

A walk on the wild side

by Julian Sereno

The reason this newspaper is in your hands a few days later than usual is because I skipped out of town for crunch week, the last week of January, and traveled to Costa Rica to visit with one of my oldest and closest friends, an environmental scientist who has resided in Latin America for the past 25 years.

He bought property in Guanacaste, in northwestern Costa Rica on the Pacific Ocean, more than 20 years ago, a year or so after I last visited him there in 1992. He planted teak and built a lovely house overlooking Playa Grande and the Pacific, principally with teak he had cultivated and other woods from his farm. He has spent most of his professional life tromping around tropical forests.

In recent years I have considered myself physically fit (ha!) and on the first day we did a 3 km. walk on the beach, the Playa Grande toward Las Ventanas. The next day we did a 7 km. walk the other way on the beach, all the way to the estuary, replete with crocodiles, that separates Playa Grande from the more developed Tamarindo. So far so good.

But on the third day my friend and I drove up to Rincon de la Vieja Volcano National Park, about an hour away, with hot springs and towering waterfalls. He asked the park attendant, where we bought numbered entry tickets, where the most beautiful water fall was. He said it was La Congreja and the trail there was 5 km., i.e. a 10 km. round trip, and it should take about four hours.

We got a late start and set out in late morning. The sun was strong but it wasn't that hot because the elevation was nearly a mile above sea level. It was quite windy, whenever there was open space.

There were some interesting animals at the outset. A large iguana poked its head out of a hole, I tried to photograph it. Suddenly my friend yelled my name, telling me to watch



out. I jumped a mile. He laughed uproariously. Continuing on, we saw some monkeys and a family of coati.

Then we crossed a rickety suspension bridge and the trail got really hard, straight up and a straight down, nothing but roots and rocks. Streams needed to be forded. My friend was unfazed and started to pull away, but would slow down so he never got too far ahead.

He was ahead on a relative straightaway when I tumbled head over heels. I was uninjured but as I dusted myself off I realized it was not a great place to have a First Alert moment, "Help, I've fallen and I can't up. And if you don't get me by sundown I might get



At left: La Congreja Waterfall, Guanacaste, Costa Rica. Above: Julian Sereno, utterly exhausted.

WATERFALL PHOTO BY JULIAN SERENO | ABOVE PHOTO BY LAWRENCE SZOTT

eaten by jaguars."

Onward I trod, more carefully than before. The views were spectacular, clouds to one side covering the volcano, a vast expanse of dry tropical forest, mountains and the Pacific Ocean 50 or so miles away. But I kept by eyes on the trail where I would carefully place each foot. Farther along on a flat part of the trail, I espied a most beautiful sight: horse manure, road apples of my eye. If I broke a leg, they could haul me out on horseback.

After descending a trail going down a rather sheer cliff, we reached the waterfall. It was as beautiful as anything I have ever seen. The water clear and cold, and I dipped my feet and we had some sandwiches, fruit and water. Some other hikers were there, one or two swam.

Of course this was only the half-way point on the hike, and I was already beyond exhausted. So we started back, up the sheer rock trail and for me slowly, slowly one step at a time. I started using hanging vines and any branches that didn't have thorns, and would swing from vine to vine only with my feet

on the ground. Finally I just started counting steps, "One, two, three, four ... catch your breath ... one, two, three, four."

Fording the final stream on the way back required jumping onto an uneven rock in the center and then stepping on a few smaller ones to get to the other side. By now it was only an hour and a half until sunset, and if I missed it would be a disaster. I jumped and I nailed it. We continued on and I limped across the suspension bridge, about five and a half hours after we set out.

We checked in with the park office where they checked us off their list. It's nice to know that they keep track of you so they can go in after you if you don't come out.

My friend and I repaired to a bar, where the misery and the fear for my life that I experienced earlier gave way to a heady sense of exhausted elation at having come out of it alive. And I saw some of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen.

When all is said and done, I survived the Rincon de la Vieja death march.

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.

Happy New Year

by Don Lein

As we get ready to embark into 2015, it is appropriate to carry forward what we have learned from 2014. Although not listed in new words in the English language "Gruberized" came into prominence last year. Gruber, an MIT professor has been a darling in liberal intellectual circles for years having been publicly praised by the President and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. Unfortunately, they had not counted upon his honesty and candor. In 2014, an anonymous investment advisor doing the work that the mainstream media failed to do, brought forth the following attributions/quotes:

At a 2010 conference, he advised economists to celebrate the successful "mislabeling" of some of the provisions of the ACA

"It's a very clever, you know, basic exploitation of the lack of economic understanding of the American voter" was quoted in 2012.

In 2013 Gruber told an audience "If you have a law that makes explicit that healthy people pay in and sick people get money, it wouldn't have passed. Lack of transparency is a huge political advantage and basically, call it the stupidity of the American voter or whatever, but basically that was really critical to getting the thing to pass."

The administration, in lockstep,

condemned these revelations and tried to discount his vital role in passing this legislation. The *NY Times* explained that public opinion on health care was so incoherent, that it forced politicians to lie – so they lied. Unfortunately the *NY Times* did not give us sufficient instruction as to ascertain when politicians are lying and when they are not. It probably would be more efficient to advise us when they are not lying, since that seems much rarer in this administration.

Let's look at some other assertions and see how many Pinocchios you believe they deserve.

President Obama claimed recently "The steps we took nearly six years ago to rescue our economy and rebuild it on a new foundation helped make 2014 the strongest year for job growth since the 1990s". The reality is that since 2007 in 49 states and DC there has been a net loss of 400,000 jobs. Fortunately, for the U. S and Obama there is Texas, which has added 1,400,000 jobs during that time period. Did it come about as a result of government activity? To the contrary, it was due to entrepreneurship and technological breakthroughs, which has allowed American oil production to have doubled in the last six years, allowing the U.S. to become the largest oil producer in the world. You have noticed it when you fill up your gas tanks. It could drop more

dramatically if the President would sign the Keystone pipeline legislation, but he will probably cling to his flat-earthed environmental fantasies. He could also create tens of thousands more jobs, but they are less important than catering to his fat cat environmentalists.

Our liberal friends and race hustlers claim that police are a threat to minorities, particularly African Americans. In New York City, where there were demonstrations about police brutality, the facts are that in a city of 8 million residents with a police force of 34,000, police discharged their weapons 81 times in 2013. Police could end all killings of civilians tomorrow and it would have no effect on the black homicide risk. An industry expert indicated "in 2013, there were 6,262 black homicide victims in the U. S. – almost all were killed by black civilians".

Purportedly, liberal policies/governance are more beneficial to minorities, than their conservative counterparts. In New York City, as a payback to teachers unions for electing him, Mayor De Blasio moved to close charter schools, which was the only place in the city where minority youth had a ghost of a chance of getting an acceptable education, thereby condemning these youth to lives of unrealized potential. In San Francisco, which has been under liberal rule for decades and is an expensive place to live, over half the African

American families earn less than \$25,000 per year. While they represent 6 percent of the population, they represent 40 percent of those arrested for homicides and are arrested on drug felonies at 10 times the rate of whites. Whether you believe the crime rates are due to socioeconomic conditions or otherwise, liberals have been in power for decades and these are the undeniable results of their policies. Consider that in deep blue markets, housing costs are \$227 per square foot while in red they are \$119 and Houston in 2013 had more housing starts than all of California. Let's curtail government and give the minorities a chance at economic equality.

Have we learned anything from Gruber and our 2014 experiences? We know that in 2015 we will have more examples of Obama's overweening narcissism, which presumably prevented him from becoming another member of the global community supporting Charlie Hebdo and condemning Islamic terrorism. Let's hope, despite the President's obvious shortcomings, that we will reduce government interference in our daily lives, especially for the taken for granted minorities, who always suffer most under liberal/progressive big government policies.

Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is involved in a variety of civic organizations.

Triangle media offer slim pickings

by R.L. Taylor

Real news reporters in the Research Triangle Park have not been swallowed up by a massive and dangerous shark. It just seems like it.

In truth, there are not that many real reporters around. The *Raleigh News and Observer* is and has been the sacred leaders of the Democrat party for over 100 years. The newspaper promoted the Democrats from when Democrats advocated lynching black people to now when they are making black people saints.

Unfortunately the N&O is the only daily

newspaper in this area. Durham's newspaper competitors, the *Herald-Sun* died from outright stupidity. The loss was not very severe, but it made a few people think.

The Triangle is also served by ABC, NBC, and CBS. All three are hopelessly steered by hopeless liberals. That leaves only Fox news to carry the load of the truth, the lies and the don't cares.

Apparently, Fox has done a good job. The three network shows have virtually dried up. CBS still claims some authority, but nothing close to Fox and its system.

This is important on the national scene,

especially in political matters. The original nationwide 24-hour news station was CNN and established what could be done. As soon as Fox stepped in, CNN began to slide. Once a supporter of all liberal events CNN today came back closer to the political middle.

So what is all this about? Every poll always puts Fox ahead of all the other networks by miles. It's hard-nosed attachment to conservatives must prove something. I like to follow what the true liberals do. They listen only to the liberal radio network, obviously thinking that is the right thing.

There is nothing wrong with that. They

have a free choice. Thus those who like Fox news outnumber all the other people in America by large numbers.

My point is the public will seek out the truth. Those of us in RTP have to scout around a bit to find out what is going on. If you want to believe the N&O that is fine with me. If I seek other sources, that is my business. At least I have some sort of gauge on public opinion. I have little faith in a newspaper whose only goal is boosting the Democrat party.

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