



# Validation, hitting 50 and changing life

I turn 47 in about 3 months... and from there it'll be a couple more years until I turn 50. I've been thinking a lot about what does it mean, if I made the right choice when I decided to stay in the US in '94 (a few weeks after I arrived), or in '98 (when I finished my undergraduate at Central), or when I decided to become a naturalized citizen in '02... or when I decided to stay in '04 (after I finally finished my Master's) I don't regret the choices I made but there's always been that nagging feeling that if I had chosen to go back, perhaps things would have turned out different for me, dad and other people around me

One of my long-term projects between now and '24 is to go back to Chile... explore for a year and validate the choices I've made. Would I want to stay there if given the chance? Would I want to go back on a regular basis?

If you don't know me, and even if you do, the choice may sound strange, I'm still working on fleshing out the idea and the project myself. Any thought of going back to Chile implies a level of acceptance I didn't think I had in me. Until fairly recently I didn't relish the idea of being a stranger where I grew up... but now it's an acceptance of what has already happened, it's accepting that, while I may know names, faces, and families I also don't know them and they don't know me. It's accepting the fact that after some 20 to 30 years of not interacting with people you can hardly say you know them.

It's also taking the chance to do things I never did and visit places I never thought I would, particularly the places near Antofagasta that seem to have had such an importance to my family.

I thought about buying a car, drive it to Antofagasta, spend time with family and then drive to Calama, see if I can find my friend Cindy in the area. Visit San Pedro de Atacama and the nitrate offices, Humberstone and María Elena... from there take a leisure drive south, stop in Bahía Inglesa and other places that may be interesting or that catch my curiosity... and where I can swim in the Pacific :-)

Then come back to spend a few months in Santiago and, in the end, drive south through the Panamerican Highway and visit the south of Chile that I never knew.

It's also learning about myself. Maybe if I go back to the places I grew up in I might learn more about who I am today. Granted that I don't live in Chile now and I've never really been comfortable there, they shaped me for better or for worse and I think it's time I accept that whatever it is I've become it was shaped by what I learned in Chile and who I learned from.