



# MindStormPhoto Ecuador 2014 pt 1

Burt and Evelyn Johnson



# Ecuador 2014 pt 1

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# Subdued New Year's Eve

## Subdued New Year's Eve



*New Year's Eve day was warm with just enough clouds to add character to the sky*

New Year's Eve this year was rather subdued, when compared to [last year](#). All the same activities were there, but fewer of each. Fewer effigies in doorways and on car tops. Fewer neighborhood competition displays. Fewer firecrackers. Fewer fires. Fewer people roaming the streets.

We have no idea why things were so much smaller this year. The weather was fine and there hasn't been any noticeable rain since the Christmas Eve parade. We haven't heard of any new restrictions since last year (when gobos and castles were first banned). We had gone into the evening expecting a full repeat of last year, and felt somewhat let down when all the first display areas we visited were completely empty. We finally did find a couple of major displays, but that was down from a dozen last year.

# Subdued New Year's Eve



*Some folks put their effigies on their car roofs. Others were still building them.*



# Subdued New Year's Eve



# Subdued New Year's Eve

*Masks were in many locations, and were worn by adults more often than kids*



We only found three major neighborhood theme presentations (and one did not photograph well...)



# Subdued New Year's Eve



*About 11:30, a truckload of clowns unloaded and joined the crowd*

# Subdued New Year's Eve



*Fireworks were for sale everywhere, but most people seemed content with sparklers*



# Subdued New Year's Eve



*Shish kabob stands provided a quick meal whenever you were hungry*

# Subdued New Year's Eve



*The audience waited the midnight countdown -- some more active than others...*



# Subdued New Year's Eve



*At midnight the fires were started, while the audience took photos to remember the moment*

# Subdued New Year's Eve



*Fires were burning everywhere, with new effigies thrown in -- sometimes within a couple feet of cars*



# Subdued New Year's Eve



*Jumping over a burning effigy is supposed to bring good luck -- unless you get burned of course...*



# Subdued New Year's Eve

*New Year's Eve gets us to walk a lot, if nothing else (of course, Evelyn's shorter legs lets her cheat and get more steps!)*



*Happy 2014 Everyone!*

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, January 1, 2014

Ecuador, Event, Food, Music, Travel



# Energy Drinks Not Needed

## Energy Drinks Not Needed



I 'discovered' energy drinks in 2012, and started using them frequently when I became tired. Nodding off on a long drive? Energy drink to the rescue! Tired in the office after lunch? Energy drink let me focus on the software to be developed.

I expected these would be hard to find in Ecuador, so I bought a case of them before leaving. Brought several in our suitcase, and a full case is in the container that we expect to arrive next month.

I had to wait in a rather long line at the butcher yesterday. While there I struck up a conversation with a gringo who has been retired a few years, and living here in Cuenca for two years. She commented that whenever she gets stressed over waiting now, she reminds herself that she is retired and is no longer in a hurry. That helps her calm down and accept the slower pace of life here.

Now if I can just find someone that wants to keep going at high speed and can use a case of energy drinks...

# LaMerced Niño Parade

## LaMerced Niño Parade





# LaMerced Niño Parade

We left the house today heading toward a major festival (see tomorrow's post for details). As soon as we were on the street we heard music and started walking towards it. We had stumbled upon yet another small parade. We hit these by accident throughout the year. We have never been able to find a schedule for these ahead of time, and nobody we know has ever known about them until they suddenly show up on the street you are walking. Judging from the very small crowds watching, it appears that nobody outside the local church knows either.

This particular one appeared to start at Iglesia la Merced -- a church on Calle Larga a couple blocks from our condo. This fit the pattern we have come to recognize as a Paseo de Niño Viajero parade. Each parish (church) appears to have one of these on their saint's day. Once I am fully mobile again (I still limp pretty badly after only a mile or so of walking), I plan on checking out the churches better, and see if I can get their schedules.

These parades always involve the kids being dressed up in religious or colonial costumes... with the occasional Santa thrown in.

# LaMerced Niño Parade





# LaMerced Niño Parade



Most are riding horses, but some younger ones sit on a car roof. Those even younger are carried in decorated strollers.

# LaMerced Niño Parade



A few kids carry a plate of flower petals that they throw on the parade route.



# LaMerced Niño Parade



Coming home later that night, the Iglesia Todos Santos (also a couple blocks from our condo) was lit up

# LaMerced Niño Parade





# Evil Is Only Fantasy

## Evil Is Only Fantasy



*The banner says "if there is love, evil is only fantasy"*

# Evil Is Only Fantasy

Yesterday was the annual *Fiesta de los Inocentes*, or "*Party for the Innocents*." Originally it was meant to commemorate when Herod decreed that all male children under 2 years old should be killed, after he had heard of the birth of Jesus. Historically, the parade consisted of men dressed in drag (representing the parents that disguised their boy babies as girls), and men in diapers (representing the target of the attacks).

While a few of those were seen in this parade, they were rare and hard to find. Instead the parade has turned into a costume party and political satire event. Before the parade started though, we spent some time at an art show that was coincident with the fiesta:



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



The lower two images are sculptures of one of our favorite local artists ([Miguel Illescas](#)). Upper left shows not everyone was excited though...

# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*While waiting for the parade to start, we snacked on a delicious ceviche from a restaurant we had only heard about before*

*Witches were a frequent site, making it look more like Halloween than a religious event*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*The clowns of the Amistad Club led the parade*

# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Ghouls were a favorite costume*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*There was a strong police presence, but they were pretty ineffective in controlling the crowd*

# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Can you even tell where the parade is in that crowd?*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Many decorated groups roamed the street just to be photographed*



*There were lots of political protests -- even against dead ex-presidents*

# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*The leaders of Coopera were arrested for money laundering last year, which was the target of this protest*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*MacDonald's opened their first restaurant in Cuenca in 2013, and was lampooned by this group*

# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Several universities lost their accreditation this year*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*We hadn't heard of any problems with condors here, but this protest indicates they are an issue*

# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Chevron's pollution fight in the Yasuni was a predictable target*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Apparently some people aren't happy with the president having a personal plane*

# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Sometimes I could not figure out what was being protested...*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*Here are few of my favorite portraits from the day*



# Evil Is Only Fantasy



*The church from our condo window was glorious as always before we left. I came across the kids in the playground while walking back home at twilight.*

# Jazz Society

## Jazz Society





# Jazz Society - MindStormPhoto Blog and Gallery

Free music is available pretty much any Wednesday through Saturday night in several clubs in town. Tonight we went with some friends to La Vina, where The Jazz Society plays regularly. They are a volunteer jam group that has often have visiting musicians join them when in town. The big names tonight were "Sweet Sue" Terry on the clarinet. Gil Barretto on sax and Renato Arbornoz on the guitar. As always, good food, good music... and not bad wine (this ain't Napa Valley)



*Renato on left, Jonathan upper right, Jim (owner of Jazz Society) middle right, and Julio lower right*

# Jazz Society



*Sue Terry and Gil Barretto dominated the second half of the evening*

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, January 11, 2014

[Art, Music](#)

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# Cooking Shrimp (class)

## Cooking Shrimp (class)



I've commented several times about how many gourmet restaurants exist within a couple blocks of our condo. Today a new variation appeared -- a gourmet cooking school! And yes, it is two blocks from our condo. Today was *La Warmi's* first such class, but they promise to soon start doing such a class every day, with a different meal being taught each day. Unfortunately, their website is not yet up, so I can't give a live link to it, but check out "[www.lawarmi.com](http://www.lawarmi.com)" in the future and with luck, it will start to show up soon. They promise to post upcoming meal classes once the site is live.

# Cooking Shrimp (class)



Today we were taught how to make garlic shrimp, Ecuadorian style, as a main course. We were then taught how to make plantains.

There were two chefs doing the cooking. One spoke only Spanish, but the other did most of the direct teaching, as all nine students were gringos with limited Spanish vocabulary, and she spoke perfect English. The end results were absolutely delicious -- even the plantain, which I must admit I am not generally a fan of.

Besides the basic recipes and general teaching of cooking, there were numerous hints and suggestions tossed out during the class. A few of the things I learned (other than the direct recipe) included:



# Cooking Shrimp (class)

- To tell if shrimp is fresh at the mercado, smell it. if it smells like the sea, it is fresh.
- Some vendors place the shrimp in a mild chlorine wash to make it more white. If you smell chlorine, skip the vendor. It isn't dangerous, but ruins the taste.
- Put olive oil on your hands before cutting chili. It prevents the chili oil from permeating your skin and later causing eye irritation.
- There are several varieties of chili in Ecuador. In general, the smaller the chili the hotter the taste. The small round ones that look like bell peppers are the hottest.
- When making soup, suspend a single chili in the soup for the last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking, then throw away the chili. Adds a nice spicy flavor to the soup.
- Tree tomatoes only come from Cuenca. They look like elongated tomatoes, though they are not really related to the "ground tomato." They are a fruit that is sweet and tastes like a cross between a normal tomato and a cantaloupe.
- For a good aji sauce, combine two tree tomatoes to one chili (aji)
- When boiling tree tomatoes, remove them from the water before their skin splits, or they will be bitter
- When buying plantain, get the Dominique variety. They are bigger and thinner, and taste much better. They must be green to be ripe.

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, January 11, 2014

cooking, Education, Food

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# Fireworks and Parade – An Epiphany

## Fireworks and Parade – An Epiphany



*Tonight I could see six separate fireworks shows going on at the same time from our condo office window. Though seeing fireworks is a common sight around this time of year, I think a record was set tonight!*





# Fireworks and Parade – An Epiphany

*Sometimes walking around town, fireworks will suddenly erupt, as happened behind the Iglesia San Francisco*

Evelyn was walking around town earlier today and stumbled upon Yet Another Parade, this time starting at Parque Calderon. These seem to happen frequently, and we rarely know about them in advance. With both the parade and so many fireworks today, I did a bit more digging. It appears that this is part of the **Christian Epiphany** -- those times that Jesus made himself known to mankind. The first epiphany is Christmas, when Jesus was born. Last weekend (Jan 6) was the celebration of the Three Wise Men coming upon Jesus in the manger. **This weekend celebrates the baptism of Jesus.** The remaining epiphany will be celebrated to commemorate Jesus' first miracle -- **the changing of water into wine** (I am not sure of the date for that one?).



# Fireworks and Parade – An Epiphany

*Since they are celebrating the baptism of Jesus, it makes sense that very young kids are the center of attention*



*Adults are always ready to party and parade too though*

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, January 12, 2014

Event, Festival

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# Baptism Parade

## Baptism Parade



*Iglesia La Merced was the starting point for today's parade celebrating the Baptism of Jesus*

*Yet Another Parade* is almost becoming a mantra around here. Seems every week (day?) we walk out the front door and find a parade under way or in the making. Today it happened again. After yesterday's small parade and the massive fireworks of last night, we were not overly surprised. Hearing the music through our office windows, we decided to head down to the street and see what was up. Sure enough, a parade was forming up about a block away at Iglesia La Merced.

As I described yesterday, today celebrates the Baptism of Jesus Christ and is the third of the Epiphany events of Christianity. Let's just jump in for some photos from the day.

# Baptism Parade



*Police were around mostly to direct traffic for the parade*



# Baptism Parade



*Not sure how clowns figure in the celebration, but there were several in the parade*

# Baptism Parade



*Cuencana's love their music -- and always loud. Cars with special speakers cranked to full volume made sure everyone in town knew they were there...*



# Baptism Parade



*A statue of Baby Jesus had honorary position at the front of the parade*

# Baptism Parade



*Lots of other baby statues were seen on other floats and cars too*



# Baptism Parade



*There were more horses than cars... so watch your step!*

# Baptism Parade



*Most parades here have groups of dancers. This time the very young were prominent dancers too*



# Baptism Parade



*Food was abundant, and many of the kids were eating along the way*



# Baptism Parade

*This ambulance had lights flashing and alarms blaring, but nobody would give an inch. Not a good idea to have an emergency in this town...*



*There were lots of kids on horseback, usually with a parent within arm's reach*



# Baptism Parade



*Kids were being kids and playing when not actively part of the parade*

# Baptism Parade



*And of course, kids always know how to be cute... even when not trying*



*As the parade progressed along Av. Loja, you could see the New Cathedral towers in the distance*



# Baptism Parade



*At the end of the parade, there was a free meal for everyone at the Fátima neighborhood*

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, January 13, 2014

Ecuador, Event, Festival, Music

# Visa Indefinida



We got our resident visas today! We are now legal Ecuadorians! We were also told to pick up our cédulas a week from Friday, which will be the final document to complete our legal integration into Ecuador.



# Visa Indefinida

The process took four hours today, and seems that it shouldn't have taken more than an half hour. I guess bureaucracies around the world are not very good at obvious streamlining though. And whenever I think of the inefficiencies here, I remember what several friends went through to get legal resident status in the USA, and suddenly I am amazed how quick and efficient they are down here...

While we were waiting, one gringo went up to the counter to get something related to his visa. When asked for his passport, the man said "I didn't bring my passport with me because I didn't want it stolen." hmmm... Going into an immigration office without a passport and expecting to get anywhere...? Needless to say, he was told to make an appintment to come back another day --- with his passport.

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, January 15, 2014

[Condo](#), [Ecuador](#), [Travel](#)

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# Another Brick in the Wall

## Another Brick in the Wall



The Cuenca Symphony had their first concert of the year tonight and, as always, it was free admission. This is a full size, professional symphony on caliber with any other city in the world. There were 54 musicians on stage, about half string and half horns.



# Another Brick in the Wall

**Orquesta Sinfónica de Cuenca**

Medardo Calsabanda  
**DIRECTOR TITULAR**

**VIOLINES I**  
Miguel Mora \*  
Marco Saquicela  
William Vergara  
Oswaldo Vergara  
Rafael Saula  
Esthela Saula  
Santiago Paccha \*\*  
Andrés Sangurima \*\*  
Daniel Arpi \*\*

**VIOLINES II**  
Pablo Yanzahuano \*  
Carlos Andrade  
Marco Saula  
Xavier Mora  
Patricio Lituma \*\*  
Patricia Iniguez  
Andrés Gualpa \*\*  
Luis Ángel López \*\*

**VIOLAS**  
Luis Paccha \*  
Juan Abril  
Joseph Jadán  
Gustavo Toledo  
Paúl Pillajo  
Carlos García Toledo

**VIOLONCELLOS**  
Wilfrido Ruque \*  
Dixon Delgado  
Raquel Ortega  
Rocio Gómez  
Isabel Rodas  
Leonidas Vásquez

**CONTRABAJO**  
José Antonio Carrión  
Christian Torres  
Sergio Toledo

**FLAUTAS**  
Paola Zambrano

**PICCOLO**  
Pablo Arizaga

**OBOE**  
Fernando Vasco \*\*  
Alberto Granda

**CLARINETES**  
Paulo Morocho \*  
Alejandro Morocho

**FAGOTS**  
John Ramón

**CORNOS**  
Cristian Tacuri  
Patricio Alvarado \*  
Jennifer Cabrera \*\*  
Fausto Paccha

**TROMPETAS**  
Jorge Puchaicela \*\*  
Fabián Peralta  
Edwin Contreras \*\*

**TROMBONES**  
Dino Paccha \*  
Freddy Lozano  
Wilson Merino

**TUBA**  
Fernando Mendieta

**PERCUSIÓN**  
Manuel Escudero \*  
Boris Bustos \*\*  
Wilson Abad \*\*

**PIANO**  
Hugo Cobos \*\*

\* Músicos Principales / \*\* Músico Extra / \*\*\* Músico Pasante

**Programa**

Franz von Suppé, (Imperio Austro-Húngaro 1819-1895)  
**POETA Y ALDEANO, OBERTURA**

Johann Strauss (Austria, 1825-1899)  
**EL VALS DEL EMPERADOR, Opus 437**

Roger Waters-Pink Floyd (Inglaterra, 1943)  
**OTRO LADRILLO EN LA PARED**  
Orquestación: Adrián Chimbo

**MOSAICO:**  
- **RAPHAEL, ESCÁNDALO**  
- **ZEQUINA DE ABREU, TICO-TICO**  
Orquestación: Adrián Chimbo

**MOSAICO SALSERO:**  
**VIVIR LO NUESTRO, REBELIÓN, EL CANTANTE**  
Orquestación: Carlos Solano Mattos

**Obras ecuatorianas**

Luis Humberto Salgado, (Ecuador, 1903-1977)  
**EL FARRISTA QUITENO, pasacalle**  
Orquestación: Adrián Chimbo

Homero Iturralde, (Ecuador)  
**LÁGRIMAS, pasillo \***  
Orquestación: Adrián Chimbo

**D.R.A.**  
**Mosaiico: A LAS 5 DE LA MAÑANA; LA ROMERÍA \***  
Orquestación: Adrián Chimbo

\* Flauta: Medardo Calsabanda

The program was varied, running from the classics of Strauss to modern pieces from Pink Floyd ([Another Brick in the Wall](#)), and ending with three pieces by Ecuadorian composers. For the last two pieces, the conductor brought out a flute and joined in with the rest of the symphony.

# Another Brick in the Wall



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, January 18, 2014

Event, Music, Theater

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# Frient

## Frient



It is sometimes frustrating when I speak "perfect Spanish" and the other person looks at me like I've grown an extra head. I *know* I said it right... didn't I?

Well, today I had a little lesson on what it probably sounds like to the native speaker I am trying to communicate with.

During parts of my regular physical therapy sessions, I am left alone while there is a heating pad and electro-shock electrodes doing their thing to my ankle. I often listen to my Pimsleur Spanish lessons while lying there. Since the walls don't go all the way to the ceiling, they can hear me mumbling Spanish (or not, when stuck).

# Frient

The therapist assistant speaks almost no English at all, and is amused that I am working so hard to learn Spanish. After all, it seems like such an easy language to her? I asked if she had English in school, and yes, several years but she didn't do very well at it. Somehow the irony of those two statements didn't sink in. Ahhh, to be so young and naive again.

She then started giving me vocabulary words from her very limited memory of English, to see if I knew the Spanish. I did pretty good for awhile:

- "city" -- "ciudad"
- "morning" -- "manana"
- "night" -- "noche"
- ... and on like this for maybe 5 minutes ...
- "frient" -- huh??

I sat up (while she was still massaging my foot) and asked "frient?" She replied, "si, frient!" After saying that, and my having no idea what she meant, she pointed to me and then herself and repeated "frient!"

Ohhhh... "Friend" I declared. "d," no "t". "Si, frient!"

I never did get a proper "friend", but I gave the expected reply of "amigo" once I knew what was intended.

Funny how one little letter mispronounced can make a word nearly impossible to understand. Now I think I have a better idea of why my "perfect Spanish" is so often met with befuddled stares...



# FotoClub Cuenca

## FotoClub Cuenca



I heard about the *FotoClub Cuenca* a few months ago, but between my crutches and the December holidays, tonight was the first time I was able to attend. I knew almost nothing about the group other than they are the Camera Club for Cuenca, and therefore my best chance of getting back into a photography circle to improve the quality of my work.

I showed up at 7:30, which was the announced time. There were only three other people there at the time -- Julie (a gringo friend visiting Cuenca that I had convinced to join me), the president of the club, and Pablo (a member). Everyone spoke English, so I was heartened, though knew that would be short-lived. The president told me that everyone always come late, because after all, this is Ecuador... Sure enough, by 7:40 the room had filled up with roughly 30 members.

Pablo came over and sat near Julie and me, and every so often we asked him to explain what was going on, since the Spanish was rapid-fire and often over our heads. He was a life saver, and helped keep the night a positive experience.

# FotoClub Cuenca

Club meetings are on the first and third Wednesday of each month, at La Riera restaurant (a change in location for 2014) at 7:30. The format of the meeting is that each member can bring in two images on a USB stick, which is given to the president for copying onto the club computer at the beginning. Any subject is allowed, unless there is a "topic challenge" for that week.

They then present each photograph in sequence, allowing anyone in the club to comment on it. There were three or four people that mostly dominated the discussion, in particular filling in when nobody else would speak up. By the end of the night, most members had said something on some photo though. I never spoke up because of my limited Spanish. However, several times I was trying to formulate how to say a thought I had, only to hear another member say it in fluent Spanish. I was happy to have both had the same thought, and to have been able to understand the speaker! Overall, I figure I understood maybe 10% of the comments that were made during the night.

After all photographs have been commented on, they are shown in groups of three for a "pre-vote" to select the better ones. That set is then shown one at a time, and everyone can raise their hands as many times as they want for all the images they like. The hands are counted and the name of the photo is changed to reflect the count. When done, the top three vote-receivers get to announce who the photographer was and a short statement about the image. Those three images will then be published on the club's web site.

The group here is much younger than we had at the Berkeley Camera Club back in California, where most of the members were retired. FotoClub is mostly composed of 20-something members. It is clear in looking at the photos that they do not have quite the same range of experience of some of the senior members in Berkeley.



# Picky, picky, picky

## Picky, picky, picky

In the next few meetings I will start submitting my own images. I am particularly interested to discover if my style of images meet with local approval. Watch This Space to hear how I do...



We went to the Registro Civil today to pick up our cedulas. We were told that it would take "maybe an hour or so." Other gringos had told us to allocate all day. They were closer to the truth...

Bureaucrats the world round appear more interested in creating and making jobs rather than serving people in any way even remotely related to efficiency. The circus to get us this far has shown numerous examples of this, but today pushed far enough that I would have likely gone ballistic just a few years ago. Fortunately, I have become more patient in recent years, and am finally getting the hang of this "retired thing," so mostly took it in stride.

One small example is that we had to pay the local cashier \$22.85, then \$2.60, then \$5.00. Each was a different trip to stand in the same cashier line and pay. Each time it held up any progress in the office while the officer that sent me to pay just waited for me to return. No handling of other waiting people. No thought of having me pay it all at once up front, even though the total cost was known before I ever walked in the door.

# Picky, picky, picky

After waiting hours for a notary to handle documents for us, an official told Evelyn she could not get a cedula and had to start over. *WHAT???*

Our names are on lots and lots of forms. On one of the forms, her husband is listed as 'Burt Johnson.' Looked fine to me (and her and our lawyer and the notary...). Nope. All the other forms had my middle name included. This form did not, and was therefore wrong, and her paperwork could not be processed. How do we get this fixed? It was a mistake by the Ministry and therefore can only be fixed in the capital of Quito -- about an 8 hour drive from Cuenca.

Yep. The Ministry made the error, so they must fix it. No concept of simply entering the missing middle name in the computer here. Gotta make another job by doing it there. Of course, this is why we hired a lawyer. Though we could technically do this ourselves, it is now his job to fix the problem. Since we are paying a fixed fee for the entire cedula process, it only means that Evelyn must come back and do this all again on another day.

Meanwhile, I waited to be called up to the window to pick up my cedula. In the States, that would take about 5 minutes to print out the card. After an hour, two men stood by me and rattled off some fast Spanish I did not understand. I replied "no entiendo" ("I don't understand") and they called over another man who said "show him your hands." Huh? I held up my hands, and the first man used an ultraviolet flashlight to examine my fingertips closely. After a couple minutes, they all walked away and said "es bueno" ("it is good").

Another hour goes by and I am finally called up to the window, only to be told "necesita otra fotografia" ("another photograph is necessary"). hmmm... Did I smile too much (not allowed)? Oh well, I went back to the photo booth.....



# Picky, picky, picky

Nope. It was "photographs" of my fingers they wanted again. They cleaned off the glass, put some grease on my fingers, and then practically stood on my hand while the computer scanned them. Apparently pleased with the results, they then did the same with the other hand and then with the thumbs. I was then told to return to the waiting room.

While there this time, I sat next to a gringo who told me his story of woe. He started the process last February and is just now getting his cedula -- more than 11 months after starting. I won't go into his full tale here, as it would make this post into a full book. Suffice it to say I suddenly felt pretty good about our own process...

20 minutes later we were both called up to the window again, this time to pick up our official cedula cards. I looked at the fingerprint on it:



# Picky, picky, picky

Yep. Just one black blob. Absolutely no whorls visible at all. By squashing my fingers to the glass, they obliterated all traces of usefulness. But hey, they were able to spend three or four times the rational amount of time, thus cutting the flow of people and thereby requiring more staff to handle the same work. Sounds like success to me... if I were a professional bureaucrat anyway...



## *Update*

Evelyn went back Monday morning, after our attorney sat in line for her to get a processing number. After the first official confirmed that Burt's middle name was now in the Quito computer, Evelyn got in line to pay her \$5 processing fee, then another line to get her photo and fingerprinting. The second official typed all the same information on the forms onto *his* computer. He questioned input from the first official, which started an extended conversation. The two officials finally agreed with each other, and told Evelyn to pick up her cédula "in 15 minutes" at the next counter.



# Picky, picky, picky

After 45 minutes, Evelyn approached the counter, and they insisted "un momento." After another 45 minutes, Evelyn approaches and asks again, and is again told to wait. When her name is finally called, she is told to return to the first counter for another photo and set of fingerprints (same experience Burt had the prior week). Apparently there was a third official checking the work of the second official (who had been checking the work of the first official), and they felt that an error had been made.

Three hours later, after what was supposed to be 15 minutes, Evelyn got her cédula.

*Yay! We are now both legal!*

And a lot of bureaucrats will keep their jobs, checking on the checker, ad nauseum, and making multiple mistakes because of multiple re-entry of all the information.

# Earthquake!

## Earthquake!



I have lived in earthquake zones in California for most of my life. I have felt many quakes in that time, including the Loma Prieta quake of 1989 that did major damage in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Tonight, sitting in my office in Cuenca, Ecuador, I felt the chair start to rock. I paused the Photoshop video I was watching, and then the computer monitor started rocking. I glanced over and saw the cactus in the corner of the office swaying.

# Earthquake!

We were having an earthquake here in Cuenca! I had traveled [3953 miles](#) and still wasn't free of these little rock 'n roll fun rides...

When in California, I could check a [USGS website](#) and see the details of the quake within 3 or 4 minutes of the event. I did a Google search for recent quakes in Ecuador, and then checked the site. Nada...? 20 minutes later it showed up. Things always move a little slower down here...

The [quake was magnitude 5.5](#), occurring 19.6 km (12 miles) below the surface, occurring 24 km (15 miles) SW of Zorritos, Peru -- just over the border with Ecuador.

No damage, but it made me wonder for a bit if I had really left California at all...

## *Update!*

I went out to run some errands Monday morning and found our street blocked off. Next door there were workmen putting up a scaffold. Looking up, I realized that a decorative part of the roof had collapsed on our neighbor's house. It almost certainly was a result of the quake Sunday morning. The photo at the top of this post shows a neighbor on her balcony as she looks over at the workmen. Behind the upper man, you can see the piece of the roof that broke off.



# Earthquake!



# Earthquake!

*Here is a wider view from the street. The taller building in the background (with our DirecTV dish on the roof) is our building. You can just see the broken roof piece sitting on the house between us.*



*Here is a view from our living room window. You can just make out the broken decorative piece, indicated by the red arrow.*

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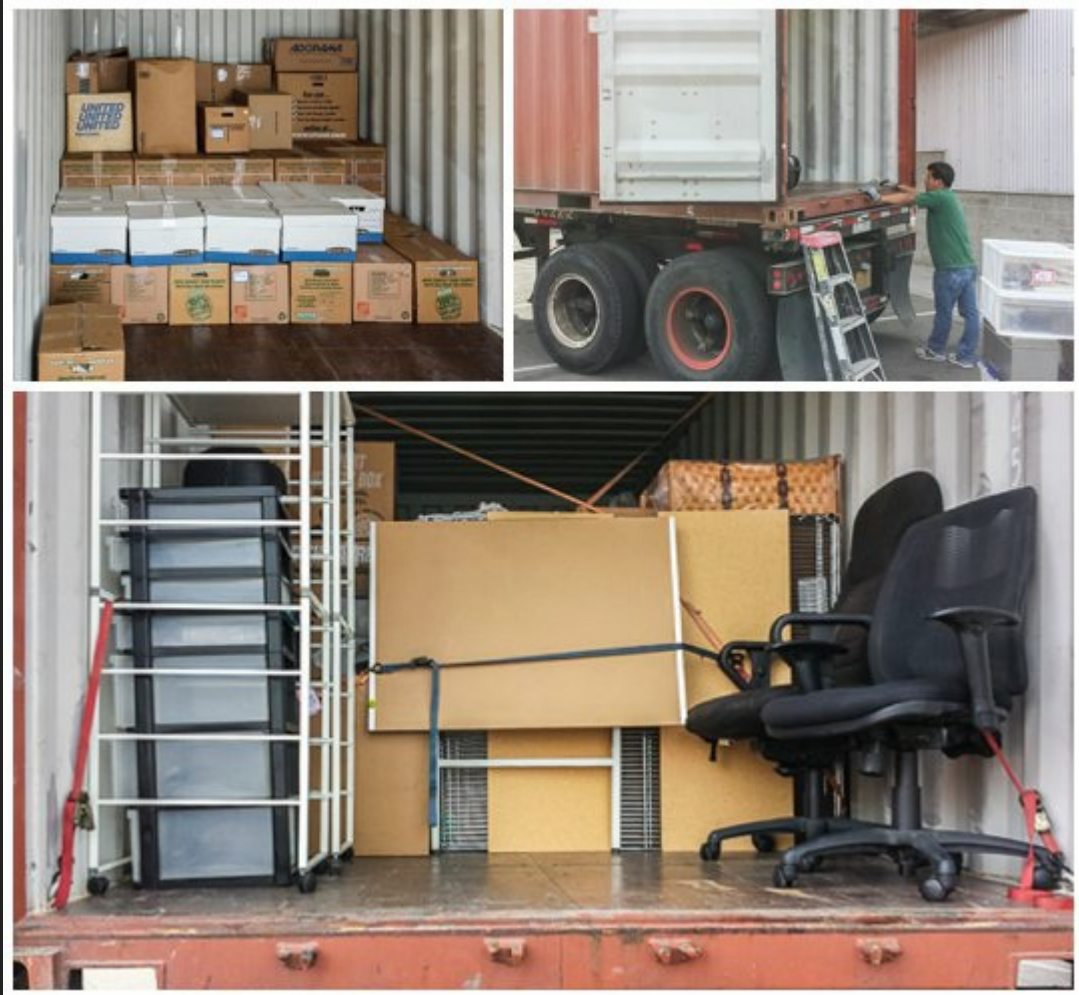
, January 26, 2014

Ecuador, Event



# Our Life in a Box

## Our Life in a Box



Our container was loaded today in Berkeley, and will now work its way towards our new home in Cuenca. It is both a relief, and a bit humbling to see everything we own fit in little more than half a 20 foot shipping container...

Either way though, our life in Ecuador is starting to more fully take shape. Our Berkeley home is being put back on the market in a couple weeks too. The drawing for the advertisements just arrived:



# Our Life in a Box



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, January 30, 2014

Condo, Ecuador, Family, Travel

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