The Dawn Patrol

November 22, 2009 By David Weiss

5 a.m.: The light of dawn is barely visible in the eastern sky, but the roosters have already begun to crow and our dogs, Pepper, Robin and Brownie, are eager to take me out to Tulubhan Beach for their morning run. I have no choice in the matter - the dogs are determined to go and they take turns pawing at my arms.

I pull on a pair of shorts and flip-flops (the island fashion) and lift my heavy staff from its resting place near the bedside. The staff was carved for me by a local artist from molave wood and is hard enough to shatter bone. The dogs watch me lift it and run excitedly down to the gate of our compound, waiting for me to open it so they can charge down the road to the beach.

The wind is “amihan” now, blowing over the tidal flats from the eastern Philippine sea, thick with the scent of salt and seaweed. Its a long way from New York City. Will I ever return to the U.S.? Probably not. While I might be pursuaded to fly back to North America to defend an appropriate case involving HIV/AIDS criminalization*, I’m finished with my law practice. I recently turned 59, and after living with HIV for 30 years, I don’t know how much time I have left. It’s time to kick back and watch the sunrise.

I became a legal resident of Sweden, where Eva’s family lives, last spring. The health care system in Sweden is far superior to that of the country that I left behind. All Swedish citizens and permanent residents receive health care, and its just as good or better than the health care available in the U.S.

The health care debate would be almost amusing if it weren’t so sad. There are those in Congress who seem determined to prevent Americans living with HIV and other serious diseases from receiving adequate health care. Its a sorry state of affairs dominated by lobbyists for the U.S. health care industry who employ fear and misinformation to prevent change and I wonder if Washington will ever manage to give change the system...

*I can be found (maybe) at www.davidweissny.com

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