

LIA 5-90

JORGE R. CAMPABADAL M.

(1936-1989)

My longtime good friend Jorge ("George") R. Campabadal died suddenly from a massive heart attack on Saturday, September 16, 1989 at age 53 years. Jorge, a Costa Rican who became a naturalized U.S. citizen, was the founding Resident Director of O.T.S. for an impressive, historically-rich eleven year period (1967-1978). As the accompanying photograph shows, taken just two days before his death, Jorge was doing one of the things many former "O.T.S. people" loved about the man, namely, his kindness of bringing together old acquaintances from past times for a present moment of warm, personalized hospitality. On the day this photograph was taken, Jorge had invited me to lunch at the home of retired O.T.S. cook, Francisco ("Chico") Vasquez. This mirthful luncheon brought back vivid memories of those great meals Francisco prepared at La Selva twenty years ago. When Jorge died two days later on a boat at Puntarenas, he was engaged in his favorite hobby, deep-sea fishing, and in the company of his sister's family (Maria and Rodrigo Fernandez C.).

At the time of his death, Jorge was General Manager for Agencia Panamericana de Viajes, which he joined in 1978 following his years with O.T.S. Centrally located on Avenida 1 a half-block from the Amstel Hotel, it became customary for me to walk by this travel agency and wave to Jorge, whose code

name with the local airline reservations people was "Campa", and who could almost always be seen at his desk near the front windows.

My friendship with Jorge was renewed in 1978 when we encountered one another on a crowded street in San Jose. At that time I had not seen him since 1971. Visiting Costa Rica two or three times a year for field work, I began stopping by "Jorge's" to reconfirm my flights to the U.S., and he always took care of these matters for both myself and others I had brought with me to Costa Rica. On these occasions, Jorge always stopped what he was doing, inviting me into his back office to chat. And I was not the only one to which he extended such graciousness. After leaving O.T.S. Jorge assisted many local and visiting biologists he had known from his O.T.S. days, with their logistical and travel needs, which he often gave freely.

What I recall from my own O.T.S. days is how very hard Jorge worked to smooth the way for visiting biologists, helping them to accomplish their work. Thousands of people associated with O.T.S. programs over the years were successful in their field endeavours because of his tireless dedication, unselfish loyalty, generous support, insight, and wonderfully personalized friendship. Jorge demonstrated over and over the confidence and stamina to deal with countless demands from impatient characters like me. He was our vital link to jeeps, lodging, supplies, and much more. In short, for many of us, Jorge Campabadal was O.T.S.

He once dubbed me the "destroyer of Landrovers", acknowledging my penchant for stripping gears and blowing

gaskets in Sarapiquí, at a time when the main road was little more than dirt, stones, and potholes. Yet good naturedly so, he did his darndest to treat us, guests in his country, royally and with deep concern for the work we were doing. Because of this, I cannot think of anyone else in the hectic, early-growth days of O.T.S. who did more to genuinely foster a spirit of international scientific cooperation between U.S. biologists, through O.T.S., and Costa Rica. In those days, O.T.S. visitors stayed at the Boston Hotel in San Jose, owned and managed by the industrious Manual Tobella and his family. How I remember the times I occasionally negotiated with Jorge the use of an O.T.S. Landrover over a couple of beers. I used to bring him an occasional bottle of scotch or carton of Lucky Strikes.

Without Jorge during those early years, it is difficult to imagine how O.T.S. could have made it to the prestigious role it plays today in shaping educational and research priorities in tropical biology. Over tea last September he told me about a recent visit he made to La Selva, his first visit in many years, at the invitation of O.T.S. He remarked, "Gosh how that place has changed!". He then reflected on the back-breaking, knuckle-skinning work it had been to build the La Selva station in the first place--back before the foot bridge, and when all construction supplies and people were hauled upriver from Puerto Viejo in Rafael Chavarria's boat to the site. Without the use of heavy equipment, sand and gravel had to be hand-carried from the old boat landing at

Puerto Viejo and loaded onto Rafael's boat for the journey ^{*/} upriver. Once there, these materials were unloaded and hand-carried up the steep hill to the construction site. In those days, Jorge worked closely with Rafael Chavarria in learning how to accomplish such heavy duty work under very challenging physical circumstances. He also assembled a very capable office staff in San Jose, including Edgar Murillo, Liliana Echeverria, Martha Chapa, Vilma Sibaja, Jerry James, Alvaro Cordoba, Luis Paulino, Francisco Vasquez, and others.

More than once in my presence Jorge referred to O.T.S. biologists was "working hard and then playing hard", a philosophy to which I believe he also ascribed. Clearly he was no stranger to gringos, and had a very good grasp of their character.

Fluent in both Spanish and English, Jorge was born in San Jose on June 1, 1936 and attended grammar school there. He was the third child in a family of four (Jose, Maria, Jorge, Roberto) born to Roberto Campabadal and Lilly Madrigal de Campabadal. His father was a pharmacist and founder of the School of Pharmacy at the University of Costa Rica in San Pedro. Due to "don Roberto's" love of classical music, the children were fortunate to meet in their home visiting great musicians, including violinists such as Jascha Heifetz and Yehudi Menuhin. His sister Maria married Rodrigo Fernandez Castro, whose father was the founder of Costa Rica's very effective educational system, still in operation today.

Jorge attended the Bronx High School of Science in New York City, graduating from there with honors in 1954. Winning

a scholarship to the Columbia University School of Engineering, he graduated from there with a degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1959, with a specialty in ventilation and air conditioning design. Jorge was first employed (1959-1961) by the J.C. Penny Company as an assistant mechanical engineer for designing retail stores and shopping centers throughout the U.S. Returning to Costa Rica in 1961, he worked as Sales Manager for the Aviatica Travel Agency, and from 1963 to 1966 as General Manager for Panamericana de Viajes. Following a brief stint as General Manager for the ATA Travel Agency, Jorge was hired in March 1967 as an assistant director for the Costa Rican Office of O.T.S., and promoted to Resident Director later the same year.

Jorge married Margaret McCaffery in New York City in 1957. They have three children. George Jr., 31, is Sales Manager for Crowley Caribbean Transport. Katherine, 23, is completing her fourth year of veterinary medicine at the Universidad Nacional, and Frederick 20, works for CATA Travel Agency, owned by Jorge's brother, Roberto. At the time of his death Jorge was also a grandfather.

When another good friend, Bob Hunter, called me late one night with the news of Jorge's untimely death, I sat down and cried, after hanging up the phone. I knew that I would miss Jorge terribly in the years to come. He had become a fixture in my life in Costa Rica. From our many contacts, either at Panamericana or while sipping tea in the Escorial Restuarant across the street, I was well aware of his string of illnesses of in recent years--a broken leg, mild heart attack, and most recently, a tumor in his throat. Within the last year of his

life his speech had become blurred by the throat operation. Yet he pushed on. When I saw him for the last time in September he was feeling strong and confident about his health.

Dreadful unexpected death, that sneakiest of bandits, which socks those left behind right between the eyes, in one traumatic moment congeals all of the kindnesses and special human qualities which perhaps, to some degree, we have taken for granted in the deceased. Death of this sort pulls us up very short, compelling me, in this case, to make an attempt at abstracting the essence of Jorge's life, and to realize why it is that I will miss him. Sure, he was always helping me with logistical and travel needs. In Costa Rica, just mentioning his name opened doors. He used to take me for coffee at the headquarters of Pan American World Airways, where everyone knew him, liked him, and they knew him. It was the same stopping off at the Salon Paris Restuarant near the old U.S. Embassy. Once, in 1983 he took me to the downtown offices of LACSA to meet Jose' A. Giralt, the airline's marketing and sales director at the time. He believed that Jose' and I would be able to work together in developing natural history promotion of Costa Rica and he was right. When the Milwaukee Public Museum opened its permanent exhibit gallery in tropical biology, based on the Costa Rican rain forest, in November 1988, Jorge sent me a personal telegram of congratulations on completing the five-year project.

But what Jorge gave to me was much more than favors--it was unconditional friendship, an acceptance that started years

many years ago with my O.T.S. days. When my father died unexpectedly in 1969 while I was living at La Selva, Jorge got me a seat on the LACSA flight to Miami the next day--in the days when LACSA had only one passenger plane and one daily flight to the U.S. Once, in 1970, he arranged for me to hitch a ride on a LACSA cargo flight (the old DC-6B piston engine plane) to Miami so that I could accompany many oversized boxes of specimens and equipment I was taking back to the States. I remember too the time I accompanied him on a trip to Guanacaste in 1970 and we stopped at the Bramadero Restuarant in Liberia for grilled steak bocas and ice-cold Cokes. On the way back to San Jose we ate "arroz con camerones" at the Cayuga Hotel in Puntarenas. Are these not meaningful ways to grieve the loss of a special person, to recall the many kindnesses and the friendship? Can we search for solace in our loss by focusing on such details of a person's life, those many unconditional favors and good times that give us a well-founded insight into the enormity of this human being? I believe we can. For this reason, I will not throw away the "Campa" business cards I have accumulated in my well-worn attache case--the one I still bring to Costa Rica. On the backs of these cards are notes written by Jorge, such as: "Sr. Enrique Rawson, LACSA-Airport--please help my friend from the Milwaukee Public Museum with his baggage--thanks, Jorge". Although I will never use these cards, they are too special to discard, now that Jorge is gone.

I am glad that I got to spend some time with a good friend during his last couple of days on Earth. In recent

years Jorge was always inviting me to lunch at his sister Maria's home in Los Yoses, which I accepted for the first time on this visit. And he was always asking me to spend a weekend in San Jose so that I could go along with him on a deep-sea fishing trip, which I never got a chance to do. But I am glad that my trusty Pentax camera, a throw-back to 1970, captured a strong image of Jorge's essence in my life, when we dined and shared memories with Chico and his wife on that rainy day last September. The specialness of Jorge Campabadal Madrigal, family man, hard worker, solid friend of many, a man of humanity, and a special friend to me, is etched in my mind and heart, like that knowing smile spreading across his face in the photograph.

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By the time ~~is~~ article appears in the O.T.S. Liana, I will be on my way to Costa Rica for the first time since Jorge's death. It is going to be very hard, and also very different to walk through the crowded streets of San Jose and not see Jorge waving out at me from behind his desk at Panamericana, peeking out over the tops of his reading glasses, smiling, and once again beckoning me to step inside for a catch-up chat. I am going to miss him terribly.

About the Author

Allen M. Young, Ph.D., obtained his B.A. degree from the State University of New York at New Paltz and his Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Chicago. He spent two years conducting post-doctoral research with the Organization for Tropical Studies in Costa Rica and so began a lifelong career studying and writing about tropical rainforest insects. Dr. Young has worked as the curator of zoology and vice president of collections, research, and public programs at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and his essays have appeared in the *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, *Milwaukee Journal*, *Miami Herald*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and *Wisconsin Natural Resources*. He has authored several books on the natural history of the tropics, including *The Chocolate Tree*, *Sarapiqui Chronicle*, and *Lives Intertwined*. He also prepared a revised edition of the *Golden Guide to Insects*, a book that piqued his childhood interest in entomology.