

Brittany/Western/Honduras/2012



I awake to the sound of dogs barking and roosters crowing in the background. Although a short distance from my Honduran village is crime, and unrest, Pespire is peaceful and serene. In my bedroom is a bed and dresser surrounded by walls of vibrant green and pink. The bedroom is simple and a place to feel content and well rested. Ruben is waiting outside for our regular morning jog through the rural countryside. He had become a very close and treasured friend. After our run, I return home for breakfast (*desayuno*) and enjoy a fragrant freshly picked mango with a side of black coffee (*café*). I glance at the calendar that reminds me I only have three weeks left. It saddens me to think of the goodbyes.

I push the thought from my mind and grab my towel, shampoo and soap and head outside for my morning shower. I learned to appreciate the simplicity of bucket showers and to manage without running water. Bathing green was refreshing in all ways. When I finish, I walk over to “*Poncho*” our pet bird, hung by the mango tree in our garden and greet him saying, “*hola!*” I was getting used to the Honduran way of life, and loving it. Valeria, the youngest in the household runs excitedly into my room, holds up my vibrant flowered dress and insists I wear it. I am thrilled she is so eager to be my little “stylist” companion and take me to school. I have come to realize personal care and hygiene are important in Honduran culture. Two showers are taken daily because of the hot humid weather, clothes are ironed and shoes are shined. After two months, my Honduran mother Chonsita was proud that her Canadian daughter, as she joked was finally “dressing like a Honduran” (matched in bright, contrasting colours).

When ready, my siblings and I walk to the school (*escuela*) only a minute or so from our home (*casa*). The sun is already hot in the clear blue sky. The fresh air feels good. On our way, Vardis’ eyes light up when he points to a bright green iguana on a rooftop. He has become my Honduran brother, and just as it is for the rest of us, for him the fascination of the little things are the best.



We pass the yellow and turquoise buildings, revealing historical charm as they were from when Pespire was first developed. Now they remain as beautiful pieces of ruined finery. These vibrant buildings are an important part of Honduran culture, an art against the natural environment of the palm trees and lush vegetation of Central America.

At the school, I am welcomed by an excited assembly of children (*niños*) dancing in the open atrium outside. Music is blaring. Their energetic and loving nature makes my heart grow and soul soar, and it is amazing how much communication occurs without words. Smiling, laughing and dancing are universal. The children perform “Punta” a dance style performed at festivals and celebrations. Hondurans celebrate life every day. At noon, the school bell rings and all the children scurry home. Fruit vendors, parents, and teachers gather in the streets, and a pick-up truck with a pile of fresh produce booming music.



We walk into Cupertina’s little hut, a passageway to our house (*casa*). She greets us with a gentle smile and her soft demeanor, our ninety-three-year-old grandma enjoys a guava she hand picked this morning, swinging in her hammock. For lunch (*almuerzo*) we had a traditional Honduran soup (*sopa*) from the sea, a specialty of Chonsita’s and one of my all time favourites, consisting of vegetables, crab and fish, and like always a side dish of rice and tortillas. Chonsita asks Shardy and I to pick some fresh limes to add a citrus zest to our soup. Our family gathers around to enjoy yet another great meal.



During the afternoon, I meet with the domestic house worker (common in Honduras) Xiomara who has become my good friend. We wash our clothes in the river, whereas I put laundry into a machine, but it has become an adventure. There were lots of other families with piles of clothes, pots, pans and became a recreational outing. We use the rocks to scrub our clothes with soap, and then stretch them on rocks to dry from the sun’s heat. They seem to know how to work alongside Mother Nature. The women put gigantic sacks on their head to carry back clothes home. They teach me. After our work is complete, we decide to join of what has become like a communal swimming pool. What could be better?

Our neighbourhood friends Daniella, Marley, Pameala, Baucey, and Jocelyn gather around to play games in the streets; they remind me how important it is to stay young at heart. Their energy is contagious. We then take turns making imprints of our hands with jars of primary colour acrylic paints. I became attached to these special moments.

I help Chonsita cook dinner (Cena), served traditionally at six throughout the country. We prepared atypical Honduran dish of avocado, beans, egg, fried plantains, and maize tortillas. The maize tortillas, which we wrap everything in are made fresh each morning at 5:00 am. After our family gathers for dinner, the two of us enjoy a meaningful conversation, and developed a special bond. Chonsita is a strong woman with a zesty personality and a good sense of humour, which I love about her. We share moments of tears to moments of pure laughter. We share our story. We laugh at Valeria dancing her heart out to Bee Gee's song *Staying Alive*. The living room becomes our dance stage and we join in dancing to *Rivers of Babylon*. I have found so much heart, soul in Honduras. I have come to love these people that came into my life and opened my horizons beyond the limits of my own perceptions.

