



FOTOKIDS FALL EDITION SEPT. 2011

Letter from the Executive Director

Two significant events have shaped Fotokids' this quarter; the Celebrations centering around our 20th Anniversary and Guatemala's presidential elections, along with the violence it typically spawns.

The opening day for our 20th Retrospective Exhibit's dawned with massive demonstrations of 30,000 to 50,000 people blocking highways and clogging the streets surrounding the Gallery. The crowds were waiting anxiously to hear if the ex-wife of the current president would be allowed to run as a presidential candidate in next month's election. I had thought these elections were the bloodiest ever. Dozens of mayoral and congressional candidates were threatened and several murdered. I was wrong. There were only 36 politically related homicides as opposed to 67 in 2007!

The violence brought back memories of our very first exhibition in 1992, when a *State of Siege* was declared after the dissolution of congress by President Jorge Serrano. On that opening night, no more than 3 people were allowed by law to meet in one place. I imagine this was to keep any additional conspiracies to a minimum. The gallery owner, showing amazing alacrity, went immediately to the Foreign Ministry and obtained an absolution for us. Alas, since no one was aware of our exception to the law, attendance was fairly low.

This time, however, all was calm by 5:30 when the exhibit opened. We made it early so that families and kids could get back to their barrios while the buses were still running. Close to the equator the sun goes down around 6:30 (give or take fifteen

minutes) all year round. Depending on how violent the neighborhood is, some of the buses stop running after 7:30 p.m. Footnote as I write this, Mely our housekeeper riding the bus this morning was been held up at gunpoint again for the fifth time.

The exhibition was beautiful! Upwards of two hundred fifty people attended and the Fotokids' loved it. We were fortunate to have an exhibit in the beautifully appointed gallery of the Paiz Foundation's, *ArteCentro*.



David is photographed w/his photo at Gallery opening entrance

Getting ready for the Retrospective Exhibition as well as the party for 150 students/ex-students was a sobering, and yes I have to say, a rewarding experience. Rewarding because I didn't have to do hardly anything. I just had to check color and B&W prints and the staff did all the rest! The staff are the same "kids" who have been with me most of their lives and are now in their mid to late twenties. They in turn were supported by our current University students.

As part of the annual anniversary event we usually have a competition (whenever we

remember to do it) focusing on written and visual themes.

The written theme was "If I were President of Guatemala"- Most surprised me with how well thought out they were and how they accurately reflect the reality of problems encountered here.

Luis age 12-*If I were President of Guatemala, I would put more police on the streets, give employment to those that don't have it and have more public schools. I would have a day care center free for mothers so they can work and I'd have a home for street kids. I would put more trucks on the streets to pick up garbage so there'd be less pollution. Everyone would have running water in their houses.*

Then this one- *If I were President of Guatemala I would change all the houses and all the poor would have a new house. Also I would pull down all the schools and build new ones. I would kill off all the people in gangs, get rid of all the cantinas, and the men that had any kind of tattoo I would throw in jail.*

SOME GOOD NEWS



(c) copyright Mac Stone 2011
This is a good photo by Mac Stone, a past GUARUMA/Fotokids Honduran Photography Director-

I have received the Humanitarian Award by the Lucie Foundation (similar to the Emmy's but for photographers)

to be presented in late October in Lincoln Center N.Y.C. I'm so excited, it's really a big deal- check out the Lucie awards trailer from a past year but it will give you an idea.

More on the blog at

<http://www.fotokidsinsider.wordpress.com>

<http://www.lucieawards.com>



Ana asks Jeremias to dance © copyright N. McGirr 2011

The Party- The party was the kind of party where everyone, all ages, had a great time. I walked into the school and there was a 12-foot red rubber inflatable can of La Sirena Sardines and a DJ! Of course someone who is never missing at Guatemalan parties of this size, the guy armed with a shotgun was at the door. This security guard wasn't our usual one, but I recognized him as a grumpy, totally disagreeable guy, that used to work in Antigua. Guess he was substituting. Working a children's party definitely wasn't his cup of tea.

Kids started arriving from various compass points; Tierra Nueva, Santa Fe, and Santiago Atitlán in vans we had hired, by public bus or on foot. Sirena Sardines had hired hot dog carts with all the fixings and brought a zillion piñatas and prizes.

Fotokids, we had lost track of and later rediscovered, came with their babies and husbands. Tiny kids darted in and out of the mix. The older students had organized games for every age group; on the side of the school, in the backyard, even on the roof. I made my way with maybe 40 kids up to the roof for the exciting game of couples bouncing water balloons from one towel to the others couple's towel. It was a dangerous game as the water balloons flew in all

directions. The Fotokids were not very accurate shots. Lorena from Sirena and I had to take off running as a balloon crashed down splattering the very spot I had been standing on. At one point as we watched, a balloon went sailing over the wall and from all reports it landed (“incoming”) narrowly missing the security guard. That gave me no end of pleasure.

The staff brought in a mariachi band because they know how much I love them. You hear those trumpets blasting as the blow in the front door and it always means...FIESTA!!!! Because I knew they did it for me, it made me cry (I don't usually cry for mariachi bands , for instance if I am in a restaurant and a mariachi band comes, I don't cry). So, I recovered but felt really dangerously tearful and Andres steps out and pulls me out of the crowd to dance. I'm trying to keep my composure while he is telling me how grateful he is to me to be in Fotokids, that it's changed his life etc. Is this guy trying to get me to cry again or what?

The dance turns into what we used to call a snowball dance, where you pick someone from the lookers-on to dance with you- I picked this little boy who kept saying, “Seño, Seño, I don't know how to dance.” He is eleven.

What's New with the Kids

Kevin, Alex, Jorge, Vidal and Stephen were all part of the 7th Design4Kids workshop. Girls from Marta's Save Girls class joined the boys. I don't know if it was because they didn't know each other that the excitement level was off the chart or if it was just fifteen year old hormones, but both Bree and I had to do hammock patrol. One of the girls flirted with a different boy each day wreaking group hierarchy havoc. Kevin, away from home for the first time, suffered from anxiety attacks and I actually had to take him to the

emergency ward at Santiago's hospitalito. *Twice*-It was the same doctor who we had seen in the morning still there hours later that finally shot him up with a tranquilizer. Despite teen drama they actually came up with some pretty good designs for a pamphlet on “when to take you child to the hospital “ (yes, the same hospital!).

Jack the dog, went with us and had a starring role in a photo class featuring freezing movement. He would run on command then stop. At one point Jeremias ran up deciding to take Jack's place. Seeing this as an obvious intrusion designed to sideline his canine modeling career, Jack bounded forward determined to trounce the interloper. In the end I think Jack found vultures, cows moaning in death throes (the stockyard is behind our school) and the proliferation of teasing squirrels, exhausting and all too strange. He was quite happy to get back home.

The dump-Torrential rains led to the collapse of all the drains affecting our families living near the dump. Water poured in through the windows and was up to Mely's knees. There are now 150 people living in the area on the fringe in a spongy, springy landfill. People have built heavy cement block houses that now threaten to sink into the mire. The fact that there have been a couple of mild quakes does nothing to diminish the nagging fear.

Rosa's little kids class is interviewing *old people* (probably that would be my age or younger) and taking portraits to put together a photo book. The kids complained they were getting a little bored with all the free advice, "don't marry the wrong man, get a good job and stay off the streets."

by Nancy McGirr/Executive Director of FOTOKIDS

Press & Links

<http://www.facebook.com/Fotokids.FNA>

The press coverage has been excellent, though predominately in Spanish.

I have started a blog so if you have internet access it's at

<http://www.fotokidsinsider.wordpress.com>

where you can see more photos and links to articles.



Honduran Fotokids
GUARUMA wannabe
4 yr. old Genesis

How you can Help!

<http://www.fotokids.org>

Haven't pitched in yet? Hey its not too late – we still desperately need 40 More Education Sponsors..and 50+ Photography class sponsors

Educational sponsorships are \$300 per year, and can be paid monthly or annually. All funds go to an individual child's educational expenses, either as a scholarship for secondary school, intensive English studies or to help defray the costs of our courses here (which are free to our students).

Photography Sponsorships: are \$150 a year and cover the students photo supplies & classes.

U.S. Tax Deductible donations: Donation checks should be made out: to "San Carlos

Foundation/Fotokids" and sent to: **FotoKids, PO Box 661447; Miami Springs, FL 33266**

OR DONATE BY PAYPAL ON OUR HOME PAGE <http://www.fotokids.org>

11 yr. old Pedro from the Lake Needs a Photography Sponsor

"I'm so happy in my family. I'm so proud of my mother and father because they are the best parents, they are the best thing in my life because they give me food every day. I work hard to help them - I go to the mountain to bring back wood for my mother to make a fire.

When I'm older I want to be an accountant so that I can count money and for the people that can't count things – I can help them. My biggest dream in life is to keep studying – it's the biggest thing in my life because I have learned everything studying. I love taking photos of people that are happy because I love moving my hands and learning other movements."

Check for MORE KIDS THAT NEED SPONSORSHIP

<http://www.fotokidsinsider.wordpress.com>

