializes in History, Econ, politics, and teaches 4AP courses. He is an expert in his field and really cares. He pushes the students.

Carlo Matthews - For MS English and Lit, this guy has no equal. He doesn't let a sentence pass. His sarcasm, of all things, earns the respect of his students. He has beat me every year with standing ovations when introduced at the beginning! Carlo is also a talented musician and song writer.

Bonnie McAuley - A 3rd grade teacher at CIPLC for the past two years, she has a real active classroom and well behaved kids. I don't spend enough time with her, but she leads strict meetings as elementary team leader. She doesn't do a lot of tech, but Bonnie has a real grip on language arts. I love watching her class rotate through learning centers. She is highly organized and works with students in an aire of professionalism most teachers don't have until after 15 years of teaching.

Sarah Diaz - Kindergarteners are lucky to have Sarah for a year. She runs a tight ship in her highly organized classroom! Sarah has a quite sense of humor that passes right over some of her cherubs, but she maps out a tight curriculum that pushes them in every class. There is a lot of love and understanding that is obvious as Sarah works in small groups or with these little individuals. Once again, there is an obvious hyper-organized feeling when you walk in.



Tech Thoughts

I spend a lot of time on the school website. That is a thankless job which is more intrinsic value for me. No one really gives a shit about it, but expects it to work for them. I tried to set it up for the entire school to author the content. That absolutely didn't work. The only person that adds to it is Keyla Urbina. I set up a web 2.0 way for her to publish our school newspaper. That has now gone solely web. She used to print it out. A weekly newsletter! Up until two weeks ago, Keyla also emailed both copies (Spanish and English) to everyone and took up space on the First Class Email server - a lot!

Teachers have really gone web crazy. In the past four years, the school board has not spent any new money on internet speed. Now the teachers are crazy for IXL, Google Docs, BigUniverse, YouTube, Facebook, and a whole load of iPad apps. All of these take up internet bandwidth (speed). I am proud of the teachers. Technology is finding its way into every classroom on devices and into the homework assignments. Around every corner is an opportunity for me to share tech knowledge. The entire grades 3-8 are on Edmodo, a kind of educational Facebook for classes. The middle school teachers are heading up student portfolios online! Grades 7-8 have been on a virtual science fair for the past three years! I could go on and on.

This staff has really grown over the past years I have been here. I hope it doesn't go un-noticed. When I leave, they better have an excellent tech person so they can continue to learn. They will continue to improve on their own, but some of them still need reminders and a continual push. They are so busy already!



Tech Everywhere

This staff has been such a treat to work with the past years. (with a few exceptions like a tall, alpha B#\$*% we all suffered for two years before she moved on to Columbia! - I refuse to say her name. It brings up poor memories!)

Besides being the technology teacher, director, and leader of everything having to do with technology here, I have also been a coach for the staff. I love it. There is nothing better than seeing teachers taking what I have offered them and using that knowledge to improve their classrooms!

When I first got here, maybe two teachers had class websites. A few knew how to use basic smart board technology. Now they ALL have working websites. More than half use the smart boards for class routines and learning!

Many of them have almost paperless. 90% of them use iPads and half of those teachers put their own iPads in the hands of their students during class.

Before Marcelo arrived to take over the network, I spent at least 50% of my week worried about internet and the network. If power went down all hell would break loose. I would run around all morning with Ruben attending to teacher frustrations. Now Marcelo is doing all that. My teaching load is full! The rest of my time I go into classrooms!



More Colleagues

Brad Handrich - He is the epitomy of a great, male elementary teacher. In 4th grade, he is one of the most patient and quiet spoken teachers I have ever met. He is so knowledgeable about teaching methods and so positive all the time! (incredible) I learn something new about demeanor and student contact every time I walk into his room. Hopefully, Brad will go into Admin and retain his special abilities so he can pass them on to his teachers!

Hannah "Aligator" - One of the most beautiful women I have seen in teaching, Brad's wife makes teaching look easy. Her first graders feel absolutely comfortable around her. I love going into her class when Hannah and Aymara Gil, the other first grade teacher, have all 19 students working in stations. Hannah's room is literacy rich and full of student work. She uses the Smart Board more than other teachers and that makes me proud - even though I haven't helped her enough. Hannah is super smart and tech saavy, but the tech is still not embedded enough.

Eric Ski Grochowski - Have you ever met a math teacher that stuns you with his knowledge? I have. Ski. This guy knows he can make a load of cash in some big company. He could rake in the dough. But this year he is adding another country to Venezuela and Korea. My bet is on Japan! Ski is a master at explanation. Students love him because he is one of the "hardest" teachers they have ever had. Ski doesn't play down to student needs. He brings them up to his standards at all cost. The same goes for his coaching skills. He is the first coach I have seen since my own hockey years that starts every practice with "suicide sprints" - which I knew as power drills. The basketball team hasn't lost since he came here two years ago. Ski is also chosen every year to speak at the Graduation. Why? He's just that loved.

More Later - I will continue with some more colleagues in the next issues. It's not like any of them read this anyway! LOL

Forced to Plan My Life

Job Fairs, Xmas, Easter, PhD, Summer, and More...

Christmas Break

I cannot tell you how much I hate planning ahead. Living in Venezuela has taught me the hard way that life has to be planned in order to work out the best.

One year, I almost got stuck in Venezuela for the Christmas holiday season. I hadn't bought my tickets out of the country by September! No kidding. If you haven't bought tickets for Christmas by September, you won't find any. Chavez put a limit on the flights out. That year, I was lucky to find a single ticket to Curacao at the last minute. I mean the 14th of December.

So it takes planning. At least getting out of the country. This year I am going to Trinidad. But that is the farthest I have planned. With ticket in hand, I am planning to head up to the Caribbean Islands and go diving. I'll only carry my dive gear, computer, and a knapsack of minimal clothes. I am maybe going to purchase a ticket to Barbados or St.Somewhere (pun intended) from Trinidad. Then I have to be back on Trini by January 2 so I can head back on the ferry to VZ. Why, because my return flight to VZ - the only one left in late August - comes back on Jan 7, the first day of school. I can't miss the first day back!

ISS in San Francisco

Ski and I both signed up for the Fair from February 10 - 14. We leave on the 9th. We already have tickets purchased (in October) and we just have to reserve the room somewhere the fair. We made a pact that even if we find jobs before the fair (and he probably

will) we will still go to San Francisco. We already asked for time off and bought the tickets!

Easter, the Galapagos

I have talked with Nancy, the instructor that I always dive with. She owns and runs dives out of her small dive shop, Bahia Divers. What an awesome person. A daughter of an Oil Company worker, she has traveled the world! A good Canadian that takes better UW pics than I do and tells better stories than I do! Anyway, she and I are all pumped about going to dive the Galapagos. She wants to only take divers that are experienced so we can both Fun Dive instead of be in charge. I'm rarely "in charge" officially. She is. But this trip, if it gets underway, will be a fun trip for her too. I've had that feeling numerous times.

Dr.Lemoine and Summer

Why does everything have to be so difficult? All I want to do is study under Punya Mishref at MSU! They have some kind of hybrid program for getting a PhD in Ed Tech over five years. Very little time is on campus. BUT.. why is it so difficult to understand how it all works. Maybe I have been out of the states too long? I have to take the GRE exam this summer, but the school doesn't post summer courses yet. I am planning too early for MSU but too late for VZ!!! Ughh. Maybe I will just buy tickets to the states, sell my boat and car, and hope for the best?

See you in the December Issue. I should be on an island called, funny enough, "St.Somewhere".



I am so lucky to be able to night dive on a whim! My camera is giving me problems at night. This was taken sin flash, just with a torch lighting the corals. Pretty cool!



I will miss the weekends in the boat. Every weekend I invite different people. Trying to make the "rounds" to include everyone. Tough to do. I hope no one ever says I neglected them!



This was Ku's first time in the open water. He is a non-swimmer. Kudos to Ku!! What a brave guy. Alex and Marisa, like his family, made it a little easier for him. Great weekend! Congrats Ku!!