

**DEALING WITH PAPERWORK IN ANY COUNTRY IS NEVER EASY  
BUT WE'D LIKE TO SHARE A LITTLE HUMOR WITH YOU  
ABOUT OUR RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH RE-NEWING OUR VISAS  
AND REGISTERING A MOTORCYCLE HERE IN ECUADOR.  
SO, THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE FRUSTRATED  
WHILE WAITING AT THE DMV - - - THINK OF THESE STORIES!**

KEEP IN MIND THAT DURING THESE PROCESSES,  
WE ARE WORKING THROUGH ALL OF THE DETAILS IN A SECOND LANGUAGE!

**THE VISA STORY**

**2 HOURS AND TEN DOLLARS LATER WE HAVE 2 MUG-SHOTS**

We walked to a place to get our VISA photos taken. The male photographer took the photo of Darrell which turned out great! Then the female photographer while taking Sondra's photo, told her to take off her glasses. Sondra then asked the male photographer why she had to remove her glasses and Darrell didn't. Both photographers THEN take 15 minutes looking on-line as to what the requirements are for VISA photos, in between waiting on several other customers (first-come first-serve rules are often broken in Ecuador). The female photographer said, "you're right, neither of you are supposed to wear glasses AND you are not supposed to smile". She then re-takes the photos. We walk away with our photos looking like that of hardened criminals and we leave wondering if they met all the correct requirements for VISA photos or not!

**APPOINTMENT WITH IMMIGRATION LAWYER – ILLEGAL MISSION WORK?**

We had to make sure to show the lawyer the special stamp and signature inside our passport showing where 2 years ago, we had hired a lawyer to "fix" our original VISA because the Ecuador Consulate in Chicago had copied our old passport numbers instead of our new ones onto our VISAs. Their mistake, but we had to pay to get it fixed. Today's lawyer looked closely at our VISAs and said that Sondra's present VISA is the wrong type (we got the type we were told to get). She informed us that my present VISA is not correct/valid "technically" because I was listed as a "dependent" and that "dependents" can NOT do missionary work. So the new VISA will be different and will clearly state that I am a missionary or volunteer. Praise be to God that I haven't gotten into any trouble for volunteering "illegally"!.

**TELL ME WHAT WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING FOR THE NEXT 2 YEARS - IN SPANISH!**

When we arrived in 2014, Darrell and the missionary personnel director had to write a description of what his job responsibilities would be for the next 2 years to submit to the Ecuadorian government. They have strict laws here about volunteering and a volunteer must follow many of the same regulations for paid employees. Several hours later, it's done. And now, because Sondra's VISA type is changing, she also has to give a description of her responsibilities. But, the day we met with the lawyer there was no time to write it all out in English and then translate it into Spanish. So Sondra, had to dictate her job responsibilities in Spanish (month by month for 2 years) to the secretary during our appointment with the lawyer!

### **1ST DOCUMENT - WILL THE REAL MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE PLEASE STAND UP!**

A few months ago, we were sent an email from the authorities in Ecuador stating that we needed our marriage certificate to renew our VISAs. Sondra made a point to find it and bring it with her from the U.S. this spring. Later, we were told we needed not the original but a "certified copy" of the certificate. So, we ordered it on-line and had it shipped DHL to Ecuador. Cost \$126.88! But at our appointment today with the lawyer, she said "no, this certified copy of your marriage certificate (now referred to as CCMC) because it is now being used for international purposes, is not valid without an apostille (formal authentication) by the Secretary of State of Wisconsin. Now, we must SEND BACK our CCMC with a form that we need to find on-line and fill out ourselves. Darrell printed out the form to fill out, to mail back to the U.S along with the CCMC, for a cost of somewhere between \$50-\$100 through DHL and then it would need to be shipped back to Ecuador for another \$50-\$100!

**THEN GOD BEGAN TO WORK IN THE HEART OF THE LAWYER.** When we told the lawyer how much we paid to get the certificate here and how much it would cost to have it shipped 2 more times she said, "Well. the Ecuadorian government really doesn't need it until 6 months before our NEW VISAs expire about 1 1/2 years from now (Makes no sense to us but she's the lawyer!) So, God then gave us all the idea that we could send the paperwork with the Woodlands Church Ecuador Team when they returned to the U.S. August 5. and they could give it to our POA to take care of. Now, we've avoided the expensive shipping fees!

Then the lawyers said that our POA should just hang onto the the paperwork until July or August of next year before sending it to the Wisc. Sec. Of State. Why? - - - because if the process takes more than 6 months from the time the Secretary of State issues the apostille until the paperwork is received and registered by the Ecuadorian government, the validity of the apostille will have expired! Plus, we realized, that to avoid shipping it back to Ecuador, that Darrell can bring the paperwork with him when he returns from the U.S Sept 2017 next year (after renewing his Paramedic license again).

But, in order to pay the \$10 fee for the apostille, the Wisc. Sec. of State, of course, will not accept credit cards and because we can't send cash from Ecuador and they won't accept Ecuadorian money orders we need to send a personal check from Ecuador, in the mail, along with the paperwork. Thank God we brought a few personal checks here to Ecuador with us "just in case" even though no one HERE will cash a personal check from the U.S.! But, we discover that out that our bank in the U.S. is changing hands and therefore it's name, so our checks will not be valid at the time that the paperwork needs to be sent. So, the new complimentary checks with the new name of our bank will be sent to our POA in the U.S. which she will have to fill out and sign for us. Now, the checks we have in Ecuador are useless. We are hoping that the new checks will come before Sept 14 when another visitor from the U.S. is coming to stay with us. The lawyer also stated, "By the way, if you wait until after January (when the new government takes place with the Presidential election and all the laws will change AGAIN) we might not need to do any of this process at all and hopefully you will not have to do something different! REALLY?

## **2ND DOCUMENT - LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF REACH BEYOND STATING THAT THE MISSION NEEDS OUR SERVICES**

President of Reach Beyond writes and signs the letter.

Check! - First thing that went smoothly!

## **3RD DOCUMENT - PROMISE FOR PERFORMING SERVICES WITHOUT RECEIPT OF PAYMENT FOR SERVICES**

Lawyer draws up the paperwork; we sign it.

Check! - Second thing that went smoothly!

## **4TH 5TH, 6TH, ETC DOCUMENTS**

Check!, Check!, Check!, etc. - the rest of the paperwork is approved by the lawyer!

## **FIRST VISIT TO THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE (FIRST COME FIRST SERVE)**

We were accompanied by the lawyers sister, Marta, who is her legal assistant. We stand in line to tell the person at the first desk why we are there. He gives us a number, we go upstairs and sit and wait for our turn. 2 ½ hours later, we are called up to the desk.

The gentleman looks through the huge pile of paperwork of Sondra's that Marta hands him, and begins carefully examining each document submitted. He tells us that our "mugshots" are not the right size and re-takes our photos! He then examines one particular document for almost 5 minutes and then tears it out of the binder and says "This signed document appears to be a copy so you will need to get an original from the lawyer and re-sign it". (Keep in mind that once you "tear out" a document the likelihood of the authorities accepting it are slim.) Marta asks me if it's a copy. I say "No, it is an original". He examines it for almost 5 more minutes and says "But it appears to be a copy and I am not sure they will accept it". Marta looks at me again and says "Are you sure it is an original?" (She was not present when I signed it in front of the lawyer). I turn to the gentleman and say "Sir, I signed this document at a different time than when I signed all the other paperwork. This is why the ink on this document (a darker blue that appeared almost black) is different than the other ink used. If you look at the back of the paper you can see the imprint that the pen made into the paper". Then I say a quick prayer. He turned the paper over, felt the "imprint" for a couple of minutes and then said "Bueno" (Okay) and put the ripped document back into the binder. Phew! He then carefully examined all of the documents and checked off, with his pen, the items he needed to see within the documents. He then removes the top 2 documents (not tearing them this time) and hands them to Marta and tells her to get new copies downstairs and hand-write out all the information on it again (never did find out why and since it didn't involve me I didn't care).

He now looks at all of Darrell's documents in the same manner and approves them all except for the top 2 documents as well and hands these over to Marta to fill them out again also. We were then told to wait in some special area until she returns. We waited more than 30 minutes. She brought us the newly-filled out documents and asked us to sign them. I point to the line where I thought I was supposed to sign and she nodded "yes". I sign it, and then Darrell noticed that it's the wrong line! (Marta did not have her reading glasses on). So back

downstairs she went to do the process over again! We wait another 30 minutes and she returns with them and we signed on the correct lines. Now back to the guy at the desk. He looked everything over again and then said, "You will be notified by email of the decision!" We go downstairs and pay \$50 each for STARTING the process! We thank God that the gentleman at the desk was patient and polite (not like most government workers we've dealt). Only three days later (which is a miracle) we received electronic confirmation that our VISAs had been approved!

## **2ND VISIT TO THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE (FIRST COME FIRST SERVE)**

So we printed out the electronic notification and returned to the immigration office. When we arrived, we did not see Marta who was supposed to meet us there. We stood in line again at the first desk to let them know why we were there. He directed us to a window (without Marta). The woman at the window, unfortunately, is NOT patient nor polite. She spoke very rapidly and unclearly and had no patience for the fact that we are not fluent in the language nor know the vocabulary used for this process. Then she barked at me and told me "Only one person at the window!") There was no sign indicating this but I backed off not saying a word. She then impatiently kept repeating to Darrell what she is asking for. Neither of had a clue what she was saying and she became increasingly angry. Just then, thank the Lord, Marta shows up. The lady was asking for a "tramite" a piece of paper that the guy upstairs last week was supposed to give us to give to her but didn't. So she made a phone call to him and then approved us moving to the another window. At the next window Marta handed over the 2 electronic notices and then the woman at the second window then asked us for the money to pay for the final process of the VISAs (\$400 each). After paying, we asked for a receipt and we also asked that if, in the future, can use a credit card to pay for it instead of carrying so much cash on us (which is very dangerous here). She looked at Marta and us like we are from outer space and said "No you can't" and "You don't need a receipt". She then handed us a very small piece of paper and said "Don't lose this and bring it back next week to pick up your VISAs upstairs. Your appointment is at 3:30pm. The piece of paper was so small that Darrell stapled it to a larger piece of paper so we wouldn't lose it.

## **3RD AND LAST VISIT AT THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE (WITH AN ACTUAL APPOINTMENT!)**

Then, July 15<sup>th</sup>, we returned to the immigration office, see the guy at the front desk to get permission to go upstairs. Miraculously, we were called up to the desk 2 minutes after we arrived (5 minutes EARLY - this just doesn't happen here). A very patient and polite lady handed us our VISAs, told us to verify the information, and then asked for each of us to sign a document stating that all the information was correct and that we received our VISA's!

**NOW, WE CAN THE SERVE THE LORD HERE FOR THE NEXT 2 YEARS!**

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**THE MOTO STORY**

Darrell bought a moto (motorcycle) over 1 year ago from a Reach Beyond missionary returning to Switzerland. He (Tomas) and Darrell, went to the appropriate authorities to draw up a contract for the sale of the moto. Thomas and Darrell both signed the contract which was written in Spanish. Thomas is fluent in Spanish, Darrell is not. Tomas then moved back to Switzerland. When Darrell took the moto to start the long process of registering it (obtaining the matricula) we THEN discovered that the authorities put the old passport number of Tomas on the contract and not his one. They said they needed Tomas to have a new contract drawn up with the correct passport number (which of course we would have to pay for again) and that he must sign it again. But we explained that it's impossible because Tomas was now back living in Switzerland. So, we had to hire the Reach Beyond lawyer to resolve the problem of the moto not legally belonging to Darrell. Several months pass and the paperwork finally made its way to Switzerland and back and then the Ecuadorian Consulate in Switzerland then said we had to have paperwork drawn for another person, who lives in Ecuador, to serve as a Power of Attorney for Tomas. The lawyer drew up the papers, and the POA, Ralph, a bilingual missionary, accompanied Darrell back to the place where he originally tried to start the process of obtaining the matricula (registering the moto). The process involves several steps and will take several days. But then Ralph left on vacation and Darrell had to find someone else to help him.

Darrell found a Ecuadorian friend, who does not speak English, to take him which makes the process more of a challenge. Darrell and his friend went to the office to begin the process of obtaining the matricula (registration) and had to pay for it before the process even started.

After paying for it in advance he was told he had to go get the cycle checked out by a mechanic BEFORE he could get it inspected by the transit authorities, which is required BEFORE he can obtain the matricula. There is not enough time to do this this day so back to arranging for time off work and getting a hold of someone to take him.

But on the day he prepared to return, the moto had a flat tire which Darrell had walk to the store to find the parts and fix himself before the friend could drive the moto to the mechanic with Darrell on the back of the moto.

Once at the mechanics 3 things had to be fixed on the bike and the emission gases had to be adjusted which of course we had to pay for. And now it was too late to return to get the matricula. So back to getting a hold of someone to take him to the transit authorities on another day to get it inspected.

Darrell and his friend prepare to leave on another day and moto wouldn't start and the other tire was flat. They pushed the moto to the mechanic and he fixed the flat. They then took it to the transit authorities but it did not pass the inspection. They said it needed brake-work and the emission gases were off (which we just had adjusted) THEN! - Someone told Darrell to get the gases adjusted THE SAME DAY that you take it to the transit authorities to get it inspected so they are not "off" at the time of inspection.

So back to getting a hold of someone on another day to take him and the moto back to a mechanic again. This time the friend suggested to take the moto to a different mechanic. The new mechanics (3 of them at this place) say there is NOTHING WRONG with the brakes but

they had to take the carburetor apart to adjust the gases which of course we had to pay for. When finished, the mechanic drove the moto himself to the inspection place as if to say "I am the mechanic, I adjusted the gases, I looked at the brakes, and I am proof that they are fine". The inspectors don't even bother to re-check the gases but they do check the brakes (which had nothing wrong with them and had nothing done to them) and the moto passes the inspection but was it too late to go get the matricula.

Now back to getting a hold of someone to take him to the place to pick up the matricula on a different day. A couple of firefighters friends told Darrell only HE needed to go to pick up the matricula and that he doesn't need to take the moto. Wrong, he gets all the way there and they tell him that he needed to bring the moto with. So because there is not more time today, back to getting a hold of someone to take him to the place to obtain the matricula WITH the moto.

So, Darrell and his friend go back on a different day to get the matricula but find out that the time limit for the process of getting the matricula has expired. So, now Darrell has to pay a citation for not completing the process in the time allowed!

As they went to get the matricula the authorities said, "Okay you have the moto, but where is your passport ?! (Why didn't they tell him this before hand ? - - - no one carries their passport here but only a copy so it doesn't get stolen!) So, he took a bus back to his office to get his passport (which he happened to have that day because we needed it for the appointment for the lawyer to start the VISA renewal process that morning). When Darrell left to go get his passport, he asked the lady at the matricula place if he had to stand in line again when he returned with the passport and she said no. BUT when he returned, she had gone to lunch. And of course, her replacement, said "no, you have to get back in line". Darrell's friend then went go to the supervisor to get permission to go to the front of the line because lines in Ecuador are incredibly long and can take hours to get the service you need. FINALLY, HE CAME HOME WITH THE MATRICULA !

WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY OTHER MISSIONARIES THAT THIS IS "NORMAL" HERE IN ECUADOR!  
THE ECUADORIANS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THE LENGTHY PROCESSES OF PAPERWORK,  
THE LONG LINES, THE FREQUENT CHANGES IN LAWS AND EXPERIENCES WITH  
EMPLOYEES IN THE SAME BUILDING, EVEN THE SAME DEPARTMENT, TELLING YOU  
SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT WHAT IS REQUIRED!

LORD, PLEASE GRANT US THE PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING NEEDED  
IN THIS CULTURE AND WITH THIS GOVERNMENT!

**STAYED TUNED FOR: "THE DRIVER'S LICENSE STORY"!**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS! - THE HOLDENS**