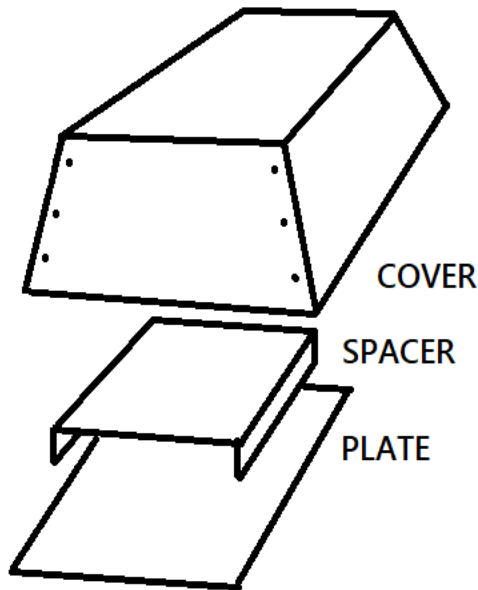


Stove-Top Oven

Having run out of money after four months of adventure in Guatemala, I found employment teaching English. Among the teachers I met were four Swedish girls living in the 4th floor of an apartment building, and a Carmelite nun living a couple of doors away.

I was wanting to bake a birthday cake for one of my Swedish friends, but the stoves in these apartments only had burners, and no ovens. The need for a stove-top oven (along with the belief that I could invent one) provided the impetus for this innovation. I set it up in the nun's apartment, and was able to surprise my Swedish friend with a birthday cake.



The design could hardly be simpler: After finding a local source of sheet metal scraps and malleable brass rivets, I cut a plate to cover two burners, formed a spacer above this plate upon which the baking pan would rest, and a cover.

Not indicated here was an end piece that could be removed or partially opened to monitor the baking progress.

Designing an oven just so I could bake a birthday cake for a girlfriend may seem like a sweetly romantic thing to do, but to my innocent heart it just seemed natural. It was generally understood that my poverty and the transitory nature of my lifestyle would never allow relationships to develop any futures, so I was free to enjoy sincere friendships that were free from the complications of sex or implied commitments.

Related Adventure: On evenings that I didn't make it out of town before the buses stopped running, I would sleep in the nun's apartment – scandalous perhaps, but I never got into the habit. I think it was indiscreet on her part though, because she was soon recalled to the United States.

I had left a jacket (the only one I had) in her apartment, but the doors were extremely secure. Fortunately, the balcony doors were not. So one night I left the balcony of the Swedish girl's apartment, and worked my way along the outside of the building – four stories above the cobblestones – climbed onto the nun's balcony, and retrieved my jacket