

**DEM DATS DOIN** (Them That's Doing) are Alfredo and Yvonne Villoria born and raised in the state of Hawaii on the beautiful island of Oahu. We left the Hawaiian paradise for separate military stints, followed by college and business careers in Southern California. Through mutual friends we met and were married in Las Vegas in 1964. This is written in 2008 and we're still happily together.



## In the '60's and '70's

**we were living the good ole American dream that is having 2 cars, 2 homes (LA & San Diego Ca.), dining out 4-6 times a week, theater/stage performances, vacations, Las Vegas once a month, Tijuana, Mexico at least twice a month, parties and outings with friends and family. Every year we took a short vacation to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean islands. We were searching for a tropical paradise that was similar to the time period of when we were adolescents and teenagers**

**Some of you** may question - why didn't we go back to the Hawaiian paradise? Simply stated we could not afford to live and do "our thing" in Hawaii. Too expensive. Hawaii is a very beautiful place to visit while enjoying the camaraderie of friends and relatives, indulging in the varieties of delicious ethnic foods, and romantic nights but we needed more "space" to flex our wings.

**So we decided** in 1976 that 1980 would be our cut off date to leave the USA. No matter where we were or what we were doing, we would retire ourselves and move to a tropical country. Mexico was our first choice but due to land restrictions and the devaluation of the peso we decided to look elsewhere.

**Traveling throughout** Central America, countries like Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama seemed to fit our criteria. We had a working familiarity with Spanish so language wasn't a barrier. However, the political climate in some of the countries was tenuous and unstable. Costa Rica was a serious contender but the country already had a

large foreign community. Belize, a British colony with similar style laws and rights provided the impetus to move to this English speaking country.

**To learn more** about Belize, we advertised in the Mother Earth News magazine asking about traveling to Belize from the USA. We received much information. One of which offered us the opportunity to purchase 20 acres in the Toledo District. Alfredo made an exploratory trip to see the property and arrange for the purchase and property transaction with a Belizean attorney.

**We have** had no regrets whatsoever in our decision. Due to our light tan brown skin color we were readily accepted by the community. We have been told over and over again by local Belizeans “you look like we”.

**We left San Diego**, California in August 1980 in a RV motor home bound for Belize. Traveling through Mexico was the beginning of our adventure. We arrived in Belize on September 6, 1980, armed with a lot of books, magazines, tools and ideas to live off the land. We wanted to be food and energy self-sufficient as much as possible. We are not trained in agronomy, horticulture, aquaculture animal husbandry or any of the sciences related to agriculture. So our new life style was definitely going to be a challenge.

**We live in** the District of Toledo in southern Belize. About 18 miles from Punta Gorda, the district capital. We own 20 acres (10 for Alfredo, 10 for Yvonne). We started to civilize 5 acres out of pure jungle (we have the calluses to prove it). We now have an integrated homestead system that serves as a model of self-sufficiency.

**We have tried** to incorporate an atmosphere of Hawaiiana. The landscaping of ornamentals and fruit trees depicts the Polynesian theme. Over 90 species of tropical fruit trees are planted throughout the area. Our goal is to have at least 100 different tropical fruit trees. A variety of palms, ferns, orchids, plumerias, hibiscus, gingers, heliconias, crotons, plus lots and lots of ornamentals surround the main residence. In addition, forest trees indigenous to the region are used to reforest areas previously used for milpa farming. There is always a profusion of colors and the air is scented by fragrant blossoms. The grass is gradually becoming a thick green carpet of zoysia japonica. Although the tropical weeds are reluctant to relinquish their space.

**“Doing our thing”** means in 1981-82 we built a two storey 30’ X 40’ wooden house of exotic

tropical hard and soft woods. In '83 an octagon utility building 12' diameter, and a 16' X 40' garage. In 1984 built a piggery - 18' X 48'; in 1985 two ferrocement water tanks, 1,000 gallons each and ferrocement bridge 3' X 8'; in 1986-87 two ferrocement fishponds 3' high 16' in diameter; in 1988 shade cloth covered nursery 16' X 28' and a 14 m biogas digester. Somewhere in between we completed a Lorena stove, composting toilet, solar clothes dryer, fruit/vegetable/insect solar dryer, installed a photovoltaic system, drilled a 25' well, rocked and graveled our road about 400 yards, three 2' raised bed gardens 4' X 12' and a ferrocement washtub. Since then, there have been a number of changes. Being senior citizens we have modified our lifestyle to include a gas refrigerator, washer/dryer combination, and a generator capable of handling all our electrical needs plus the present photovoltaic system.

**We no longer** have the Lorena stove, insect dryer, and solar box cooker, no longer raise pigs, chickens, ducks, rabbits, butterflies, and raised garden beds.

## NEW CHAPTER

**In 1990** we opened the Toledo Visitors Information Center in Punta Gorda close to the immigration and custom offices.

**In 1991** we initiated the Indigenous Experience - a Homestay program in 3 villages.

**We incorporated** Dem Dats Doin as a non profit governmental organization in 1993.

**In 1998** we co-founded the Toledo Tour Guide Association.

**In 1995** Yvonne and 2 PCV initiated the Chairladies Fajina and the Fajina Craft Center.

**In 2000** we formed a new NGO -Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment to co-manage the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve.

**In 2002** DDD was awarded a consultancy to Survey the “informal marketing of agricultural products along the Guat/Belize/Toledo border.

## **POTENTIAL DDD PROJECTS**

Hydroponics (in progress) Aquaponics (in progress)

Mushroom production (planned for '09-'10) Hybridizing plumerias

Multi-grafting of similar plants ***Continue collecting new plants***