

Dave's Blarg!

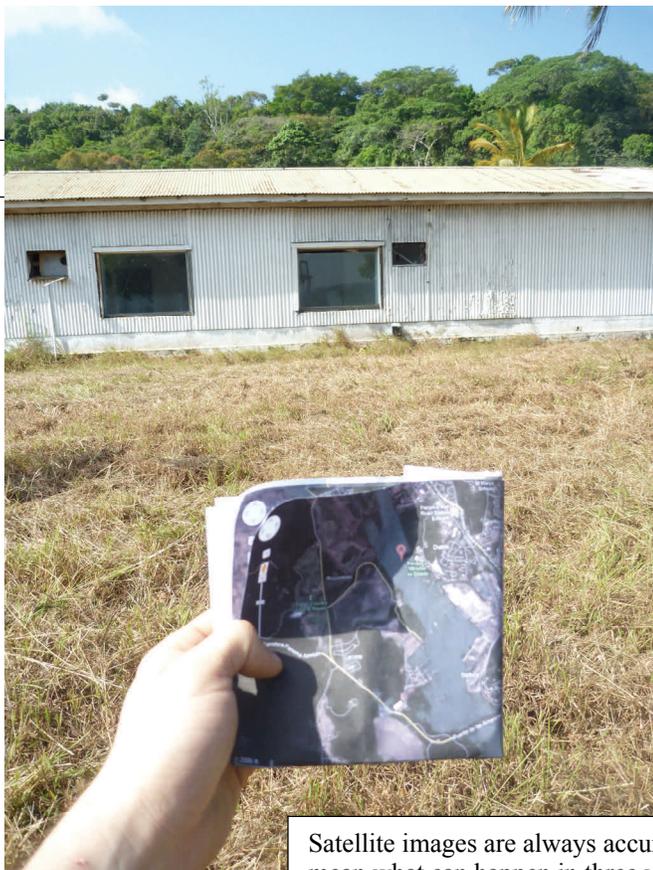
2012-Feb-05-06

Well we got all tied up and I decided to head out for a jog this morning :D Generally I have a pretty good sense of direction, and when backed up by



my clever phone I can generally get where I want to go, sadly reception is a little weak down here, luckily I printed out some satterlite photographs of the route I

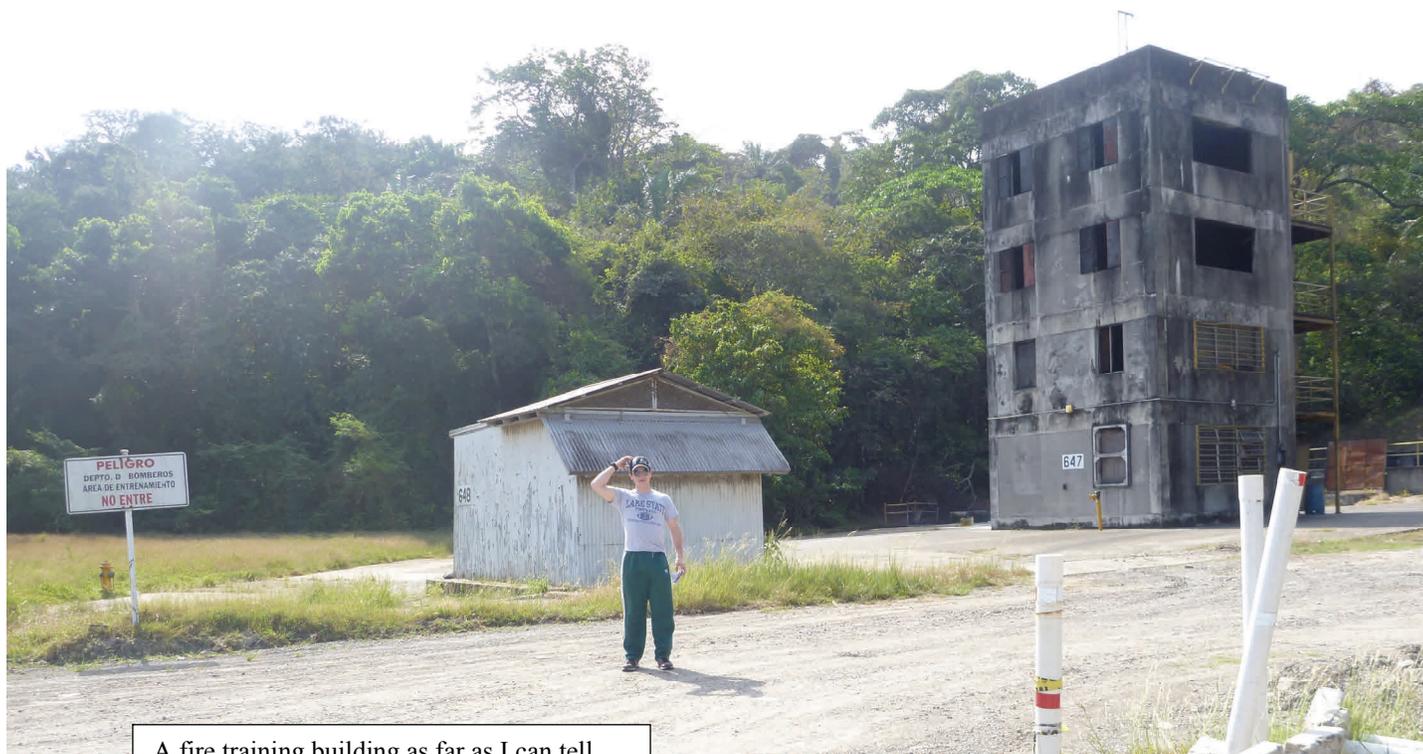
wanted to take, and I headed out, so armed, on a route that *would* have been about twelve miles (long, but not un-doable, even at my level of training :p) I was planning to go from my ship, up to the century bridge, across it, down the other side of the river, and back across the bridge of the Americas, then back to the ship.



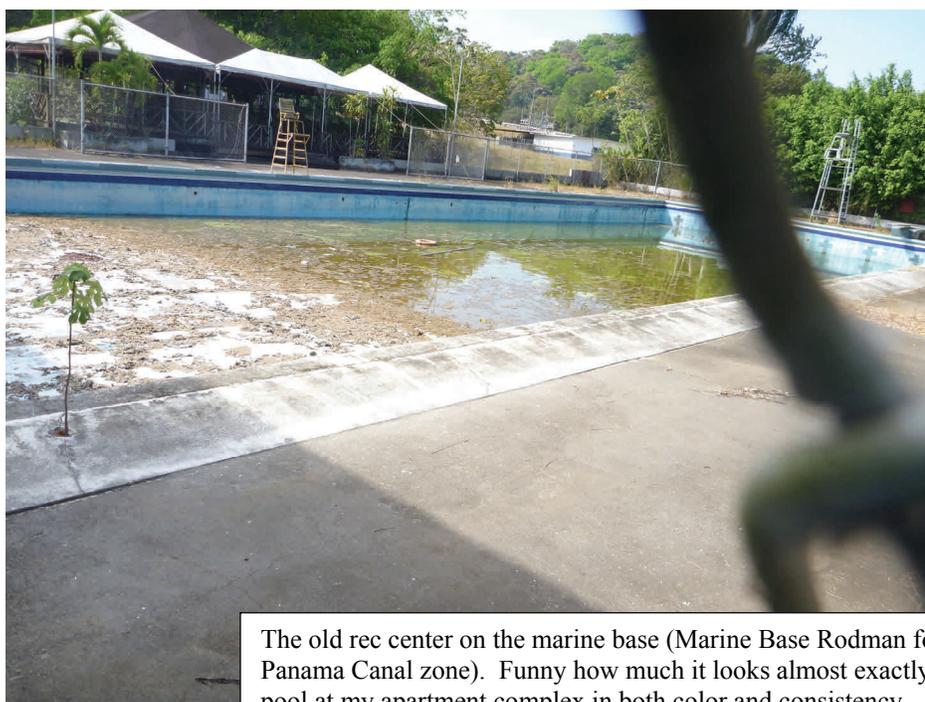
I had it all figured out and mapped in google earth, and that's never led anyone astray right? :D

Satellite images are always accurate, right? I mean what can happen in three years....

Right? :p

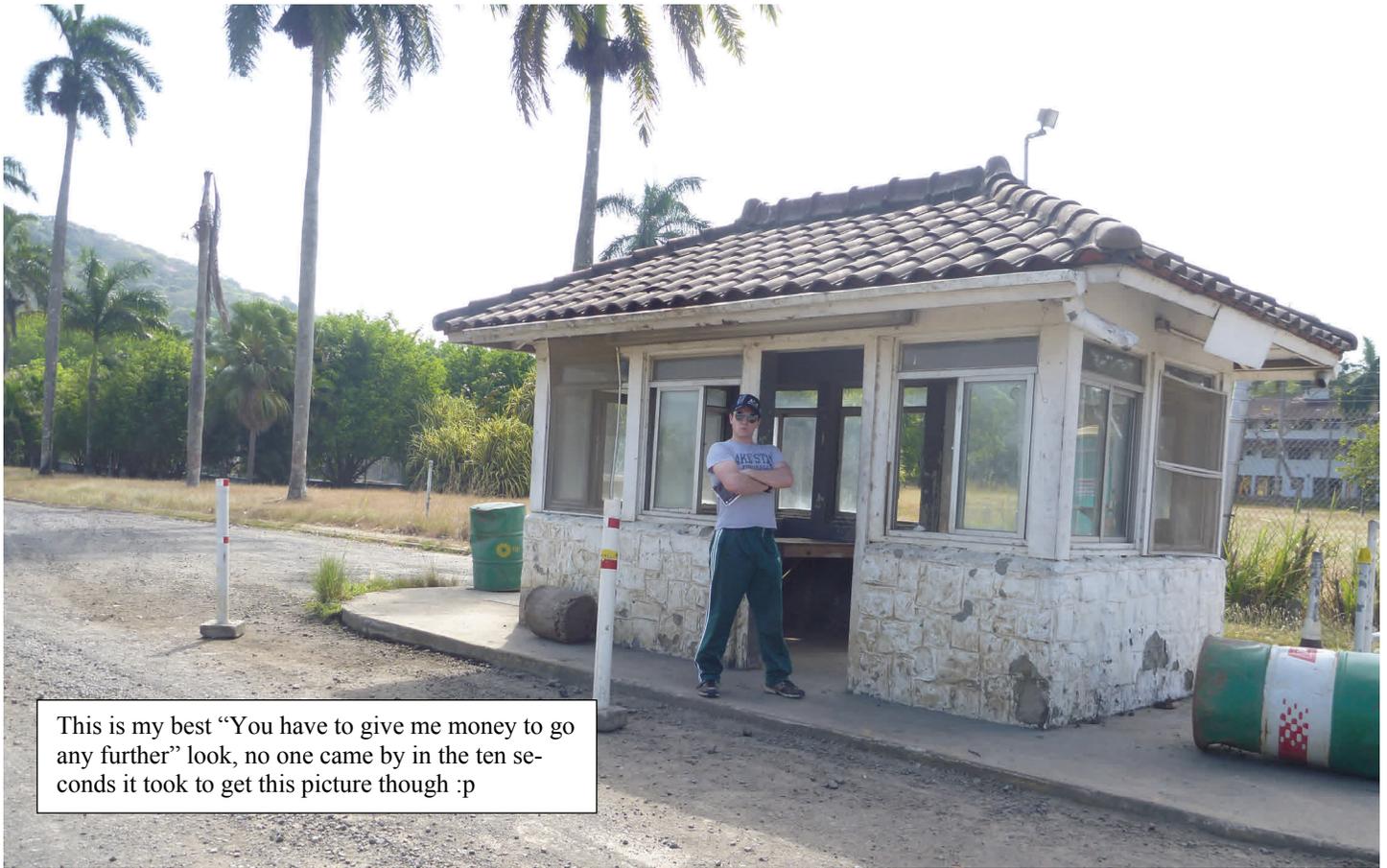


A fire training building as far as I can tell...



I mean I saw a few things that looked military base-ish, but it **was** a military base until no-so-long ago, so I didn't sweat it **too** bad :p

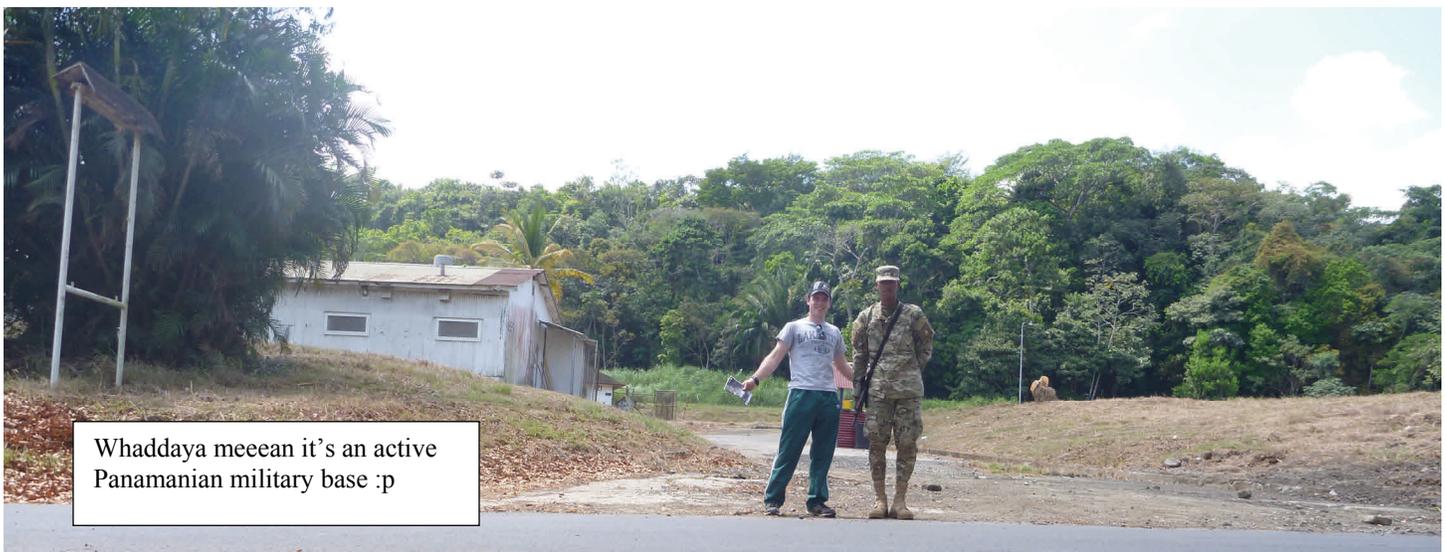
The old rec center on the marine base (Marine Base Rodman for the Panama Canal zone). Funny how much it looks almost exactly like the pool at my apartment complex in both color and consistency...



This is my best “You have to give me money to go any further” look, no one came by in the ten seconds it took to get this picture though :p

I even found this cool guard shack at one end of the base, it was all empty and run down. I tried playing guard for a while but no one came by :p

So imagine my *complete* surprise when I found out (via an armed guard) that *certain* parts of the base (including a field that I kind of was taking a shortcut across) were.. Well, still a base :p He was pretty cool about it :p



Whaddaya meean it's an active Panamanian military base :p



Nice refreshing cool clean looking water,

So On I jogged :)

I hadn't packed water, figuring that I could stop at one of the three town I was going to be passing through to get some. I almost stopped for a sip at this river, until I

really thought about it and realized that it was coming out of a genuine rain forest, and that it might be prudent to wait for something from a bottle...



Coming from the gosh-only-knows-what-lurketh-here jungle..... :p



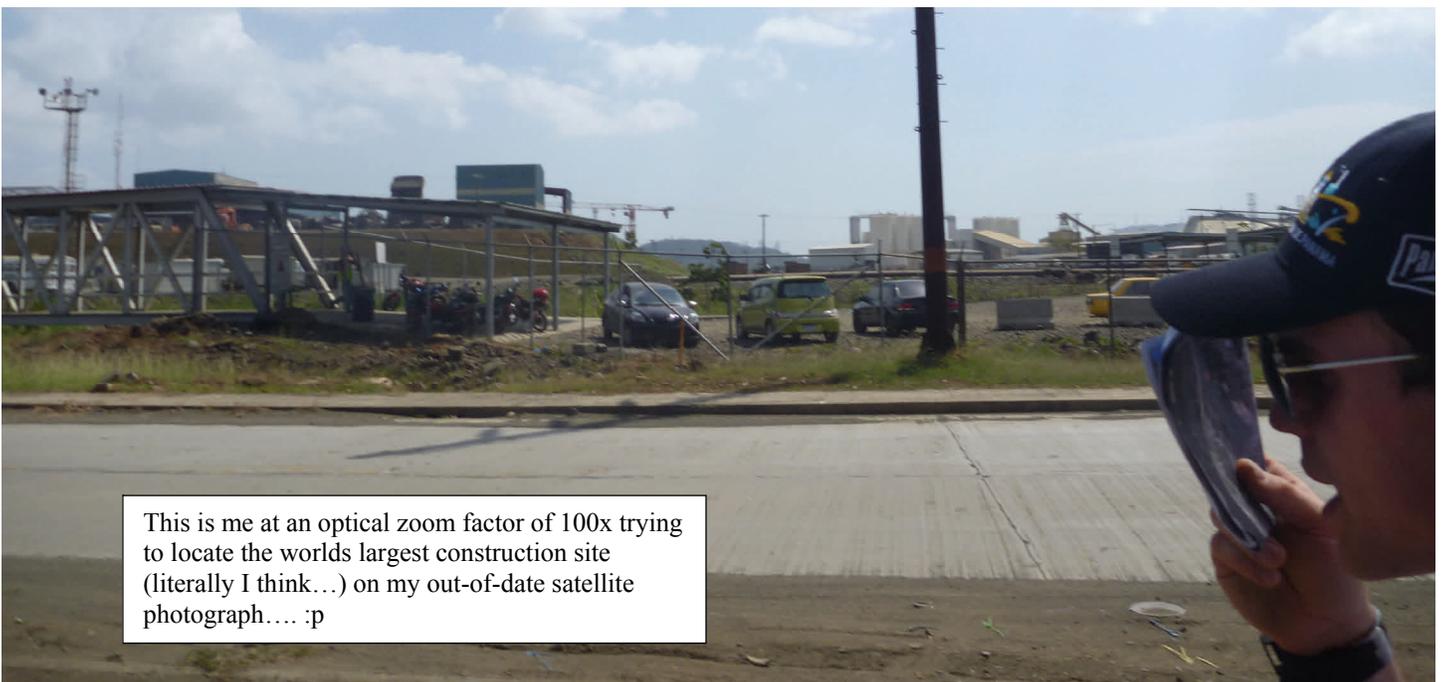
So on I jogged :D (there was a bit more sun than I budgeted for, so there *might* have been some walking involved) :p

technically shots like this are reenactments (which I have a prohibition against), because the only time that I actually jog past this spot is after I run back and pick up the camera, but I figure that the fact that I have to run it twice makes up for it



The is the entrance for the area where they are digging the locks on the pacific side

After a while I started entering a bit of a big construction zone. They are building three *huge* locks at this end of the canal. It wasn't exactly on my map. I knew that it was happening, but I thought that it would be restricted to an area that I was planning to go around.



This is me at an optical zoom factor of 100x trying to locate the worlds largest construction site (literally I think...) on my out-of-date satellite photograph.... :p

But the construction site was a little bigger than I had anticipated....



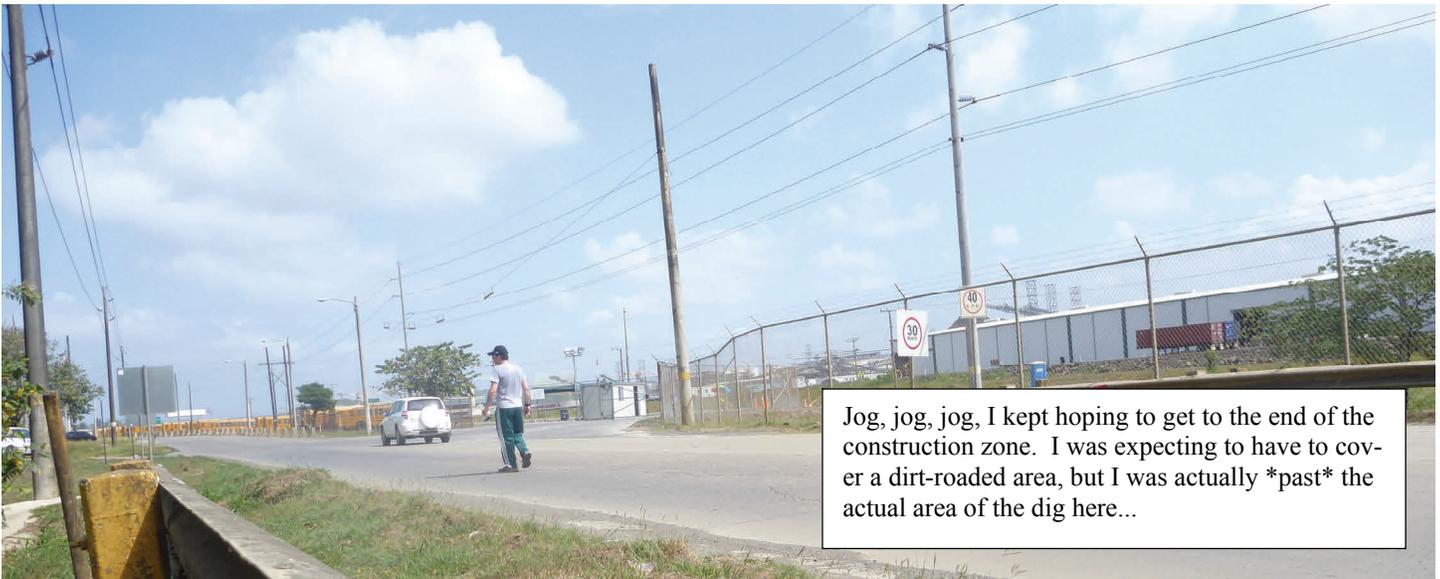
Mountains of excavated (and probably dredged) fill and parking lots that *did not appear* on the map/photos... :p



They would have been in the lush green area under "Pedro Miguel" [frowny face]

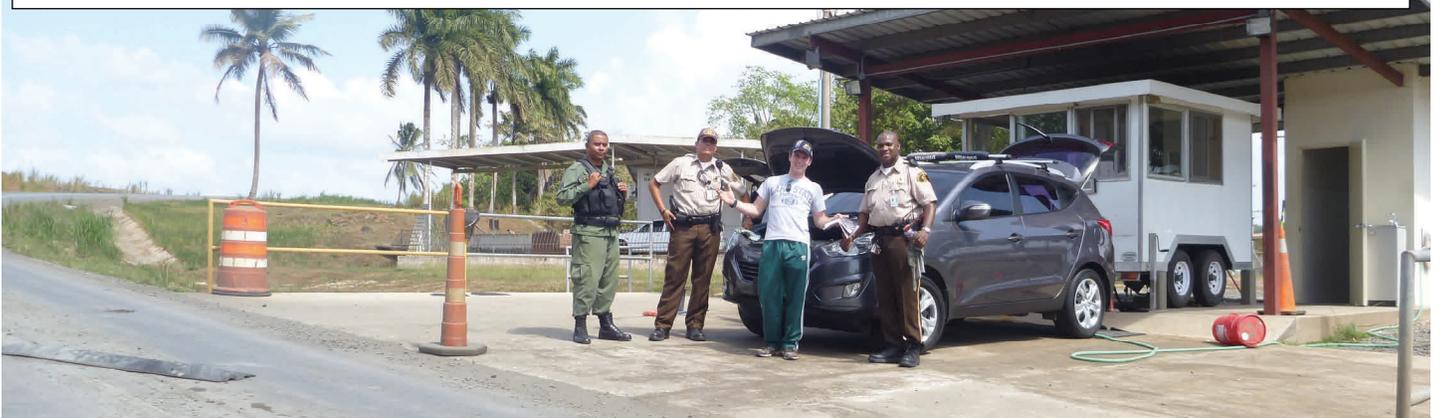
By huge, I mean man-made mountains, parking lots, cranes, none of which were on the map :(

There *might* have been the odd “something official that I can pretend not to understand because it is in Spanish” sign here and there along the road, and there *may* have even been some guards driving around. That being

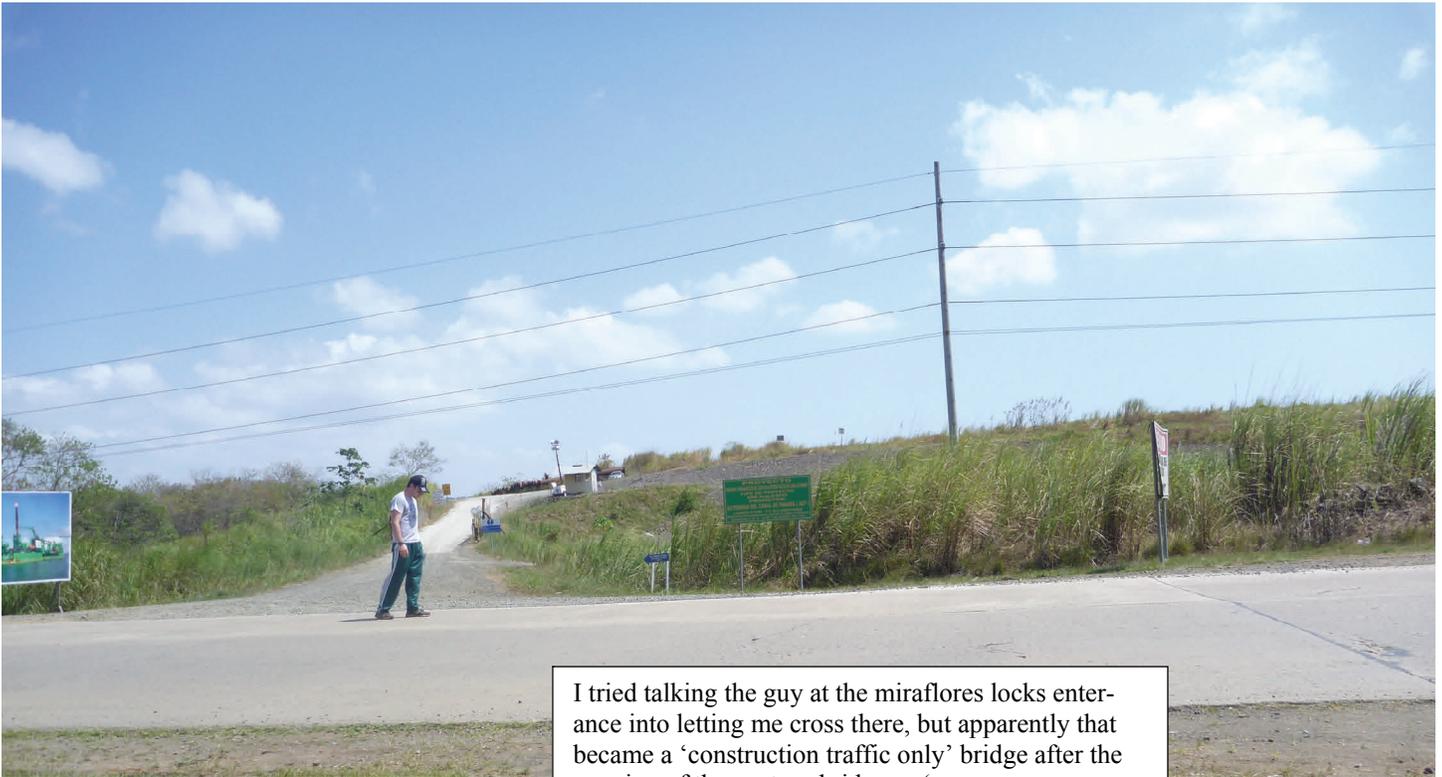


said, all the gates I saw were open, and the guards generally honk and wave if you keep jogging and give them nod and a wave like you're supposed to be there. I think that my big sunglasses helped too :D My luck finally ran out when I was like 2/3 of the way through the zone and I came across a guard shack with real live guards in it :(They were pretty cool (despite being

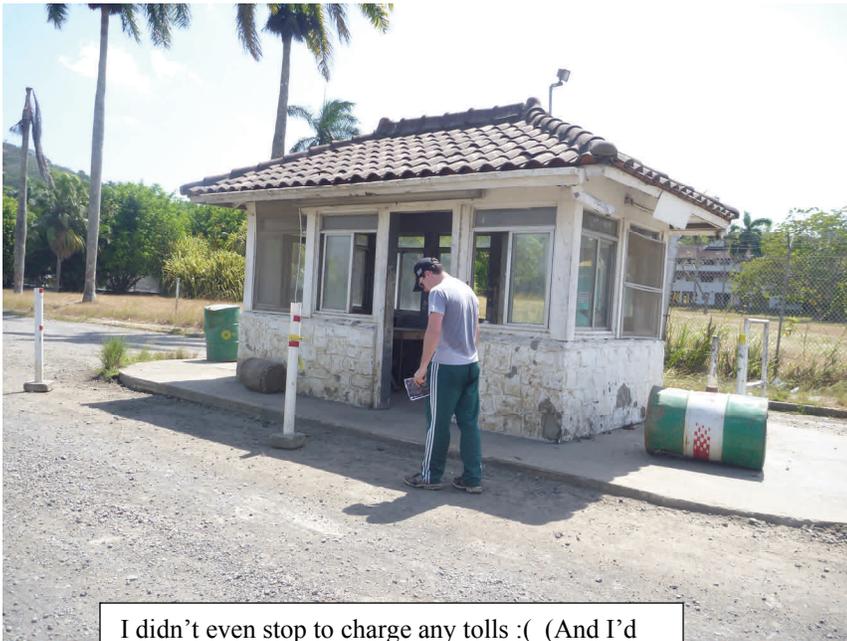
Well armed, and *also* the best car maintainer in the northern hemisphere. The guy on the right changes his transmission fluid and filter *Once a year*!!! *And* he had just cleaned between the terminals on his battery!! *No One* remembers to do that! The biggest bummer of all of this was that I was about a mile from the bridge and these guys were guarding a tailing pile that was at the end of the construction zone :(



ridiculously well armed) and we chatted about one fellas car for a while before they explained that the only way to get to the century bridge from there involved a twelve mile detour, which *starts* where I had started jogging :(



I tried talking the guy at the miraflores locks entrance into letting me cross there, but apparently that became a 'construction traffic only' bridge after the opening of the century bridge. :(



I didn't even stop to charge any tolls :((And I'd even brought my alumni magazine covers for more cool pics :p)

So I started heading back :(

It was getting hot, and I didn't want to burn up the rest of my day, so I pretty much decided to bag the rest of it by the time I got back to the ship :P

I saw some cool stuff on my way back to the ship though :)



There was this truck marked 'inflammable' which I thought was odd because I'm pretty sure it was gasoline, and that's flammable right? :p

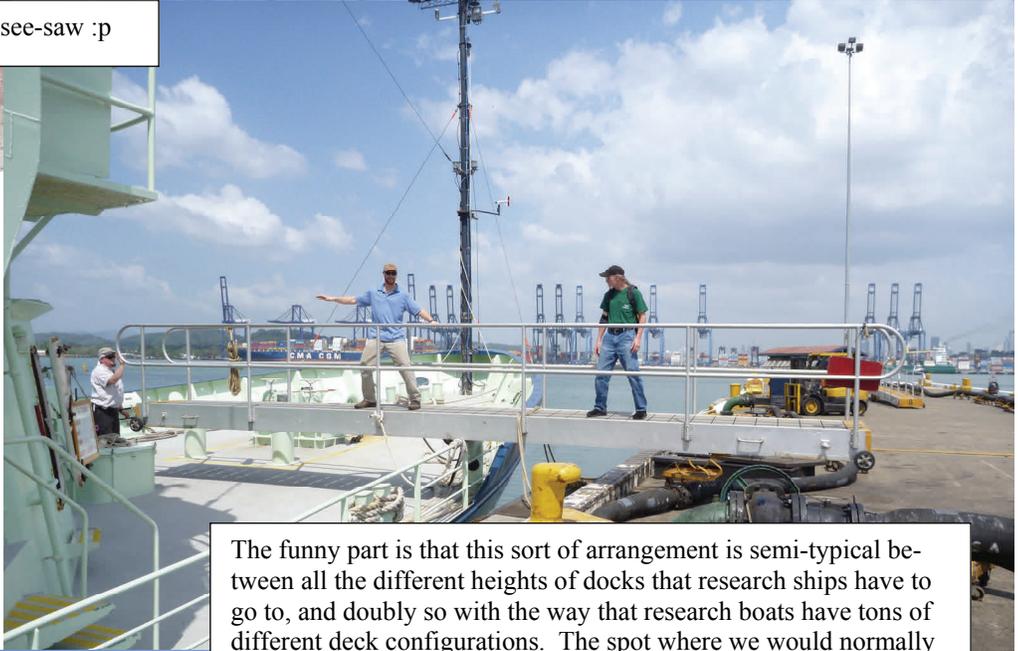


They had these awesome retro telephone booths too, they are for all the folks who come in on ships and don't have cell phones that work here. I couldn't get a map out of one of these either though :(



I got back to the ship and got all did up to head out on the town :) Eric and Chip came along too, this is them demonstrating the 'teeter-totter' gangway that we were using to get on and off the ship :)

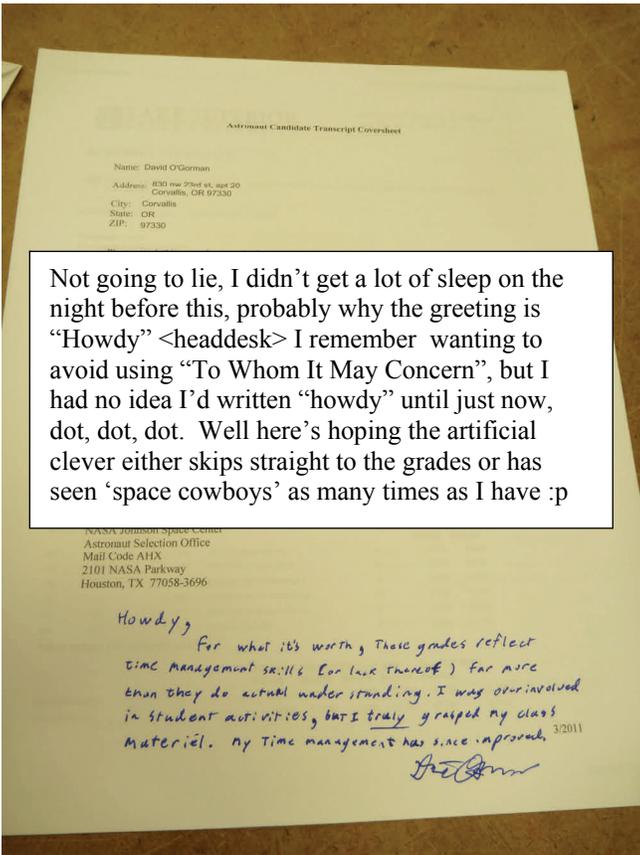
Multi-million dollar ship, janky see-saw :p



The funny part is that this sort of arrangement is semi-typical between all the different heights of docks that research ships have to go to, and doubly so with the way that research boats have tons of different deck configurations. The spot where we would normally have this gangway (and would have been an order of magnitude less janky) has a shipping container on it right now.



It works pretty well overall provided that it doesn't get simultaneously used by persons of disproportionate mass...



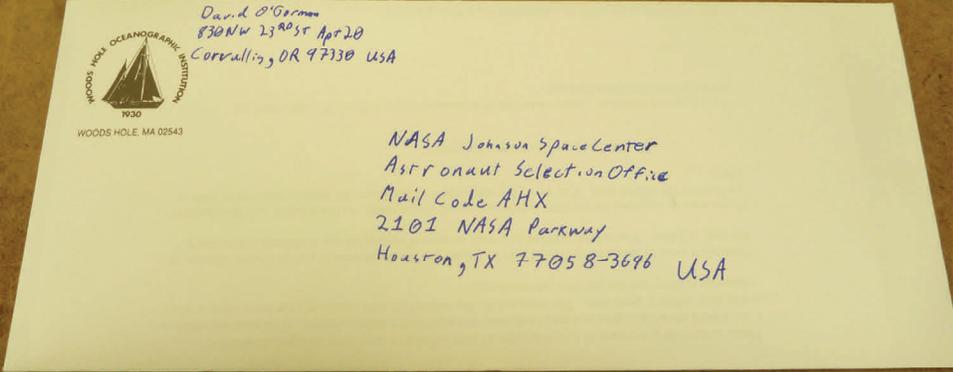
Not going to lie, I didn't get a lot of sleep on the night before this, probably why the greeting is "Howdy" <headdesk> I remember wanting to avoid using "To Whom It May Concern", but I had no idea I'd written "howdy" until just now, dot, dot, dot. Well here's hoping the artificial clever either skips straight to the grades or has seen 'space cowboys' as many times as I have :p

Howdy,
For what it's worth, these grades reflect time management skills (or lack thereof) far more than they do actual understanding. I was over-involved in student activities, but I truly grasped my class material. My time management has since improved.
3/2011
David O'Gorman

Oh! Before I left I made sure that I got the rest of my paperwork together for my NASA application :D For some reason, despite the application being for, well, NASA, and despite the fact that the system is being run by an artificial clevertelligence, that want to have transcripts *mailed* in :p I'm going to be completely honest here, my transcript has enough evidence of time spent on things other

I was super-psyched to find an official woods hole envelope to mail it in :)

than classwork that I felt it required a handwritten note on the cover sheet :p



After that it was into the cab to head into town :D

Two things to note about this cabbies steering wheel:
Thing one—suicide steering knob (illegal in Americus)
Thing two—Die cast Toyota logo bling *glued* over the stock Toyota logo which was merely impressed in the steering wheel over the , oh wait, *Freaking Airbag*..... :p



Here's me wandering around a casino with my NASA letter... Apparently the only places that they have ATM's down here is in casinos.

Wait, there's something in this casino that cash actually comes *out* of? :p

Woot! All stamped and ready to go!! I paid extra so that the envelope will *only* take eight days to get there :p

And I needed cash to get stamps :)



Woot!! One transcript, complete with handwritten cover letter, mailed to NASA in a Woods Hole Oceanographic envelope from Panama :D

Hey, you never know, maybe the artificial clever has a stamp collection :)



I was going to get the Dave a panama hat, but they wanted \$40 for one!!

After the important business was taken care of it was time to get some souvenirs :D I generally suck at this part of things, usually when I travel I feel like I shouldn't shower my loved ones with 'junky trinkets' from the tourist traps of the world, but every time someone brings *me* something from somewhere that they've been I'm always like

“Wow, that was really thoughtful, I wish I was thoughtful like that” :p After talking myself into at least getting a *few* odds and ends we headed down



Read closely, girls *and* rooms, these folks don't mess around :p

Is this where they do the can-can?!

the street where I was surprised to find out that you could probably 'catch' some souvenirs that would last a lot longer than a junky t-shirt...

I skipped that part.....

Anyhow, there was a *lot* of cool stuff to see walking around. Interestingly enough, not only has McD's made it down here, I think that the Mcdonalds franchise in Panama is *more* advanced than that of it's poor American counterpart, these guys have bicycle



McDonalds delivery on a bike, at least there will be *one* healthy person involved in this transaction :p



delivery!! They even had an awesome little McDon-

Actually, despite the higher cost of prepared food, I'd bet that the reduction in cost from the dangers of shopping while hungry would make a big-mac with every shopping trip economically rather feasible :)



I don't know why she's giving a peace sign, but in addition to getting an address, we got a map, two of her coworkers phone numbers (complete with times that they would be off work (and despite us explaining to her that we didn't have phones to call them with)), direction to a bar where we could hang out until then (where there would be 'mas chicas') and a two hour conversational Spanish class :)

alds kiosk in front of a grocery store!! After wandering for a wee bit, Erik and I ducked into a casino to ask for directions. After finding out where we were from and where we wanted to go,

and giving us phone numbers for two of her coworkers the front desk lady sent us on our way, two hours after we had walked in :)



Peace sign again... and the coworkers that she was trying to set us up with :) Gentlemen, let me be the first to tell you, there is *nothing* unmanly about stopping to ask for directions. I'm planning to start asking for directions as often as possible... :)

So yeah, we went to a cool superbowl party and headed back to the “barco” (Did I mention that we learned some Spanish when we stopped to get directions? :p) I can’t upload a whole photo album while I’m out here, but if I could, these photos would be from the “infrastructure and cool vehicles of the one and a half world” album :)



Inside the port customs office, a pulled fire alarm next to a ‘big red button’ installed on a box with a cover that can’t be closed over the button, next to some light switches that appear to be actual alarms, over a spot where someone seems to have lost interest while installing something else... probably another non-functional alarm...



This meter box had been open long enough that the vines had a chance to grow *into* it. The meter was ticking away as well, it was even a fancy new digital one :p An odd contrast, my apartment in America stil has the old ‘spinning record’ style.

This excavator had (apparently) been prepped for the zombie apocalypse...



This was at the guard shack at the other end of the base that we had (apparently) tied up in the middle of. For some reason this shack actually had guards. Also apparently it is not guarded by electricians...



That's right, more than half of the windshield covered by paint. Why? Because it's cooler, and because the way that people drive down here you're better off *not* seeing them. :p

Woot to the high rise tailpipe!!



Speaking of the driving, quote of the day goes to Erik with: "Dude, you could *so* be a cab driver down here...You'd fit right in!" :p

I once heard that busses in countries like this get so overdecorated in large part because a significant portion of the population is illiterate and having a distinctive bus makes it easier for them to find their way. Folks, these people can read, they just dig cool busses :D



WWII officers jeep with Nevada & Panama plates



And a touch of the kitchen sink on the hood :)

Now It's back the boat and the groundhog day special for the next seventeen (ish) days :)



Don't wander too far off the beaten path ;)

-

Dave

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