

Hitchhiker Picked Up... by Uruguay's President



Montevideo, January 19 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Hitchhiking is unusual enough in Western countries, but imagine hitchhiking with the possibility of being picked up by the president.

That's what happened to Uruguayan Gerhald Acosta earlier in January, when President Jose Mujica stopped to give him a lift. Hitchhiking is common in the tiny South American country of just three million people, but Acosta told Uruguayan *El Observador* that he had been struggling to get a ride.

"I had been walking for a while and around 25 to 30 cars passed by and nobody stopped," the hitchhiker said. But Acosta's luck changed when a car following a government SUV stopped to offer him a ride.

But it was not President Jose Mujica that Acosta recognized first, but his wife, Senator and First Lady Lucia Topolansky and the couple's three-legged dog.

"I know this woman. It was Lucia, with Manuela, the dog," Acosta recounted. Then he noticed Mujica in the front seat. "I couldn't believe it. The president was giving me a ride."

Acosta shared the story on Facebook, posting photos that looked uncannily like the first couple, but after the interview with *El Observador* Friday, the story has gone global.

Outgoing left-wing President Mujica is beloved worldwide for his modesty and generosity. It was recently revealed he has donated over 75 percent of his presidential salary since being elected president. He and his wife live in a modest farmhouse and “Pepe,” as Mujica is affectionately known in Uruguay, still drives his old Volkswagon Beetle.

The hitchhiker said: "When I got out, I thanked them profusely because not everyone helps someone out on the road, and much less a president."

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