

## Tale of the Oxen Thieves

(We both wrote this from each of our observations)



We moved to Santaní in May, 2003. We were excited to be out of the big city of Asunción, moving to a small, friendly town. It took us 2 days to get all our boxes to Santaní, but we finally made it.

Our first night with all our “stuff” was *interesting!* We had boxes everywhere. We had not had time to unpack anything except our bed & linens. Linda was standing in the kitchen, drying her hands; Ed was setting up the computer. It was just past sunset. We heard a clap at the front gate. Instead of using doorbells, which very few houses have, people clap at your front gate to announce their visit.

Linda – I was in the kitchen, drying my hands on a dish towel. I heard the clapping, looked outside, and told Ed we had visitors. As I was walking outside, the first person I saw was a police officer, with a shotgun. We had parked the church’s big truck in front of the house, and my first thought was that the truck was in the roadway and the officer was going to ask us to move it. As I walked closer to the fence, I realized this was a foolish thought. We are at the end of a dirt road, the truck is not on the road, and there is no one else on the road that owns a vehicle. As I got even closer to the fence, I realized there were several (about 10) police officers. Some had kaki pants and shirt – that’s the national army. Some had black pants, black vest, and white shirt – that’s the customs officers. Others had plain clothes – that’s the posy. **ALL** had at least a shotgun, and some also had pistols. So, my next thought was, they have come to introduce themselves and welcome us to the area, but why so many guns?

Ed – As I walked outside and saw all the police officers, my first thought was what has happened that they are going to blame the new “gringos”?

The first officer was not very friendly. He asked if we owned the big truck. We said it was the property of our church, but we had borrowed it to move out things from Asunción to Santaní. He also asked if we owned a freezer. Yes, we do

own a freezer, it is an upright that stands about 5' tall, and is about 2 1/2' wide. He then advised us that 2 oxen had been stolen by someone with a truck just like the one we had, same color, same model, same year. His implication was – we had stolen the oxen, butchered them, and stashed them in our freezer!

I don't know if you've been up close and personal with an ox lately, but they are LARGE animals! There is no way even 1 butchered ox could fit in our freezer. Besides, we had not even plugged our freezer in for use.

He asked to look at our freezer. We showed him the freezer, still away from the wall, not yet in use. He seemed rather disappointed. Then he asked if any animals had been in our truck. We said only the 2 legged kind, as we had had some children and youth in the truck just the week before. They looked inside the bed of the truck for evidence. I'm sure they wanted to find some animal remains in our truck, but only found dust from the road.



While we were trying to assure them we were **NOT** their oxen thieves, the whole group started to become a little friendlier. They then apologized for disturbing us and said if we ever needed anything, their office was just down the road from us. They gave us their phone number, and left.

Now, Santaní is a very small town. There is only 1 other North American who lives here, and he has been here for 30 years. He has a Paraguayan wife, and 1 daughter living at home. So, we are very conspicuous. By the next day, the entire town had heard of the evening's activities. Ed went to buy some plumbing supplies. The owner of the shop was friendly, asking where Ed lives. The wife poked him as if to say – you know, they are the ones who were accused of stealing the oxen.

So the end of the story is, when you move into a new town – why not do it right? Make a BIG splash to announce to everyone who you are and where you live!