

Bicycle Courier: Fit, Efficient Business in Belize

With her wild hair blowing, arm up in greeting, and an infectious smile, you can't miss Dianne Lawrence when she speeds down the sandy streets of Ambergris Caye on her trusty Quicksilver Messenger bike. Wave and she'll always wave back, as she dashes off to run errands for her customers. Dianne arrived in Belize from Canada a little over three years ago. Unlike many local expats, she's neither baby boomer nor retiree—but an energetic 40-something single who came ready for a new adventure.

Before Belize, Dianne spent more than five years traveling the world. During that period, she lived and worked in Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Thailand, St. Croix, and Malaysia. She even sailed the Pacific for 10 months as a crewmember on a 37-foot sailboat. While teaching English near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, she started working toward a doctorate. Eventually, she returned to Canada to finish her thesis and regroup. But once she'd checked that box, she was ready to take that trip to Belize she'd put on the back burner.

Dianne lived on the mainland at first, and then she headed to San Pedro on Ambergris Caye. "I was at home the first time I set foot on



Dianne Lawrence prefers waking up in paradise as a bike messenger to working as the professor her doctorate qualifies her to be.

this island," Dianne recalls fondly. She says she fit right into the lively island community; the locals and expats welcomed her warmly. "People here are trusting."

Overheard: Rumor has it that Madonna's song, "La Isla Bonita," was written about Ambergris Caye.

Dianne is determined to stay in Belize. But in order to live in paradise, she has needed to modify her career path. In her case, it was a major detour. Dianne had just finished her doctorate in business administration, with a specialty in higher education. She came to Belize expecting to work as a professor.

But she has no regrets: "I prefer waking up in paradise as a bike messenger to holding a professional job."

When she arrived in San Pedro, Dianne had just \$1,000 left to her name. She had to find a way to support herself. Fortunately, she met Drummer Dan at the popular Crazy Canuck's Beach Bar. He owned the fledgling Quicksilver Messenger Service. But Dan's heart was really in his music. So he readily handed over his messenger business and single client to Dianne. Once she borrowed a bike, she was ready to go.

The first year was rocky. It took time to

earn the trust of her clientele. And she lost more than 35 pounds from biking 40 to 50 miles a day. But Dianne is one determined woman. "I'm one of those people who believes I can do anything I want, as long as it's legal and honest." Her attitude is typical of many of the independent-minded folks who end up in Belize.

Dianne expanded the business to include post office boxes, errand services, messenger/mail service, and cellular phone rentals. Now she earns a comfortable living and has more than 70 clients. "I'm always thinking of the next thing to include."

Socializing is a critical part of her business as she regularly generates new courier or mailbox clients at local bars. So after hours, Dianne will often wander to one of her favorite hangouts, like Wet Willies, Crazy Canuck's, BC's, or Road Kill Bar.

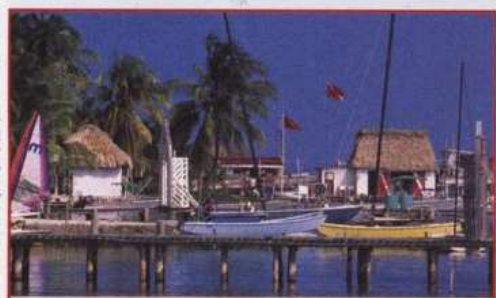
Dianne says she knows that she can't keep up her current cycling pace forever. So in addition to her business, she's now working on post-doctoral research studies. And during the last year, she also researched and wrote a manual on Belize's immigration laws and processes (see: www.belizevisas.com).

If you visit San Pedro, give Dianne a wave when you see her. Rent a cell phone from her Quicksilver Messenger Service, and you'll be connected on the ground in no time. See: www.quicksilvermessaging.com.

Editor's Note: *IL's* new report, *Belize: Live the Caribbean Dream...for Less*, gives you the lowdown on living in this tropical paradise. See: www.internationalliving.com/belize-report.

Buy a Business in Belize for \$35,000

Surf Guru is located in the town center of San Pedro. The shop has an inventory of top-of-the-line brand name swimwear, sandals, sunglasses, and other accessories. This would make a good business for a semi-retiree, but there is room for growth, too. Price: \$35,000. E-mail: pelicanproperties@gmail.com.



Chill out in Belize

If you'd like to see firsthand why Dianne loves living in Ambergris Caye, head there for a Chill Weekend at Grand Baymen, Belize. For more information, see: www.pathfinderinternational.net/belizeil/.

Quality of Life

Belize is the only country in Central America to have English as its official language.