

# The Villages of Lake Atitlán

By Norma C. Wilson

Part four of a five-part series

In January, I traveled with Sharing the Dream in Guatemala's "Fair Trade and Indigenous Cultures" tour with my husband and STDG Board member Jerry Wilson, film maker Charles Nauman, weaver Grete Bodogaard, environmentalist Dana Loseke and information technologist Ronda Harrity.

There are three means of transportation in the villages – home-made canoes, tuk-tuks (enclosed motor scooters) and pickup trucks. We rode in the back of a pickup truck to San Lucas Tolimán to meet Los Cuchareros, the only men's co-operative we visited.

Cucharero leader Julio and six craftsmen greeted us and showed us the workshop where they make beautiful spoons from local woods. Like most younger men, they wore jeans and T-shirts rather than the traditional striped trousers worn by many older men.

When they began in 2003, they made spoons with three basic tools – a machete, sandpaper and beeswax for a non-toxic and waterproof finish. Gradually, they added a vise, rasps and chisels for finishing their products.

The men never expected they'd one day sell their spoons throughout the U.S. But from the beginning they used half their profits to help others in San Lucas and Santiago who were in need. They still sell their products in local stores, but now they also have a website and sell on the Internet and through non-profits like Sharing the Dream.

They use several woods, but mostly branches from coffee trees that must be pruned every 15 years. Julio and coworkers demonstrated the entire process – chopping a spoon-like shape with a machete, drawing the interior of the spoon, scooping out the hollow with a round chisel, rasping, sanding, and finally rubbing on beeswax, melting it over coals, then buffing the spoon until it shines.

The men express their artistry and cultural identity with distinctive designs, carving handles that resemble the ducks



Dana Loseke and Ronda Harrity cross Lake Atitlan by cayuco.

(Courtesy photo)

on Lake Atitlán and Guatemala's national bird, the resplendent quetzal.

Returning to Santiago, we stopped at the new community of Chuk-Muk, where the Guatemalan government has built houses, a school, a museum, a church and a hospital for victims of the 2005 mudslide. At Chuk-Muk's entrance is a mural painted by children depicting the community of their dreams. The movie theatre has not yet materialized, but other dreams have come true.

On Sunday we visited the Catholic Church where Father Stanley Rother, a beloved missionary priest from Oklahoma, was murdered by a right-wing death squad in 1981. A plaque inside the sanctuary recognizes him as a martyr.

We had lunch with Maria, Jaime, Sara, Diego and Antonio – Santiago area students who receive scholarships from Sharing the Dream donors, and guidance from STDG staff.

Middle-schooler Maria hopes to attend secondary school in Quetzaltenango and become a teacher. Her friend Jaime wants to study business administration. Sara wants to teach kindergarten. Diego, who dreams of being a pro-soccer player, also has the more practical ambition of working as an accountant. Antonio wants to be a doctor.

The scholars study their native language as well as Spanish and English, math, science and other basic subjects during their six-hour school days. Like their North American counterparts, they

don't seem much interested in politics and history, but they are committed to voting.

Monday morning was everybody's favorite, a journey across Lake Atitlán to Chacaya by cayuco. The lake was placid and glorious with blue and green herons, egrets and sparkling sun. We were two to a boat, each paddled by a man who stood in back. Our boatman said the fishermen in cayucos were catching mojarras in their nets, which he said are good to eat.

We passed the steep Volcán San Pedro, the slope patch-worked with corn and coffee growing near shore, and arrived at the village of Chacaya. A teacher, Pedro, greeted the women in our group with a kiss on the cheek, and he and his sixth-graders led us through town to the

school, past gardens of pole beans and vines loaded with green tomatoes.

The rooms of the sturdy masonry building face a central courtyard where everyone was assembled for a ceremony marking the first day of school.

The women and some of the girls wore traditional trajes, while other girls and the boys wore jeans and T-shirts. The students applauded their visitors, and then we all stood for the pledge of allegiance to Guatemala's flag and their national anthem. Each teacher was introduced, and the principal, Pascual, wished us all a Happy New Year.

Pascual said the children studied in a makeshift structure of plastic and sticks before Diane Nesselhuf began helping them in 2004. Sharing the Dream supplied them some of the materials to build the school in 2007; and when a mudslide destroyed a wall last year, STDG provided money to rebuild.

Sharing the Dream also supplied desks and chairs, and now the Chacaya school is helping poorer schools. The Coffee Care organization provides meals for students.

As Charles filmed the assembly, one little girl drew close, and soon he was surrounded by children fascinated with him and his camera. We visited each classroom and the cramped principal's office with one bookshelf stocked with donated textbooks.

Sadly, the classrooms held few learning materials, and a barbed-wire fence is necessary to protect the school from theft and vandalism.

We returned to Santiago and visited the Panabaj mudslide area, now mostly deserted, and the nearby Peace Park, built where soldiers formerly stationed here shot down thirteen villagers on Dec. 2, 1990. Villagers had assembled to protest abuses, including rape, perpetrated by soldiers.

After the massacre, the city petitioned the Guatemalan president to remove the army base. Their demand was granted, and they created the peace park to remember the victims and their sacrifice for the peace of their community.

## \$1,000 scholarship offered

The South Dakota Stockgrowers Association and the South Dakota Cattlemen are currently accepting applications for a \$1,000 scholarship in memory of Guy E. Ham.

The scholarship is available to any South Dakota student having completed at least one year of post-secondary education and pursuing a career in an agricultural or agri-business related field.

This \$1,000 scholarship is made possible by the generosity and gift of the Guy E. Ham Beef Industry Scholarship in memory of Guy Ham and his commitment to the future of the agriculture industry in South Dakota.

Application information and details can be found by visiting [www.southdakotastockgrowers.org](http://www.southdakotastockgrowers.org) or by contacting the SD Stockgrowers Association at (605) 342-0429.

Applications will be accepted until Aug. 1, and the scholarship will be awarded during the Stockgrowers Annual Convention on Sept. 28.

## Lecture, award highlight PBK ceremony at USD

Alpha Chapter of South Dakota, Phi Beta Kappa, will host its 2013 initiation ceremony at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 14, on the campus of the University of South Dakota.

A celebratory banquet to honor all new members is at 5 p.m. in the Freedom Forum Conference Room at the Al Neuharth Media Center followed by the initiation ceremony and a presentation of the James M. Doyle Humanities Teaching Award by Matthew C.

Moen, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, in the law school courtroom.

Following the award presentation, Dr. Dereck Daschke, professor and chair of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Truman State University, will present the 2013 Phi Beta Kappa Lifo Amundson Lecture, "Religious Studies, Liberal Arts, and the Educated Citizen."

The award presentation and lecture are free and open to the public.

Daschke joined the Truman State faculty in 2000 where his academic interests include apocalypticism, the psychology of religion, new religious movements, religion and health, and ancient and modern Judaism. He is secretary of the Delta Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at Truman State and the former chair of the psychology and biblical studies section of the Society of Biblical Literature. Daschke received a master's and a doctorate degree in divinity from The University

of Chicago Divinity School, specializing in the area of psychology and sociology of religion. He also received a bachelor's degree in psychology and bachelor's degree in religious studies from the University of North Carolina.

The Lifo Amundson Lecture was established by Marjorie Lifo Amundson and her son, Dr. Loren Amundson of Sioux Falls. She was a member of USD's Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and her son was also elected to membership in

the chapter. The annual lecture is sponsored by the South Dakota Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and is made possible by an endowment through the USD Foundation. The Alpha Chapter, chartered in 1926, is the only Phi Beta Kappa chapter in South Dakota and is sponsored by the College of Arts & Sciences.

For more information, visit <http://orgs.usd.edu/pbk/> or go to the USD Department of History Web site at [www.usd.edu/history](http://www.usd.edu/history).

## OBITUARIES

### Eugene Ashmore

Eugene "Gene" Ashmore, 87, of Sioux City, IA, passed away Friday, March 1, 2013 at a local care facility.

Services were held at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 5, 2013 at Wesley United Methodist Church with Rev. Nea Huggins officiating. Visitation with the family present was from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday, March 4, 2013 at Meyer Brother Colonial Chapel. Burial will be at a later date in Logan Park Cemetery.

Gene was born Feb. 19, 1927, the son of Rex and Elsie (Harrington) Ashmore.

Gene attended Vermillion High School. After graduation, Gene entered the United States Navy in May of 1945 and served during WWII aboard the USS



ASHMORE

Church in Elk Point. While the couple raised their family, Gene worked for Roberts Dairy. He later worked as part owner of First Reality in Sioux City for 23 years before retirements.

Gene enjoyed spending time with his family, and fishing at his son's cabin in Minnesota. He

Daily 519. After Gene was honorably discharged from the Navy, he married Blanche Eidem of Sept. 6, 1950 at the St. Paul Lutheran

also liked to fish with Brad and Mike in Oregon, and watching sports with Curt in Omaha.

The couple spent 20 years enjoying the winters in Arizona, playing softball, tennis, cards, and dancing.

Those left to cherish Gene's memory are his wife, Blanche; children, Mike (Bonnie) of Maple Grove, MN, Brad (Carol) of Mulino, OR, Curt (Tami) of Omaha; six grandchildren, Adam, Allison (Matt) Deal, Alaina, Andrew, Taylor, and Joseph; many nieces and nephews; and a brother, Gerry (Dorothy) Ashmore of Rapid City.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Rex and Elsie Ashmore.

### Glendae Anderson

Glendae Florence Block Anderson, 84, of Vermillion, passed away Monday, March 4, 2013 at the Sanford Vermillion Hospital.

Glendae Block was born Sept. 11, 1928 in Colome, to Glenn and Hilda (Koeester) Block. She graduated from Yankton High School, and married Wallace Anderson on June 4, 1946 in Portland, OR.

She is survived by her three daughters, Gloria (Dan) Christopherson of Vermillion, Nancy (Gregory) Pickering of Dallas, TX and Peggy (Frank) Moore of Stockton, CA; six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Funeral service will be 10:30 a.m. Friday, March 8, at the



ANDERSON

Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermillion, with burial to follow the luncheon at the Garden of Memories in Yankton. Visitation began at 5 p.m. Thursday March 7, with a prayer service at 7 p.m. all at the church. Memorials may be directed to the Trinity Lutheran Church Board of Property Fund or the Vermillion Food Pantry. [hansenfuneralhome.com](http://hansenfuneralhome.com).



YANKTON MONUMENT CO.

Family Memorials by Gibson

AMBER LARSON



325 Douglas Ave., Yankton, SD 57078  
Office (605) 664-0980 • 1-800-658-2294  
Cell (605) 610-6992 • [www.gibsonmonuments.com](http://www.gibsonmonuments.com)

## HELP WANTED

Full time **Journeyman Lineman** with the City of Miller. Applicants will be required to obtain a CDL with air brakes endorsement and will be subject to drug and alcohol testing. Applicants must be able to lift 75 pounds. Excellent benefit package. Applications available at City Hall, P.O. Box 69, Miller, SD 57362. Phone (605) 853-2705. Equal opportunity employer. Position open until filled.

## CALL FOR ART ENTRIES!

**4 ELEMENTS**  
AIR. WATER. EARTH. FIRE.

**Avera**  
McKean Hospital & University Health Center

The four elements—air, water, earth and fire are all considered the base of existence. What is your interpretation?

You are invited to upload digital images, regardless of media, to [Avera.org/art](http://Avera.org/art) for inclusion in our latest juried exhibition.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE: APRIL 5 • EXHIBITION DATES: MAY 21 – AUG. 13**

## Meeting Notice

Vermillion Township Annual Tax Equalization Meeting

7:00-8:00pm

March 19th & 21st

4-H Center

515 High Street, Vermillion SD

Michelle Hauck  
Township Clerk

## Attention Pleasant Valley Township Taxpayers

### Board of Equalization Meeting

Monday, March 18th, 2013 at 7:30 PM  
Clay Rural Water Plant

Notice is hereby given that the Equalization Board will meet for the purpose of reviewing the tax assessments for 2013. All persons seeking and adjustment must notify the clerk in writing no later than March 14th, 2013.

Brandi Johnson, Clerk  
30630 Frog Creek Rd  
Wakonda, SD  
[brajohns76@wildblue.net](mailto:brajohns76@wildblue.net)

## NOTICE

Fairview Township Board of Equalization

will begin

Monday, March 18th at 7pm,  
Burbank Schoolhouse

The Board will adjourn on Friday, March 22nd.

Letter of appeal must be mailed to Fairview Township, 32012 White St., Burbank, SD 57010, and be postmarked no later than March 14th. Please include phone number.

Carolyn Carlson, Clerk  
624-4742