

04-04-2014

Well, if this week was any indication, this month there isn't going to be much of a journal. It will have even more photos and less text than last month.

I was delighted to see Silva jump out of the car when Jorge picked me up on Tuesday morning. They were going to the airport to meet a birdwatching group after dropping me off at ENSAP. Still no word from the embassy about his visa.



Brenda arrived on Tuesday afternoon and brought the electrical box to replace the defective one in our kitchen at ENSAP. The electrician appeared at my door within an hour after I told Martita at the office that I had the fixture. So now we can make tea without having to stand there holding the plug in exactly the right position so the hotplate stays on.

Power was off from 8 this morning until almost 9 pm. There were announcements about rotating outages this week while they make preparations for hurricane season. I'm not clear on exactly what the preparations might be. One thing might be the ferocious tree pruning to avoid storm damage. Poor trees, if they had their druthers, they'd probably prefer to take their chances with a hurricane.

We joked that they had the extended apagón tonight because it's the only night this week there's no baseball game in the big series. If it went out during a playoff game there'd be a mass uprising.

It's been wonderful having company, but I'm feeling the effects of burning the candle at both ends. On Wednesday night we went to Casa Lala for dinner and didn't get home until 10:30. I worked until about 1:30. We had dinner at home last night but it was still a late night. When I finally sat down at the computer I just couldn't keep my eyes open so I gave up. I'm so tired I feel almost sick.

One good thing this week: I graduated to heavier weights for some of my physio exercises. Here are my old and new weights together.



06-04-2014

I'm starting to feel a bit less anxious about the April issue after making a lot of progress over the weekend. I had two good breaks, so it wasn't all work and no play. Conner texted me at about noon yesterday and invited me over to Cuba Libro for coffee; Gail and Kathleen Howard were there. I was on a bit of a roll with a manuscript so gave my regrets, but the power had been off for a couple of hours and a few minutes after our exchange, my laptop ran out of juice. I had to go to Nancy's to pick up Vladimir's birthday cake for tomorrow anyway, so after I got back Conner, Gail, Kathleen and I went to Casa Lala for lunch (my third time there in five days—too bad they don't have a frequent diner discount); by the time I got home the power was back on. The conversation over lunch made me miss my women friends in Canada. Not just in Canada, though; there's a certain kind of talk I don't have very often here, really only when I have visitors, and a couple of times at dinner with Conner and Gail. Despite our good intentions to do something monthly that has nothing to do with work, it rarely happens.



Nancy trimming the base of Vladimir's birthday cake yesterday so it would fit in the cake box.

And Vladimir getting ready to enjoy it today at the cancha. It was pretty yummy, if a little soggy at the bottom from the syrup soaking in.

It was a great afternoon for me—I got my first goals since I started playing again after my accident in May. Three of them! All thanks to Tomás, who kept passing me the ball. I still can't play two games in a row, but I feel a lot more comfortable on the bike, and I'm not dabbing as much.

Tomás is a real enthusiast. He made himself a top tube cover out of styrofoam, with a sleeve that says bicipolo, and wheel covers out of cardboard, the front one complete with our club logo picked out in red duct tape. Despite the wheel covers, he managed to break two spokes.

Rodney has disappeared, so it looks like we won't be making a video for our crowdfunding project any time soon.



09-04-2014

I don't seem to be firing on all cylinders this week, possibly due to lack of sleep. I had set my alarm to get up earlier than usual on Friday (Jorge needed to meet a group at the airport after dropping me off) and forgot to reset it Sunday night. I really missed those 15 minutes of sleep I didn't get. When I got to ENSAP I climbed the stairs on automatic pilot, only coming to when I realized I was on the fifth floor, having climbed a whole flight more than I needed to. Then today I forgot we were supposed to pick Gisele up. She called me last night to remind me and asked if she should call me this morning again. I said, *no, I'll write myself a reminder note*. Then this morning there was a plumbing emergency and I was delayed; I ran out the door without even looking at the diningroom table, where the note was prominently displayed. We were pulling in at ENSAP when my cell phone rang—my heart sank to see Gisele's name on the screen. So back we went. Gisele was understanding about it, but qué pena, to waste three people's time—not to mention Jorge's gas.

Hulene and Michael and Brenda got back from Viñales Monday and treated me to a goodbye dinner at Doña Eutimia, reputed to be one of the best restaurants in Havana. I had *arroz a la cubana*: rice, black beans and two fried eggs. I tried to get them to scramble the eggs for me but for some reason the server thought that was too complicated. I was sad to say goodbye to my visitors this morning. I've enjoyed having company besides my own, and it counteracts my workaholic tendencies. I can't let it counteract them TOO much this month, but it's good to have motivation to do something else besides work.

11-04-2014

Today's contribution to my gratitude jar: the power stayed on until I finished my exercises. It must have gone off practically the minute I turned my fan off, because when I walked through the hall to the kitchen, the radio display was blank. There was power at ENSAP, but no water, which is better than water but no power.

I made some notes on my phone this week of things I wanted to remember to write about. Thanks to autocomplete, they are worse than cryptic: anybody's guess is as good as mine about what "Uriel's herrientas" might mean.

This is my improvisation to replace the broken chain in the toilet tank: a large zip tie threaded through a bungee-cord hook, to grab the stopper that has to be lifted to flush. And has to fit snugly back down to keep it from running all day and using up all the water in the rooftop reservoir. The advantage of the zip tie over the chain is that you can actually push down with it, to get the stopper to seal properly. The disadvantage is that it's not attached to the handle; I have to lift the lid to flush, for now, anyway.



It might have been a mistake to buy a bonsai, a bigger one to buy two. They need more care than a pet! They look pretty sad, even though I remember to water them most days and put them out for their dose of sunshine every day. The *Yo Puedo más que Tú* looks particularly bedraggled. I'd better give them to someone before they expire.

Had a bit of a setback for my rotator cuff this morning. poked a hole in the wrapping of a package of toilet paper and when I tried to pull it the rest of the way open, I felt a searing pain in my shoulder. Not nearly as bad as what I had last year, but I'm back to putting on my undies very carefully. Yuniór adapted my physio tonight and told me not to exercise on the days I have physio.



There's now a formal campaign going on to promote civility. The billboard reads, *Good morning. ¡It's so easy!*

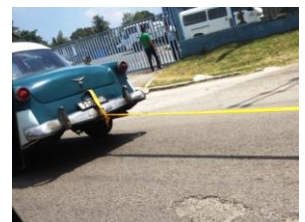
If only it were *that* easy.

Meanwhile, this fellow declares to the world that he likes to live his life drunk and crazy. I wonder what sort of person would find that attractive. Or what sort of person he *thinks* might find it attractive.



Cuban version of traffic flares. For some reason, there always seem to be people fixing flats in front of the children's hospital.

I looked twice when I saw this car towing another one with what looked like police crime scene tape. I'm sure it's something a bit stronger than that, though.



14-04-2014

Margaret came over yesterday morning and we opted for a relaxing "hanging out" day. We had coffee Cuba Libro and then lunch at my place before she went off to meet a friend and I went back to work. Altogether a thoroughly restorative break.

Tomás came by when I was having a tea break with Niurka this afternoon, to see if I was going to bike polo. Of course they know each other—after all, this is their 'hood. It makes me feel pleasantly enmeshed when I find out that people I'm friends with know each other.

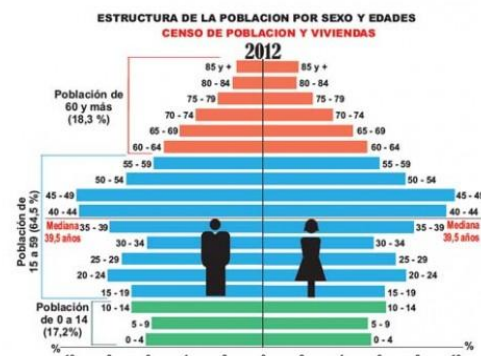


But I had already decided to skip bike polo today and take Margaret to 1830 for dinner instead. I was hoping to show her the folly gardens, but there was a salsa event going on. Too bad. The gardens are the best thing about 1830, besides the location, and the main reason for going there.

The maple syrup she brought me is definitely going to be mentioned in my gratitude jar tomorrow morning. I can't wait for breakfast.

16-4-2014

There were some of interesting things in the press summary we get every week. One had to do with the most recent census data. The average number of persons per household has fallen to 2.87 from 3.16 in 2002. I don't know whether that reflects more housing availability or more people leaving. Both probably contribute, as well as low fertility rates. The latter two certainly influence the shape of the population pyramid, a worrisome one from a social planning perspective.



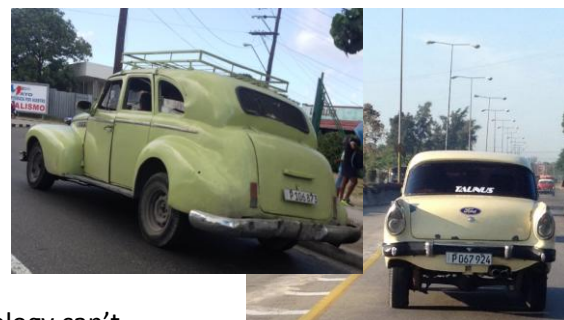
Another was about Cuba beginning to make some profit from its sizeable investments in medical R&D. The article quotes a Cuban biomedical researcher who now works at University College London: "Soon after the collapse of the socialist block, the Cuban science, technology and innovation system began a rapid transformation,...[this] might not have been a direct consequence of the new geopolitical situation, but a result of long-standing political will to develop science and technology for the benefit of society and the investment in biotechnology in the early 80s." Well, well, well. What a concept!

And complaints about problems with condom supply to Santiago de Cuba. Not enough condoms? Or too much sex?

19-04-2014

This week's Frankencars...

This Lada isn't a Frankencar, but got a giggle out of it. The rear window decal is from a tourist bus, and suggests that it has a washroom, reclining seats, food service, audio system and television. And something else my knowledge of transportation iconology can't decipher.



Nor is this one a Frankencar. Quite the opposite; I include it because it's so beautifully maintained (or restored). Much as I enjoy the sheer inventiveness with which Cubans keep their ancient vehicles operative, it's refreshing when someone has both the means to restore one of these beauties and the taste to respect its original elegance—and refrains from trying to gussy it up.



Speaking of washrooms (Ok, I know that was two paragraphs back, but my readers are smart), Estrella fixed my toilet this week, or at least fixed one thing about it. After she tinkered with it, it flushed, but

then the chain would get stuck under the stopper and I'd have to lift the lid to remove the chain so the water wouldn't keep running. After a few days of that, I managed to fish out the end of the chain and tuck it over the end of the arm thingy (technical term) that lifts the stopper. Born to plumb. ☺

I was late getting out the door this morning because I kept hearing the fumigation plane coming nearer and would run to get a photo of it, always just missing the best shots because the phone not where I thought it was or the camera was slow to open. I mentioned it to Jorge and Silva and they stared reminiscing about parachuting from that exact model, an old biplane that they said they trusted more than many, more modern, planes.



21-04-2014



Tomás called on me again this afternoon (*Can Chrissie come out to play?* ☺), and this time I told him I'd go by after five for a short time. I can only spare about an hour, and can't play until the court's shaded anyway, so that will work out fine. Too bad I had to pass up getting help carting the bike downstairs.

I didn't even get to play a whole game. We were tied for beer point (4-4) when I got a flat tire. Vladimir fixed it for me, but by the time BamBi was ready to roll again I figured it was about time to get back to work.

No goals this week, but I did make some very satisfying saves in goal, including three in a row, with both Laura and Chachi unrelenting. Finally Chachi got a rebound from Laura and I just wasn't ready for it. It was fun while it lasted, though.

Vladimir's older daughter was there this afternoon, for the first time, but not to play. She just had her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, which is a huge deal in Cuba, as it is in many countries in Latin America. Some families go into debt for years to give their daughters a big party with a professional photographer, choreographer the whole drill. She had her book of photos with her—not just a photo album, an actual hardcover book, with full colour plates of her in various sumptuous costumes (possibly rented, or maybe provided by the studio). I asked him if Laura was going to want the same thing when she turns 15 in a couple of years. He rolled his eyes and I said, *poor you!* Then he told me the cost was *garantizado*—an aunt in Florida put money in a bank account for her when she was born, specifically for her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday! It actually made me feel a bit ill, to think that, with all the things she and their family must need much more than a birthday bash, what the aunt wants to give her is a flashy, expensive rite of passage that harks back to the days when men put their daughters on the marriage market like any other chattel, practically at their first menstruation.

My phone's been out of order since yesterday (my own line, not the extension from Julio and Estrella). Of course, at this time in production Gail and I are on the horn a good part of the time, so the system now is that she calls me on my cell and I call her back on the peso line. It's a bit of a pain, because I have to hold the coupler together or I lose the connection. If it's a long conversation I sometimes get a cramp in my thumb and eventually have to say uncle. I called ETECSA and they said someone would be here investigate within 72 hours. They're quicker than that to suspend service if I don't pay my bill.

Seems there's a blitz on to enforce at least some building bylaws; several small businesses have had to relocate their kiosks back from the streetfront, in line with the facades of the rest of the buildings. Also the agro on 26<sup>th</sup>, which had spread out right to the sidewalk. Unfortunately, the urbanism crackdown

doesn't seem to be affecting some large and hideous private projects that have been going up around Vedado, apparently by nouveaux riches Miami returnees with more money than taste. At least one beautiful art deco mansion has been mutilated beyond recognition, with North American-style double-hung windows and its spacious rooms partitioned.

22-04-2014



We dropped Elizabeth at a meeting in Marianao this morning and took an alternate route to ENSAP, cutting through a neighbourhood where Jorge lived when he was growing up. He told me that the artist who did the mosaics in this playground lives in the neighbourhood; he just started doing the mosaics to brighten up the park. Sort of a mini-Jaimanitas. I wonder if he lived in the house with this turtle in front.



*Granma* reprinted an old article by Fidel about a conversation he had with García Márquez and mutual friends many years ago, when they discovered that, without knowing each other, they had both been present at the Bogotazo in 1948, when the assassination of a popular progressive leader set off massive demonstrations of rage and pain. Fidel described various things people were doing to express their anger, among them someone who lifted a typewriter high in the air and smashed it down on the cement, after deciding that hitting it with his fist was insufficiently cathartic. When Fidel turned to Gabo and asked where he was during the Bogotazo, the answer was *Fidel, I was the guy with the typewriter.*

Now here's something you don't see every day. Not the horse-drawn cart (that I do see every day), but the cart passing a bus.

25-04-2014

Whew. It took a 15-hour marathon, but the April issue is finally a fact. We worked from 9 yesterday morning until midnight, with only two brief pauses to refuel (bless Daniel for keeping us fed and supplied with strong coffee), and now it's a matter of proofing the whole thing, checking for consistency across articles, etc.. We usually allow 24 hours for that, but since we have 120+ pages to proof (including online-only content), rather than our usual 40–60), we are giving ourselves a break and allowing until Monday.



It shouldn't have taken that long, but there is an "article from hell" in every issue, and this time it was the last one to get to Gail for final approval and in the rush both of us missed things we should have seen much earlier. And, since the author is in El Salvador, not Cuba, we couldn't just call him up and ask for clarification every time a duda came up. We did manage to get a reference from him when we noticed that all the references for a statement about chronic kidney disease agricultural communities in Egypt, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Nepal were from Sri Lanka, except one: and that was about factories in Poland. It was in Polish, so we only had access to the English abstract, but that was enough to tell us that it had nothing to do with the statement it was supposedly substantiating.

Proofing is more challenging this time for more reasons than the extra number of pages. Since the articles are on the same them, we have to make sure that terms are used consistently across articles, and that there are no contradictions if a data source is cited in more than one article. Another wrinkle is that there are three articles from one group of investigators, with different first authors, and they cite

each other's findings. Since we didn't have final page numbers until yesterday, none of those references could be final until then. Today when I did the overall check, I searched the PDF for the page ranges of each of the articles and discovered to my dismay that two of the references to the clinical article had the author order of the epidemiology article, something I wouldn't likely have found on a paper proof.

There must have been a bumper crop of Chevs in '52—I think I have enough photos of them for a whole book on its own. Here are two more from yesterday morning, one in much better condition than the other (the owner of the one on the left probably sold off all the chrome during the Special Period), but both with the original tail-lights. I've seen the most bizarre taillight substitutions on them; the weirdest-looking are from Ladas or Moscviches, making them look like the a boa constrictor that swallowed a harmonica.



Another '52 Chevy, this one with a rear-window decal declaring that there's a Chevy movement. That would seem to be the case.

And here's a polaquito David that clearly wants to be a Goliath. I don't know how it even manages to turn corners with those oversized wheels.



Yunior brought his son with him tonight. He was very shy at first, but I got a laugh out of him when I told him I at first thought his parents had named him after a fan (the Daytron brand is a common one here; my pedestal fan is a Daytron), when he finally figured out it was a joke. Mostly he would look at his dad and answer unintelligibly when I asked a direct question. I meant to get a photo of them together and forgot. He's interested in bike polo, but it's a long way for him to come; they live way out near the airport.

Poor Yunior. He has all sorts of ideas for making money, but something always happens. I can't remember whether I ever wrote about the time he bought a pregnant cow, planning to pasture her at his stepfather's place and make yogurt from the milk. Alas, she turned out to be a milk dud (ba-da-bam). His latest scheme was to hire a potter to make plates and another one to paint them with tourist-baiting motifs, and sell them to souvenir vendors in the ferias. The first batch of clay he bought to supply the potter wasn't sieved properly and the little stones in it made the plates crack when they were fired. He lost his investment in the clay and still had to pay the potter for his time. A few survived to the painting stage, but he'd have to charge quite high prices for them to recoup his costs. He is amazingly buoyant, never seems to let it get him down.

Part of his general lightheartedness these days comes from his reunion with Yuly, sort of. They're not living together again, but when Dayron goes to his maternal grandparents every second weekend, Yuly goes and stays with Yunior. She seems to have accepted now that Dayron is part of the package, but she doesn't want to live with Yunior's mother. She bought 500 cinder blocks to build an apartment for them on top of her mother's house.

26-04-2014

Up until 2:30 again this morning, proofing the issue and Gail called me at 8 to ask me to get Jeannie to



send me some copies of the issue at the Council of Science Editors conference in San Antonio. I wish she would learn to text. Oh well, I wouldn't have been able to sleep much longer anyway. They were putting a new roof (I liked the terra cotta much better) on Aimee's house out back, and the torch was pretty noisy.



But it turned out to be a good thing she got me up early. I spent all day proofing and still have a bit more to do. I took a break at five to go over to Conner's for the opening of the new art exhibit. Very odd stuff, like cross between animé and heroin chic fashion photography. I didn't stay very long, but enjoyed talking with Yurelis, an actor who lives a couple of blocks away on 19<sup>th</sup>. She's an actor, currently working on a TV serial for release next year on Cubavisión. It sounds interesting; a major theme will be the changes in the economic model, particularly the trend to self employment. Talk about the serial led to a more personal theme: her feelings of loneliness for her own age cohort (she's 32), most of whom have left the island to work. She has friends much older and much younger, but almost none her own age. I heard the same lament last year when (Silva's daughter) Gabi's last close school friend moved to the US.

I still had lots of proofing to do, so I didn't stay for the live music by a jazz trio from the neighbourhood. On my way home I detoured by the store at 15<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> to see if they had any milk. Nope. But I did get a photo of a singularly ugly Frankencar parked nearby (two actually—to fully appreciate it, you need the two views), almost touchingly hideous. Like a bulldog puppy, but it won't eat your shoes.



27-04-2014

Great turnout for polo today. We had four visitors: Gastón and Daniela from Argentina, and Matthias and Nicola from Germany. Gastón and Daniela are filming a travel documentary of some sort. They didn't get much footage, because it started to rain shortly after they arrived. Not very hard, but they had to put the equipment away. We huddled under the tree in one corner and drew lots for the polo t-shirts Matthias and Nicola had brought. Here's the gang showing them off. They also brought a couple of mallets, some shafts and a whole bunch of mallet heads.



Matthias played on BamBi and scored a goal in the first minute of his first game. There's a slow leak in my front tire, the same one Vladimir repaired last Sunday. I don't know whether it's the patch, the valve, or a new leak. We had to pump it up after every game. Here he is, making her look even better than she usually does. He loved her. During one game the tire looked a bit too flat to play and I asked Raúl to lend Matthias his bike for the rest of the game. No comparison, said Matthias. Even with a flat, Bambi was a better ride. Makes a mom proud. Now back to proofing. I think I can...I think I can..I think I can...



28-04-2014

Yahoo—the April issue is final. There were a few moments of panic this morning when Esther María drew my attention to a table that clearly had an error in it but we weren't sure exactly where the error was. Since the author is in El Salvador, I couldn't just pick up the phone and call him, as I would with a Cuban. We sent him an e-mail and kept working on the other corrections, hoping he'd respond by the time we had to close. He didn't, so we just did what we thought was most likely. Between a 100% certainty of having to do an erratum in the next issue (by leaving it clearly wrong) and an unknown probability (but less than 100%) of having to do an erratum by using our best guess, I opted for the latter. Five minutes after Aram copied the issue to a CD for me to mail to SciELO from San Antonio on Friday, I got the email: we were right! No erratum next issue.

Just wondering, could “yahoo” be a derivative of “alleluia”? Wish I had an etymologic dictionary to check.

Something very weird just happened. The lights went out, but that's not the strange part. They went out in my place, and in the back of Julio and Estrella's downstairs, but not the front. They're off next door, but in only about half the houses I can see across the street. People are out on the street pointing: *Look they've got light, but they don't.* I've never seen anything like it and I can't think of how it could happen. But, there it is. I guess I get to go to bed instead of forging ahead with manuscripts for the July issue. *Now there's something for my gratitude jar today!*

29-04-2014

Best-laid plans department: I hoped to get my rent money at the Meliá Cohiba this morning, do some express souvenir shopping for my trip at the Almacenes de San José right afterwards, and be at ENSAP by ten or shortly thereafter. Silly me. I forgot I was in Cuba. The connection was down at the Meliá Cadeca so that was a no-go. Oh well, I thought, that would give me a few more minutes to be indecisive when picking out gifts at the Almacenes.



Nuh-uh. They didn't open until ten. Jorge and Elizabeth (she's on holiday this week, so came along as co-pilot) invited me for a coffee at a café-boutique in a corner of Habana Vieja I'd never seen before. I snuck a photo of the yellow car while pretending to snap Elizabeth. Wait a minute...isn't that another '52 Chevy?

Just as well the system was down at the Cadeca: when I logged in to my bank account later to pay my income tax, I saw there wasn't enough money on the card. I made a transfer, but it will take 24 hours to go through. Sigh. Good thing I noticed today instead of tomorrow!

Silva came over tonight. The invitation was for dinner but he said he had eaten a late lunch, so he just kept me company while I ate. Then we watched bike polo videos while I copied some music onto a flash drive for him. I managed to persuade him to take home some of the leftover beans and rice that I won't get a chance to eat before I leave on Thursday.

Oops, all out of month and I have no idea why I took this picture. Nice car, though.

Yacqueline Yair Yarisleidis Yasna Yenisleidi Yenisleidis Yerenia Yessander Yislena Yohayna Yorkiel Yoseidy Yuildy

