

# Friends of Colombia



Newsletter of the Colombia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

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## Letter from the President

Dear Friends of Colombia,

Since our last newsletter we have had a significant renewal of interest in FOC and the message has come through that FOC does serve a function, not only in the projects which we support, but also in the lives of its members. Therefore, we are regrouping, adding a few new members who have a fresh perspective, and plan to move forward.

I was particularly invigorated by my group reunion, which took place in Yosemite National Park last August. You will read more about the reunion in the article by Donald Goldberg, who was instrumental in organizing the event. The message was loud and clear that people wanted to maintain a connection with their Peace Corps experience, but that they also want to continue to support the people of Colombia. This involvement can best be accomplished through the support of FOC projects in Colombia.

FOC has made the commitment to put greater emphasis on projects in Colombia, enhancing the ones we currently support and expanding into new areas as is possible. In order to do so we are looking at various approaches to fundraising. We have been able to double our contributions to these projects for the year 2006. You will find more details about these contributions inside this newsletter.

The weekend of September 15th marked the 45th Anniversary of the Peace Corps. Ambassador Carolina Barco, recently appointed to the Embassy of Colombia, invited FOC to a reception at her home. Ambassador Barco was genuinely interested in the mission of the Peace Corps and had put us high on her priority list of people she wanted to meet upon arriving in Washing-

ton, D. C. We have agreed to dialogue on the subject of what Peace Corps accomplished in Colombia, what FOC is currently involved in, and how we can continue to work with Colombia on a people-to-people basis.

Another event of the weekend was a party on the sailing vessel, the Pajaro Jai. (See pictures on page 6.) The Pajaro Jai was commissioned to be built by the Embera people in Panama, by Jim Bruton, a former Peace Corps Volunteer in Panama. Their mission is one of increasing awareness of the plight of indigenous groups who face a struggle for survival. We wish to thank Jim Bruton for inviting us on board to experience the Pajaro Jai. Information about the Pajaro Jai Foundation can be found on its website, [www.pajarojai.org](http://www.pajarojai.org).

On a personal note, I would like to thank Pat Suarez for her many contributions to FOC, her leadership as chair of membership and maintaining our data base—no small task—for five years, her many years on the Board and then as a participant, and her willingness to simply pitch in as needed. Pat has decided to turn over her responsibilities to Gate Gibson. We hope that she will be able to continue to interact with the Board, sharing her insights and enthusiasm.

Lastly, I am asking all former Peace Corps Volunteers to Colombia to write and tell me about projects that you started as a volunteer and you know continue today or you would like to know if they continue today. In addition, I would like to know of any projects in Colombia that you are involved in today. This information might help us get funding in the future.

I look forward to your response. You may contact me at: [president@friendsofcolombia.org](mailto:president@friendsofcolombia.org)

Sincerely yours,  
Arleen Stewart Cheston  
President, FOC

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# Group VI Has a Reunion — Will Their Glory Ever Fade?

## Editor's Note

With a tepid apology to Tennyson and his 600 who rode hard and well, with canon on the left of them, more canon on the right ... and, well to the rear an aspiring poet, Group VI charged headlong into an unprepared San Francisco on the pretext of holding a Reunion. Yes, this is the same group which has been symbolically de-pledged by FOC for overexposure in its Newsletter! At the request of civil defense authorities, their Reunion was held at an undisclosed location. Thankfully, while serving time in Colombia, their numbers were small. They were distinguished more by those things they didn't do than by those

oft told tales of what they were purported to have done, often at reimbursement rates which were called into question by Peace Corps/Bogota. One of its members had a blue-water capable yacht anchored at the Cartagena Marina, while another tooled around the country on a motorcycle. Once, he crossed the border into Venezuela and ended up in jail. After three days of an endearingly inept exchange on the use of the conditional verb form, e.g., if I hadn't taken a wrong left turn in Cali, I wouldn't be here today, the bemused police were finally convinced he really was with the Cuerpo de Paz, if temporarily off the reservation.

## Group VI Holds a Reunion in San Francisco

Anonymous

From August 31 through September 4, many Colombian VI volunteers attended a fun-filled reunion organized by Dick Miller, who lives nearby in Foster City. Activities included a trip to the redwoods in Muir Woods; a visit, tour and lunch at the Niebaum-Coppola winery in Napa; a boat ride to Sausalito across the bay; visits to art museums and shopping at Union Square, and a banquet at a restaurant in Chinatown. Highlight of the weekend was a performance at Beach Blanket

Babylon, a spectacular, satirical musical review that makes fun of entertainers and politicians, while the performers sing and dance wearing enormous hats. Dick Miller's sons attended the show and dinner afterwards at the Washington Square Bar and Grill.

Those unable to resist the temptation to renew old feuds or tried—again to collect past bad debts, included: Bob Colombo and Sue Meyer, Irv and Robin Dubinsky, Joe and Genie Hindall, Duane Kline,

John and Sarah Muccifori, Jerry and Margurette Norris, Bill and Shirley Salisbury, Jack and Cathy Swenson, Jim and Evelyn Todd, and Chuck and Myra Willson.

One Group member that could not make it was Mike Eubanks. He recently visited his old site in Colombia and kindly shared a letter of his contemporary impressions, though many questioned what he had been smoking.

## You Can Go Back Home Again

Mike Eubanks Group VI, July 1963 - February 1965

I would like to share with you some observations from a recent month's stay in Bogota and Santander. Most of what we saw represented success of what all of us worked for and hoped would result. Apart from the continued growth and development of the middle class, the campesino is sharing in the country's prosperity.

'Caminos vecinales' is extending paved farm to market roads deep into the countryside. Commercial quality vegetable crops and fruit are being grown everywhere. Milk for urban markets is regularly collected from even small farms. Fish farming is being rapidly developed. Tropical fruits have been widely commercialized. We found potable water and electricity everywhere.

Public schools are picking up campesinos after work, taking them to night school and then returning them to their homes by bus. Campesinos are rapidly acquiring trucks and motorcycles. Brick is replacing mud as the preferred building material.

Craft programs are well supported with a very strong design program, adapting skills to produce products that easily fit into homes beside modern furnishings.

Nick-knacks are out. High quality useful furniture and decorative objects are in.

'Artesanias de Colombia' is trying to find and record the history of its founding by USAID and Group VI.

Politically, we found walls painted with political signs for local candidates running for local offices—rather than revolutionary slogans.

We found strong security measures in the heart of the country, safe travel, and a police force that was friendly, outgoing and very helpful. The police have a high level of self-respect and are respected. In Bogota, the police are expanding into neighborhood service centers. There is a very active traffic police (male and female) force. There is still substantial urban crime, but it didn't seem very different from Chicago.

Bogota has taxis running on pressurized natural gas, a rapidly developing urban transit system, active bike routes and dedicated bike paths. The streets are cleaner than New York City's.

Smog is still a major problem and there is a great multiplicity of small buses serving the outlying barrios. But as the public transportation system continues to ex-

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pand, the smog spewing buses are slowly being forced off the streets.

What was most impressive was the multiplicity of new businesses and services necessary to support a rapidly modernizing country and a modern city of 7 million people. There is a very high level of satisfaction with past and present Mayors of Bogota.

With the vast numbers of retail stores and services open on U. S. hours of operation, there are many great jobs available for part-time students, opening advanced education to poorer students.

We were particularly impressed with the building industry and were able to see and compare earlier construction with the latest apartments and condos. Given the state of development, the availability of excellent medical care, \$150 health insurance policies, \$5 for opera seats, \$2 for afternoon concerts, mountain streams filled with rainbow trout, and home ownership at 30% of U. S. costs, I am planning to move with my wife to the Bogota area in the Spring of 2009.

## Colombian Ambassador Hosts Reception for Former Volunteers

Jim Todd  
Group 13 ETV

On September 15, newly arrived Colombian Ambassador to the U.S. Carolina Barco took the initiative to invite former Colombia volunteers (some of whom were in Washington for the RPCA's 45th anniversary events) to her embassy for a reception. She asked them to continue serving as individual "ambassadors" for Colombia throughout the U.S. Recalling that 2006 is the centennial of Alberto Lleras Camargo's birth (he was President of Colombia in 1961 and personally welcomed the first group of volunteers who arrived), she lauded his work with President Kennedy on the Alliance for Progress. Ambassador Barco also expressed interest in working with Friends of Colombia, especially with regard to grass-roots development projects that FOC has been assisting. Finally, she showed a short DVD entitled "Colombia is Passion" designed to promote tourism and deliver the message that there's more to Colombia than the drug problem. FOC President Arleen Cheston responded to the Ambassador's remarks, thanked her for the reception, and pledged that FOC looks forward to cooperating with the Colombian embassy in identifying worthy development projects and in its outreach efforts here in the U.S.



## Book Review

By Patricia A. Wand, RPCV, Colombia 1963-65.

Ingrid Betancourt, *Until Death Do Us Part: My Struggle to Reclaim Colombia*. Translated from the French by Steven Rendall, NY, HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.

For those of us passionate about Colombia and curious about the state of politics there, this book is a must-read. Ingrid Betancourt was born in 1961, the year Peace Corps began service in Colombia. Through her eyes, the reader sees the political scene in Colombia from then until the year 2000.

The daughter of a well-placed Colombian family, Betancourt spent her formative years in Paris where her father served as Colombian ambassador to UNESCO. She married a French diplomat and, with two children, was living the relatively easy life of a diplomatic family when she discovered her passion for her country of origin.

Her mother was working on the campaign of presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan when he was assassinated in 1989. The ramification of this event helped to thrust Betancourt into the middle of Colombian politics. Returning to Colombia to assist her politically active mother, Betancourt became politically active herself. She saw it as the only way she might contribute to the social change necessary to save her beloved country from widespread corruption and violence.

Her life as change-agent began by working with politicians to plan policy or investigate projects. In March 1994 Betancourt was elected representative to the Colombian congress and in 1998 she won a seat in the Senate, receiving the highest number of votes cast for any candidate. Her numerous courageous efforts to stop corruption and to impose a new standard of ethics on politicians attracted international attention and endeared her to the Colombian electorate. Upon the urging of many, Ingrid Betancourt became a candidate for the presidency in 2002.

But neither her presidential campaign nor her kidnapping by guerrillas in February 2002 are covered in this book. Instead, within its pages, the reader finds details on political activities of Ernesto Samper, Andres Pastrana and many others with whom Betancourt associates through the 1990s. In addition, one learns of the vicious rivalry between Pablo Escobar (Medellin drug cartel) and the Rodriguez brothers (Cali cartel) and of their numerous interactions with politicians and police. One learns about the sacrifices endured by a woman in Colombian politics: pain of divorce, anxiety of multiple threats on her life and her family, and the guilt of unfulfilled motherhood during long separations from her children.

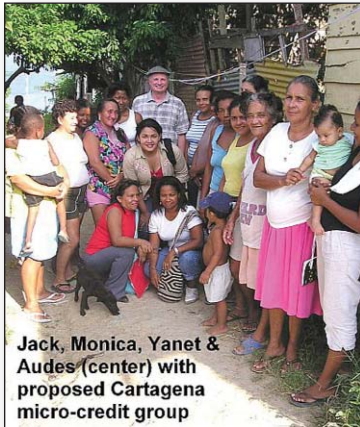
Written like a fast-paced suspense novel, the book informs and intrigues the reader, especially one who shares the author's deep passion for Colombia. As a returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Colombia, if you harbor questions about your country of service, do read this book.

# An Update on the Colombia Project

Helene Dudley - Colombia 1963-65

After a recent visit to Colombia to meet with our Santa Marta partner and visit loan recipients, we want to give you an update about progress to date and exciting plans to add a third partnership in Cartagena.

The Colombia Project is now six years old, and we have achieved success far beyond our initial expectations. We have given out more than US\$30,000 in



Jack, Monica, Yanet & Audes (center) with proposed Cartagena micro-credit group

micro-credit loans to displaced families in Popayan and Santa Marta. Our initial focus on helping displaced families has proven to be one of great need as Colombia ranks 4th in the world in terms of internal refugees or displaced families, and there is no end yet in sight. Our two partners are well re-

spected, of the highest integrity and are admired by government officials and the displaced families. The repayment rates have been good, and we are gratified to see our partners focusing on what needs improving and to see that incorporated into the next loan cycles.

These loans have had a much broader impact than just the \$30,000 we have given to loan recipients—they are helping improve life in the broader displaced community. First because the loans repaid are loaned out again to other people and secondly because our partners have leveraged their programs' success to obtain other micro-credit funding as well from government and international funding sources.

The Colombia Project held a Strategic Planning meeting earlier this summer to take stock of what was working well, where we needed to improve and to focus on plans for the future. We agreed on the need for closer ties to our two partners, both through site visits and our partners visiting us in Miami. But we also agreed we should expand our efforts with a third partner in another area where poverty and displacement are major problems.

We are pleased to announce that plans for a third micro-credit loan partnership were discussed during a Sept 19-21 site visit to Colombia. The proposed Cartagena program would be under the direction of APRODEFA and Audes Jimenez Gonzalez, who is an internationally recognized community development leader in Colombia. Audes came to the attention of The Colombia Project through the ASHOKA Foundation, which identified Audes as an outstanding and ef-

fective agent for social change. Jack Edwards and Helene Dudley had the opportunity to watch her in action at a meeting with 15 displaced women who are emerging leaders and entrepreneurs and would be the core group for this expansion.

Jack and Helene also visited the FUNDEHUMAC program in Santa Marta and discussed a possible grant-funded initiative focused on indigenous Wayuu and Arzareo families who have been displaced due to economic development (mines, petroleum and a maritime port) in the Colombian states of the Guajira and Caesar. FUNDEHUMAC is already working with three Wayuu families that have an excellent track record with their loans and businesses to date.

In Santa Marta we met Isabel who is the sole support for her two aged parents, a paraplegic uncle and three children. She was displaced after her husband was killed. Marta used to own half of a town, but lost all her possessions and saw five of her children killed before she moved to Cienaga where she has set up a small store with the help of a Colombia Project loan. Zaida feeds her family from proceeds from her informal luncheonette, set up under a tree. Despite the seemingly unending hardships, the families continue their struggle to make a better life for their children.



Wayuu with mochillas



In a humble house atop a nearly inaccessible hill in one of Cartagena's invasion barrios, the women voiced the same concerns that one could hear at any PTA meeting in the states – the importance of a good education, how to protect their children from bullies and bad

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# Reunion of University of Missouri-Kansas City Training Group (Summer 1964)

By Don Goldberg,  
Community Development  
1964-65

From August 4-6, 2006, my Peace Corps training group held its first reunion since leaving Colombia in the summer of 1966. We met near the beautiful waterfalls and shadows of the mountains in Yosemite National Park. Why there and why now?

During the summer of 1964, about 70 of us gathered at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in June. Three months later 52 of us flew to Colombia, spent a few days in Bogota and then took off for our site assignments. Although we had two in-service meetings while in Colombia, this past August was the first time since the sixties that we had met as a group. When we came together, we reminisced, caught up, met spouses and partners and, of course, downed a little aguardiente. We were able to celebrate our shared experience, mourn those who had died, talk about the impact of our lives in Colombia and in the Peace Corps, and learn about how our lives had unfolded over the past 40 years. We did a lot of laughing and a lot of sharing of stories, pictures, information and hugs.



Left to right, Steve and Maureen Sloan; Terry and Betty Kennedy; Janet Mulgannon del Castillo; Arleen Cheston (center, back row); Merilee and Paul Beyreuther; Jack and Diane Carney; Virginia Tindall; Bob Arias; Pam Horowitz Spindola; and Barbara and Don Goldberg.

For all of us, both our training experiences and our time in Colombia left a lifetime of memories and changed our lives forever. The reunion gave us time to reflect on our experiences and to share in them.

Sometime in the summer of 2005, I was lucky enough to reconnect with a member of our group on a trip to Washington. Arleen Cheston (Stewart back in 1964-66) and I met for lunch while I was there visiting

my son. It was either from that lunch--outside on a beautiful Washington D.C. afternoon--or soon after that Arleen and I hatched the idea of a reunion for our group. Arleen, President of Friends of Colombia, was able to supply me with contact information for about 30 of our 52 RPCVs. We sent letters and e-mails in fall 2005 and received enthusiastic responses -- and additional contacts -- from all over the country and from Chile and Mexico. We decided to hold a reunion somewhere during the summer of 2006.

One long, typed response came from Virginia Tindall, who had been a member of our group along with her husband Art. Art sadly had passed away, and Virginia was now over 90. She wanted to be part of the reunion but was unable to travel. Virginia and her granddaughter lived in a small town in California close to Yosemite National Park. To honor Virginia and to ensure that she could attend, we made arrangements to hold our reunion at Yosemite -- a perfect location we all agreed at the end of the weekend.

About 15 of our group came, along with about 10 spouses/partners, to Yosemite for the weekend of August 4-6, 2006. The first night we met over empanadas, aguardiente, and other Colombian goodies and reconnected. Many people had brought along DVDs, pictures, and other remembrances. Robert Arias, one of our group and later a country director for the Peace Corps, brought some T-shirts and bumper stickers made for our reunion, along with a DVD message especially addressed to us from former Peace Corps Director, Gaddi H. Vasquez. It was also very exciting to hear from Arleen Cheston, in her capacity as President of FOC, about FOC's ongoing activities and projects. Our conversations, serious and full of laughter, went on for hours.

The next morning began what went on throughout the weekend. We met in small groups to eat and then sightsee. We walked; we took our cars or tour buses to sites within the park. We had our cameras going all weekend, with the extraordinary scenery forming the backdrop of many of our group photos. Saturday night as a group we held a rather formal dinner at the world famous Ahwanhee Hotel in the Park. Our honored guest, Virginia Tindall, came with two of her granddaughters. Virginia and Art's granddaughters were able to see, for the first time, wonderful forty year old pictures of their grandparents joyfully dancing the cumbia, in costume.

So what did we learn from our time together in Yosemite? I think we learned that, nearly half a century

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later, our experiences together in training and in Colombia still resonated for us and united us – the Peace Corps remained a profound experience in our lives that was joyful to recall and to share. We learned that we could begin where we had left off and reestablish relationships and friendships from those days. We learned that for almost all of us, the Peace Corps was a catalyst for lives of public service both in the states and overseas. We learned that Colombia held a special place in our hearts – one that we wanted to continue to support through FOC’s projects. And we learned that we wanted to continue these reunions, now that we had met at Yosemite.

I can't say strongly enough what this reunion has meant to me and to so many others. I hope your group will do it. Don't wait 40 years if you can help it.



## Let's Finish the Job via GlobalGiving.com

*(Excerpted from the National Peace Corps  
Association Website)*

Many in the Peace Corps community remain motivated to alleviate the worst aspects of human suffering in today's world. A new initiative between the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) and GlobalGiving.com gives us a proven tool to finish the job we started as volunteers—eliminating global poverty through high-impact, grassroots projects.

GlobalGiving.com is a non-profit online marketplace for international giving, connecting individual and institutional donors directly to social and economic development projects and environmental causes around the world. “Let's Finish the Job” will provide training in fundraising and communications to interested RPCV groups and work with them to identify or develop their own projects. Groups can then promote their own projects on this customized Website, significantly expanding their reach to potential donors.

As a pilot, projects of two NPCA affiliate groups and one NGO with strong ties to the Peace Corps community are now posted on the GlobalGiving Web site. Click GlobalGiving.com to visit and explore NPCA's Global-Giving pages for the Friends of Thailand, Friends of Burkina Faso and High Atlas Foundation, as well as Tony Gambino's blog. Learn how GlobalGiving can be a powerful tool for the Peace Corps community!

## FOC Event on the Pajaro Jai, September 6, 2006



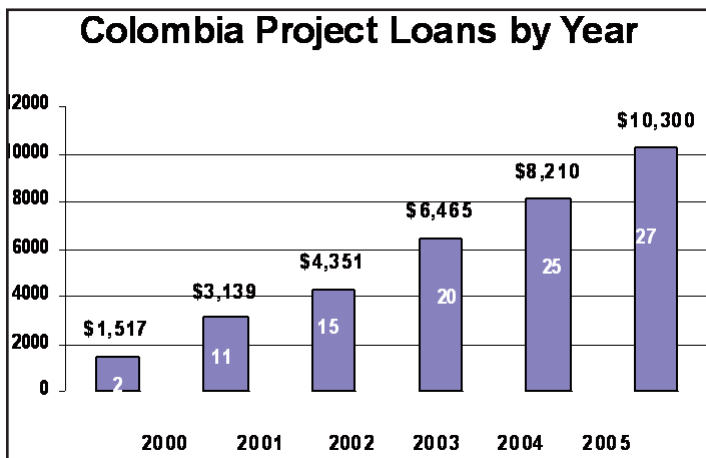
*Board Members Gale Gibson and Pat Suarez in center.*



*Some members of Group I in Pajaro Jai's interior.*

influences, how to increase the family's standard of living. Help to these families is money well spent.

With each visit to Colombia, we become more convinced of the merit of our mission to offer a helping hand to people who are capable and willing to do the hard work required to improve their lives. Thank you for your continued support of those efforts.



## Paso a Paso Update to Friends of Colombia

By Haroldo L. Suarez

President Magdalena Foundation, Inc.  
Vice President, Fundehumac

The children in the program have made remarkable progress and MFI scholars have organized a few programs where they can participate. Children have visited the museum at the place where Simon Bolivar died and participated in the Children's Week celebration which took place in the main square in front of the Mayor's Office in June.

MFI students have had difficulties with a couple of families because parents are negligent, do not take care of their children and send them to school in dirty uniforms. Children have appeared abandoned, they lose their notebooks and books are torn. These items were replaced once but parents were told that the Foundation would work with other children if they did not cooperate in their education. One mother improved her conduct but the second family did not. In July, I accompanied Alba and two students to this household in Barrio San Pablo to inform them that we could not continue working with their three girls. They are: Diana, Saray and Keren Imbreth.

However, while working in the different schools where the children study, 21 children have been added to the different activities. Those extra children receive tutorial help and their parents seemed to have embraced

## FOC Doubles Contributions to Projects for 2006

The new policy of the FOC's Board is to raise funds for projects, mainly in Colombia, and to put truth to that by doubling contributions for 2006. At the Board meeting of October 18, the following contributions for projects were approved:

	2005	2006
Magdalena Foundation	\$1,300	\$2,600
American University (for the Colombia RPCV Archive)	\$ 700	\$1,000
The Colombia Project	\$ 700	\$1,500
Paso a Paso	\$1,300	\$2,500
K-12 Wired-Orth Foundation		\$1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$8,600</b>

The Board is in the process of conducting a due diligence on other potential recipients, including a Washington-based group called Colombia Progresiva, which helps 4,000 children through gifts of clothing and other materials. If the outcome is positive, the Board could approve grants of \$1,400 to such groups later.

this initiative. At the MFI scholarship award ceremony, the children sang and recited poems. This was a rather moving ceremony and their picture can be seen on the MFI web page under "Scholarship Awards, July 2006."



Paso a Paso children with several MFI scholars who work with them at the MFI awards ceremony in July 2006

The children who have visited the pediatrician (free services) have been found to be under-nourished and with ongoing health problems, such as worms, low growth and some have dental problems. A home survey conducted by Francisco Redondo, a medical student of

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MFI, found that their habitat is at fault for this situation. They do not have latrines and the family hygiene habits do not offer them a healthy environment. In the past, when the pediatrician gave them a prescription, parents came to the foundation to ask for money to buy the medicines. Very often, these children go to school without food and one girl suffers from headaches and dizziness when she engages in any physical activity. Fundehumac will also discontinue working with Jorge, Ilder and Breiner Pertuz in Gaira because their mother does not take them to participate in any activity that may further their educational growth. She is unemployed and continues to neglect her children.

Above developments should be considered as serious limitations to the healthy educational growth of these children and require an appropriate review of the future of Paso a Paso. Fundehumac proposes a selection of those children who have the best options to succeed because of their parental support, health profile and interest to study.

While Alba Lucia and all MFI students who work with the Paso a Paso program are deeply saddened with this reality, they realize that we do not have the resources to rescue these children from their household environment. Some parents believe that the Foundation should take complete responsibility for their children. At that point, it has become an awkward situation to try to help when MFI scholars do not feel they are making a contribution and may be resented by the parents. Additionally, these children do not have the benefit of participating in any out of school programs, because the parents do not cooperate. As these resources could be better invested in other children, Fundehumac will try to make a better selection next year to ensure a positive and successful contribution.

Conclusion. Four children will continue in the program next year and based on available resources, Fundehumac will incorporate other children from the extra 21 children. However, Fundehumac will continue to monitor and tutor as many children as it is possible and will advocate for public support with a couple of local institutions. For example, Alba has filed a letter with the Family Welfare Institute to provide breakfast and lunch for all these children with the support of a nutritionist. It is likely that the new director of this institute who is supportive of Fundehumac's work may help us to get a positive outcome.

#### ABOUT THE MAGDALENA FOUNDATION.

Three students finished their academic work in June and were replaced by 3 new students. Two of the grad-

uated students are fully employed and helping their families. The third student cannot find a place to do his internship in auto mechanics to get his diploma. We expected 8 students to graduate in December but it appears that one university, where six of our graduating scholars attend, is trying to lengthen their program by at least one semester, and this will affect MFI plans to include 6 new students into the scholarship program.

The students who are affected by this change are organized under the leadership of Jorge Manjarrez, a MFI scholar. They plan to file a legal case with the courts, but will have to wait until the decision is announced officially. However, this case may not be resolved by the end of the year and this will impair our ability to help the prospective students who are working with Fundehumac and deserve a chance to go to college. Should the current graduating scholarship students need to continue one additional semester, there would be no funding available to add any new students as our fundraising efforts, at this time, are at about one scholarship less than the previous year.

This will be an unprecedented experience for the Magdalena Foundation, i.e., not bringing in any new students. If FOC members would consider raising the level of support, at least this year, we would be able to bring in a couple of new students. By the second semester we would then be able to offer scholarships to the other deserving four students and hopefully provide some additional funding for our students who are not studying locally. We would consider this to be a one time increase to get us through this "peak period". Thereafter we would reduce the total number of students by two or three so that we can absorb additional costs due to increases in cost of living and tuition fees. On behalf of the Board and the students of the Magdalena Foundation and the children of Paso a Paso, who you have helped in the past, through Fundehumac, we wish to thank you for all the support and interest you have shown in our programs and we will continue to strive to provide assistance to those most deserving youth in Magdalena. We are profoundly grateful for your support.

This Newsletter is being sent to all for whom we think we have a current address. If you are not currently a member, please consider joining FOC and continue to receive this Newsletter!

# FOC's Board Members Recruit First Round Draft Picks

Led by Arleen Cheston, Board members set out to recruit fresh blood and rejuvenate the organization. Under the spirited recruitment banner "Few are Called & Less Chosen", the first round draft picks from Arleen's exercise are:

**1. Web Master** With considerable help from Irv Dubinsky, Arleen recruited the first Web master for FOC. He is Jim O'Reilly of Durham, North Carolina. Jim served in rural community development in Isla Tierra Bomba, near Cartagena, and in Mompo on the Magdalena from September 1964 through June 1965. Afterwards, he did stints in the Army, serving in Vietnam, followed by newspaper reporting assignments in New Jersey and North Carolina. Jim attended graduate school, studying demography and sociology, statistical legal consulting, and political consulting. For the past 25 years he has been involved in contract survey research, working mainly on computers and information technology. Jim has been married for 34 years, has three children—and one marvelous granddaughter, Lila.

Welcome aboard, Jim, we look forward to the application of your expertise to the FOC web site!

**2. Membership Director** Gale Gibson has agreed to try and fill the shoes of Pat Suarez as Membership Director. Yet, Gale has been on the bench for some years now, mainly on Injured Reserve, awaiting his turn at the Big Show. Gale is among the few—the very few, that have been with FOC from its rustic beginnings in a room decorated with Early American furniture and appliances (apple crates, a hand powered sharpener for #2 pencils, etc.). Over the past several years, his sage advice and counsel to the Board as an advisor has been of material assistance to its prudent decision-making, especially as Arleen assumed the leadership position from Bob Colombo, FOC's first president. The Board is appreciative of Gale's willingness to take on this new assignment. And we thank Pat for all

these past years of unswerving attention to the tenuous details of putting together and maintaining a Membership directory.

**3. New Editor** Beginning in January 2007, Abby Wasserman, Group XIII, '63-65, has agreed to serve as the new editor of the FOC Newsletter. FOC is fortunate to have such an able and experienced professional assume this post. Abby is a writer, artist and editor, living in Mill Valley, California. She recently published her first children's picture book, *TOSCA'S PARIS ADVENTURE*, which she wrote and illustrated. Previous books include a monograph on contemporary Native American artists and a multicultural history of Oakland, California. She is active in local arts organizations and leads several writing groups.

With far more enthusiasm than was necessary, FOC was able to encourage its current editor to take his blue pencil elsewhere. He was suitably informed that the Board vote was "more than unanimous". His offer to be of assistance to the new editor has been rejected by the Board, which noted when responding to him in a remarkable declarative sentence: you cannot stand on the order of returning to your former obscurity.

**4. New Vice President** Bulletin ... Group I comes in from the cold! Ned Chalker, a member of Group I—yes, the originals, has agreed to serve as the Board's new Vice President. By training, Ned was a mechanical engineer, working on the famed 'Gateway Arch' in St. Louis before answering that first call from President Kennedy. Following his Volunteer service, he worked in Peace Corps Washington for several years in Campus Relations. He then went on to the U. S. Department of Education, where he was Director of the Educational Research Centers Program. After his retirement, Ned served as president of the Potomac River Pilots Association from 1993 to 2003. At present, he is Chairman of the Board, National Maritime Heritage Foundation.

Jerry Norris, Editor  
Friends of Colombia Newsletter

Dear Jerry,

I understand that you intend to resign from your current post as Editor of the Friends of Colombia newsletter. The Board of Directors deliberated for many hours to determine whether or not we should accept your resignation. We reviewed your conflicting offers of more leisure time, travel to dream destinations, substituting the finest cuisine and superb wine for Papa John's pizza, writing the great American novel, hiking in remote locations, power lunches to influence the course of our world, and realized that we could not refuse.

Not only are our members appreciative of your many years of involvement in FOC, accepting the position of Vice President, your opinions, ideas, suggestions and your many hours of putting together the newsletter for the past five years, but we have also enjoyed your sense of humor and personal touch. We will miss that.

So, Jerry, on to other rewarding endeavors. We are consoled that you will remain working with the Board and that we can count on your guidance.

With gratitude and affection,

*Arleen*

Arleen Stewart Cheston  
President, Friends of Colombia

## In Remembrance

### Editor's Note

*Dr. Jim King is fondly remembered by thousands of Volunteers who served in the early years of Peace Corps Colombia. Along with his wife, Mary and their children, they were an inseparable part of the Peace Corps family. Many volunteers, like myself, who had met with an untimely accident or some other medical emergency, found themselves at their home in Bogota, where recuperation was mainly accomplished through Mary's home cooking and the warm, encompassing family environment they provided. Outside of being a highly skilled medical professional who imparted confidence to Volunteers on first meetings, Jim also played a secular role, taking the time to see to it that they had a home away from home. When he and Mary instinctively knew Volunteers were at their tipping points—you know, that time when we said to ourselves "just what is it that I am doing here, anyway", there was nothing like being sat down at their dinner table and being part of a family. That would ease the tensions and make going back to the yucca and rice routine seem like a well earned badge of courage.*

Dr. King passed away at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland on September 1. He was born in Newcastle, England. After his graduation in Medicine from Durham University, he immigrated to America where he married Mary Ellis Heilbron. Following his service in the U. S. Army, Jim was a surgeon in private practice in Red Bluff, California, and then took a position as Chief of Surgery at Guam Memorial Hospital. He served as the first Peace Corps physician for Colombia, Venezuela and Jamaica following President Kennedy's call to service. He earned a Masters in International Public Health from Johns Hopkins in 1968 and then served as an Associate Regional Health Director, Chicago Regional Office, U. S. Public Health Service. From 1968-70, he served as a consultant to the Ministry of Health, Guatemala, as a Public Health Advisor on loan to USAID. In the 1970s, Jim was Deputy Director, Office of International Health, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Jim established the Office of Refugee Health Affairs prior to retirement in 1981. In retirement, he enjoyed success in Amway, and later as a Medical Review Officer for K&A Medical Review Services.



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