

Friends of Colombia



Newsletter of the Colombia Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
P.O. Box 15292 • Chevy Chase, MD 20825 • www.friendsofcolombia.org

Volume 21, Number 3

December 2007

Letter from the President

Dear Friends of Colombia,

Cartagena '08 is rapidly approaching. More than 150 are expected to attend the Colombia RPCV conference and reunion February 5-7. This is an outstanding representation.

Everyone we have talked with at the Colombian Embassy is determined to make this a memorable event for all. The Embassy is arranging the speakers for the conference; the military attaché is preparing security information for those traveling out from Cartagena; and they are hoping to find sponsors for some of the events as well.

Fiesta Travel, a Colombian-owned agency, is doing a magnificent job of following through on travel requests and connecting us with Gema Tours in Cartagena for on-site plans. Some of the events in the works are an evening welcoming reception on Feb. 4th, a luncheon and an evening reception Feb. 5th on the tall ship *La Gloria*; a city tour, a walking tour of the old city, site visits to community non-governmental projects, including a FOC project, and evening *chiva* bus tour and dinner Feb. 6th—and for those who have time, an excursion to the Rosario Islands. Some of these events will be sponsored and some will be purchased by participants.

Don't forget to sign up for the conference, spouses and companions as well. Participation in these events will be only for conference registrants. Those who have registered will receive a list of participants to date.

We will be sending registrants a form to complete. It is very important that you send us this information. We will have to put money down on some events so we need to have reservations. In addition, the Colombian Embassy wants to know what your destinations are, not just the main city you're traveling to, but where you plan to visit outside of the city—a particular *barrio*,

small town, or village. They want to do everything possible to ensure that you can safely travel.

Would you like to volunteer once again in Colombia? Here is your opportunity. Mary Ray and Merrily Copeland Beyreuther recently traveled to the Caldas area of Colombia to do a needs assessment at the request of La Federación de Cafeteros. The object was to determine whether or not there would be volunteer opportunities working with teachers of English as a foreign language. In this newsletter you will read an account of their trip as well as a proposal for a volunteer project. This is only the initial step in what could develop into a wonderful opportunity for RPCVs and Colombians to reconnect. Thank you to Mary and Merrily, who accepted the challenge and traveled at their own expense, and to Maureen Orth, who initiated the project.

Ned Chalker was instrumental in making it possible for *La Gloria* to drop anchor in the Washington Harbor this past summer. It was a cliff-hanger, but thanks to Ned no one was thrown from the mast. Great job, Ned!

Arleen Stewart Cheston
FOC President

“Reconnecting with the People of Colombia” RPCV Conference February 4-7, 2008

Travel arrangements are being handled by Fiesta Travel, 4626 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20016. Contact Mery Patterson at 202-862-5570 or mpatterson@fiestatravel.com for all air and hotel reservations.

To register for the Conference, contact Arleen at arlches@aol.com. For complete Conference details, go to www.friendsofcolombia.org

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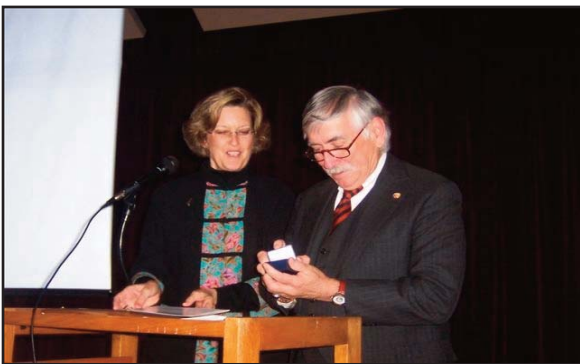
Home Town Projects

Send your description of your community work, professional or volunteer, to editor@friendsofcolombia.org.

Bob Arias: “That Fire in the Belly”

On Oct. 16, 2007, Bob Arias received the Presidential Volunteer Service Award in Salem, Oregon. Jody Olsen, PC Deputy Director and a personal friend, presented the award. Bob first served as a PCV in Sevilla, Colombia, from 1964-66. He returned to Colombia in 1968 as North Coast Director, covering Barranquilla, Santa Marta, Cartagena, La Guajira, and the island of San Andrés. Later he was in charge of language training in Bogotá when PC moved its training for South America there. He settled down to work in Los Angeles County, but returned to Peace Corps in 1993 as Country Director for Argentina and Uruguay.

Bob says he remains a PCV at heart, always with “that fire in the belly” to get involved. He volunteers with the City of Salem on committees while serving as Executive Director for the Polk County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) program. He supervises some 50 men and women who advocate for abused and neglected children in juvenile court. “Working with CASA Volunteers is almost the same as working with Peace Corps Volunteers,” he says. “In fact, many CASAs in other counties were PCVs before, or want to join Peace Corps someday.” He dreams of getting a partnership going with National CASA and Peace Corps. Contact him at FlacoBob@yahoo.com.



Bob Arias with Jody Olsen, Deputy Director of Peace Corps.

Sue Patterson: Back to Guatemala

After serving as a PCV in Dos Quebradas, Caldas (now Risaralda), Sue Patterson became a Foreign Service Officer. She retired in 1997 after 24 years and moved to Guatemala, where she had served as Consul General from 1989-93. It's now her permanent home. Seven years ago she founded a non-profit called WINGS (www.wingsguate.org) which provides education about family planning, as well as subsidizing family planning methods for impoverished Guatemalan families. They also do cervical cancer screening.

Sue serves on the board of Behrhorst Partners for Development and is its Guatemalan Coordinator. Behrhorst

addresses basic community development needs, with a particular focus on health-related infrastructure, including water systems, latrines, gray-water filters, and fuel-efficient stoves. Contact Sue at www.wingsguate.org.

Peter H. Fraser: Linkages

Peter Fraser (PCV 1968-70) has maintained continual contact on a professional, business, and personal level with Colombia since his volunteer days. With his Colombian wife, Soffia, he's involved with a social service NGO, Popayán Corporation, that provides assistance to homes for the homeless elderly and scholarships for children studying at the Don Bosco Vocational Technical School in Popayán.

Recently Peter suggested to the Popayán Corporation board of directors that there could be some beneficial linkages with Friends of Colombia. He was actively involved in micro-enterprise and micro-credit program development and evaluation throughout Latin America and other parts of the world during the late '70s, '80s, and '90s, and recently started his own business, Fraser Market Access. Contact him at PHFraser1@aol.com.

NGO Source List

Here's a list of non-governmental organizations that prepare reports about Colombia, have offices there, or sponsor projects in Colombia.

Advocacy Groups

Human Rights First – HumanRightsFirst.org
AFL-CIO Solidarity Center – solidaritycenter.org
Human Rights Watch – hrw.org
Center for International Policy – ciponline.org
Amnesty International – aiusa.org
Washington Office on Latin America – wola.org
International Crisis Group – crisisgroup.org
Latin America Working Group – lawg.org
Peace Brigades International – pbicolombia.org
US Office on Colombia – usofficeoncolombia.org

Socio-economic Development Groups

Adventist Development and Relief Agency – adracolombia.org
American Jewish World Service – ajws.org
American Red Cross – usa.redcross.org
Americares – americares.org
Catholic Relief Services – crs.org
Lutheran World Relief – lwr.org
Mercy Corps – mercycorps.org
Refugees International – refugeesinternational.org
World Vision – worldvision.org

USIP Works for Peace in Colombia

By Gale Gibson

Many of us who have lived in and loved Colombia have watched her with interest, and sometimes sadness, since we left. So it's heartening to know that even though the Peace Corps left in 1981, there are still organizations with concerned Americans working there.

One of those is the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an independent, non-partisan institution established and funded by the United States Congress. It engages directly and indirectly in the peace-building process throughout the world. Its goals are to prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote post-conflict stability and development, and increase peace building capacity, tools, and intellectual capital.

During 2006-2007 USIP targeted Colombia as a priority conflict zone, prompting activities that include holding public events to discuss the Colombian crisis; development of on-line courses in conflict resolution in Spanish; publishing papers on Colombian Peace initiatives (among them an up-to-date analysis of peace initiatives that have created hope, and suggestions for new approaches for peace in Colombia); an advanced "train the trainer" conflict resolution program in Colombia which will expand on previous USIP training in Cucutá; faith-based initiatives for peace consultation among Colombian Catholic and Evangelical Protestant churches about ways to promote Colombian peace; and

hosting conferences with leaders from around the world to focus on peace in Colombia.

In addition, there are grants for specific activities, such as a project to create and test materials for youth aged 14-18 that integrates trauma healing, conflict resolution, and violence prevention; a research project to examine incentives for private firms to support the reintegration of former combatants into society; and a project to document missing persons and clandestine cemeteries in order to address how to build peace after political violence.

For more information, check the USIP website at www.usip.org. Their printed materials are excellent.

Coop Group Reunites in Cartagena

By Bob Archer

Last April the Colombia Cooperatives Group (1964-66) gathered in Cartagena for four days. For many it was the first return since 1966. *Los costeños* lived up to their reputation for friendliness and hospitality.

Our group came into Colombia at the end of *La Violencia* in the '50s and early '60s. The violence ebbed for many years but began to flow again, continuing to this day—unlike most countries in South America where the violence exhausts itself for extended periods. How to intervene in Colombia to get out of the cycle of violence remains a challenge. But it is important to note that Cartagena does not suffer from the violence.

We gathered at the Capilla Del Mar on Carrera 1a. on the Boca Grande beach (one of our hotels for the upcoming Friends of Colombia Conference). One of the suites became the *centro comunal* for catching up, singing, reintroduction to Aguila, Costeña, Club Colombia, and the products of Caldas. A full day was spent talking and passing

the talking stick, a tradition that gives the floor to the holder for as long as desired.

The Old Town looks great. Not overly commercial, not overly preserved. Only white paint was allowed in the '60s, but now pastel and earth colors are widespread, based on Colonial period research. Our first night we had a light dinner outdoors in the "Botero Plaza" (Plaza Santo Domingo), with its Botero reclining nude sculpture and looming church.

We hired our own open-sided *chiva* bus for a night tour. It came with a band, personal rum bottles, cokes, and ice buckets. Cartagena is especially beautiful at night. The daytime sun is brilliant, sometimes harsh, and shows the city's flaws. Our able young guides got things started with a dance contest to determine which row had the best dancers.

Cartagena restaurants are numerous and memorable. The remarkable Club de Pesca continues to operate on the harbor with a view

that is unmatched. Santísimo in Old Town hosted all of us with cordiality and superb food. Special mention goes to Jerry Estruth's discovery of Fondo Antioqueño, about four blocks from the Capilla Del Mar. I recommend a stop at a Pan de Bono to choose from 16 tropical fruits for a large fresh iced smoothie (\$1.25) and warm *pan de bono*.

Several of us made a *barrio* visit, arranged by Bill and Shirley McGrath through Helene Dudley of RPCVs of South Florida. We met with a group of women who are candidates for micro-loans for their small businesses selling fruits, vegetables, and crafts. As a result of the visit, our group will finance the next round of loans to be extended through the good work of the RPCV-South Florida group.

I won't be able to attend the February 2008 Friends of Colombia gathering in Cartagena. I know when it rolls around I will be kicking myself. There is, truly, only one Cartagena. Only one Colombia. Go if you can.

THE FLOWER PARADE

By José Castañeda

CONCLUSION: THE GIFT

A new wave of applause redirected our attention to the avenue. It was then that the smell of hot *buñuelos* drifted again into my nose. I sniffed the air like a chase hound and stretched my head forward in an effort to peek through the sea of shifting bodies. I finally located the pushcart that was the source of the aroma. Behind the pushcart stood a robust woman with her sleeves rolled tight above her elbows. Her wide, expressive eyes and the soft brows that joined in the middle gave her a girlish look that triggered affection.

I watched as she scooped the reddish-brown spheres from a sizzling oil pan and piled them in a large basket. She then grabbed new chunks of mushy dough and began to round them in her palms, while her hips, and breasts, and arms moved graciously in rapid boogie swings. She tossed the dough into the oil, stepped back and threw in some more, all while protecting her arms from the hot splashes with a corner of her wide, layered skirt. I excused myself briefly and sprinted to her for a bag of crusty pieces. My two companions smiled as I offered to share the feast with them. When I broke open my first *buñuelo*, a fragrant plume of cheesy vapor overcame the conversation and I had to take a few quick bites to regain my full composure.

The couple talked as we ate and continued talking when we finished. They mentioned the hardships of the country and the hardships in their lives. They talked of a childhood on farms bursting with life, where cows, and crops, and housework demanded so much toil that school was sacrificed. They recalled stealing kisses that their parents wouldn't approve, and then their puppyish marriage after gaining their consent.

They remembered the gatherings on special festive days, when she cooked savory dishes and he played his guitar. They mentioned with pride their children growing strong, with cheeks shining as red as the strawberries they gulped and teeth almost as white as the milk they squeezed warm. They spoke in tender voices of the quietness of the mountains as the night fell on their roof, of the dampness of the leaves at the start of a new day, and the sadness of a land of extraordinary beauty where rebels fought each other with extraordinary hatred.

We turned our heads back to the street at a new arrival of *silletas*. One of them had an array of soft pinks and pale aquamarines that cascaded over a base of crimson dahlias. Another showed swirls of waxy petals with the colors of a tropical aquarium. They rested on a blanket of wet moss that brought with it the freshness of the mountains.

The couple returned to their story. One day tragedy came. Their sons were killed by sons of peasants just like them. Their grief rendered them helpless. Their animals

went loose, their crops stood in ruins, and their livelihood soon vanished. They knew they had to leave. Then, in a flash of passing years, they finally arrived at the stage they always feared: alone and poor, and aging quickly.

"Life in the city calls for the strength of younger years," Pachito said after a pause.

"Couldn't you get government help?" I asked.

"That's an illusion."

"Steady work?"

"Not at my age."

After selling what was left of their possessions, they continued, they settled in a room with cooking privileges in the outskirts of Medellín. All he kept was his guitar. Unstrung, fatigued, its former luster now gone, it served him well in trying times. On special days he took it to the streets to play and sing nostalgic tunes of betrayal and lost love. An all-time favorite, he pointed with delight, was his rendition of *La Vieja Molienda*, an enthralling soft samba of unrequited love, the sadness of which, the lyrics went, appeared more vivid in the lethargy of the night, when the days wind down and the shadows cut into the moaning silence of the coffee trees. Time and again he was asked to sing it by men who sought to quell their emptiness of heart with *aguardiente*, the country's traditional hard drink. His wife would often sing along with him and help collect the spare change.

At that point the woman let her puffy, silky hand rest over mine. With her other hand she smudged tears. When I looked at her husband his eyes were also wet, but he stood firm.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I didn't mean to bring back memories of suffering."

"Oh no," he said, rasping between words. "It's okay to look for solace in the past. The nights are always cold for those who lack warm memories."

"Perhaps it's better to talk about the present," I said.

"Poor," he said, "we just live poor. That's our present, and that seems to be our future. We live as if every item of survival was rationed to us."

"When I was a child, my parents also had to flee the countryside with us in tow," I told them.

"When was that?" he asked.

"Back in the mid-fifties, in the mountains of Tolima. My mother bundled us up in the middle of the night, and with pots and blankets loaded on a mule, we scurried through the darkness for a trek across the hills. On the first day, the mule slipped in a creek and the blankets became wet. On the second day, we had no food and we had to eat wild berries. I could hear my mother crying at my side every night."

"Why did they have to leave?" she asked.

"It was either the blues after the reds or the reds chasing the blues. It didn't matter."

"Well, we are now into a new century, and I feel things have really improved. That's why I like Uribe," he said, referring to the President.

Hearing that, his companion moved closer.

"But even today people leave their farms and houses in fear for their lives. Every day we hear of armed bandits killing peasants. Entire villages are abandoned." She spoke in a clear, urgent voice. She paused briefly to hold her dress against a sudden gush of wind. She then continued. "Only this morning we saw around the corner a newly arrived family sleeping on the sidewalk."

Her words arrived as burning rods that pressed on my chest. My breathing became short. My throat felt an obstruction.

At that instant the air was overtaken by the scent of the night jasmine. Its honey aftertaste had such power of persuasion that it shut off my other senses and kept dancing in my mind. It stayed and stayed, like the lingering perfume of an attractive woman.

"Turn around!" I shouted at the man carrying the jasmynes, hoping to have a full view of his arrangement.

My words were drowned out by a multitude of voices, but others in the crowd kept repeating my request. It finally caught its own immediacy. The jasmine *silletero* slowed down, gazed at the faces, bestowed a wide smile, and proceeded to pace the crowd with the air of a triumphant matador circling the arena. I joined the others in cheering and applause. As he went up the parade route, a swarm of wobbling bees trailed behind.

The fading jasmine was quickly replaced by an approaching vendor of honey-coated roasted peanuts. The rich, lively scent of the honey touching the hot skillet carried me back to mornings in Ibagué and Gary Gonya's honey-coated French toast.

The parade was still going. While the sound of applause and dancing rhythms filled the air, I grabbed pen and paper and asked the couple in front of me about their most immediate needs, things that would improve their lives, if only temporarily. A new *silletero* passed through, and the loud cheering from the crowd drowned out my words. When I repeated my request, they looked mystified. A long pause followed, until, apparently convinced of the sincerity of my words, the woman responded with delight.

"Pachito needs new shoes!"

His shoes were held together with a few lengths of string, and the holes under the soles, made visible as he lifted up each foot, had been unevenly patched with cardboard and newsprint.

"New shoes for Pachito," I said, and wrote it on my paper, together with a price they suggested at my request.

"What else?"

"A refill of his arthritis medication," she said.

I wrote that down, too.

"And a shirt, and pants and socks," she said with growing vigor.

"And for you?" I said, but before she gave an answer, I had another question.

"What's your name, if I may ask?"

"Lucila," she said solemnly. "Lucila Burgos..."

"Mine is José Orlando," I replied.

"*Mucho gusto.*"

"Let's make a list for you, Lucila."

Her hand flew to her mouth and she gave a nervous laugh. "Oh no, thank you, that's all right."

"A new dress, perhaps?"

"No, that's okay," she said, her fingers now rounding the buttons of her blouse.

I asked her again. She smiled. I paused for an answer.

She frowned. I slowly stepped back. She smiled once again, shifting her body. I then moved a step closer and repeated my request in a low voice.

"A dress would be so nice," she finally responded.

"A dress," I repeated, writing it down.

"And shoes?" I continued.

"Yes, thank you."

"And rouge for your lips?"

Her eyes now sparkled. "Thank you, thank you," she said, still smiling, her hands clasped tight in front of her.

One hairpin was the last item she mentioned, but when I saw the strands of snowy hair fluttering loose over her shoulder I crossed out the line. *Half-a-dozen hairpins*, I wrote instead.

When I lifted my head, I caught the vendor glancing at us over her customers. I did not acknowledge her. My mind was still fixed on the list I had just written, a list that spoke silently of the basic deprivations that burdened two lives.

While Lucila and Pachito looked on in disbelief, I counted out enough money to purchase the items they had mentioned. I then gave it to Pachito, together with the list. He held it for a moment in his hands, as if putting it away without a pause would be discourteous.

We were engulfed in brief silence. Then, with a sudden burst of energy, Lucila started voicing one nice word after another. Pachito also spoke. "For us, this is nothing but a miracle," he said. He hugged me so close that the roughness of his beard pricked my cheeks. They thanked me many more times and wished me the best in all endeavors of my life. And through their joy and words of gratitude, they managed to make me the happiest man on earth.

The parade was now finished. Dozens of *silletas* rested on the sidewalk, their owners standing by for perfect pictures. New dogs roamed about; the flock of parakeets still shrieked above; accordion passion songs still soothed my ears; and the wind still retained its medley of festive

scents. When Lucila stepped forward to bid a last adieu, the satin of her collar left a sweet scent on my shirt. I then watched her slim figure fade slowly into the crowd. Pachito went behind holding her hand, his legs slowly accepting the support of his old cane.

In the distance, they murmured to each other. I couldn't help but wonder how they would describe their day at the parade. As for me, I felt it was a blessing to have been in their lives if only for an instant, to have witnessed their eyes grow teary at the mention of the past. My giving gesture was also a humbling one. I knew that in the end, the sum was utterly inadequate in proportion to their needs or my relative capacity. I struggled for a moment. But I was finally redeemed by the thought that quantifying such an act was also unfair. It is the intent that counts the most; the desire to build a coffer of goodwill. It is addressing those in need with dignity and respect. It is being ready to listen with the heart and feel their pain. And for that, the ultimate reward is the spiritual connection it engenders with our common, vulnerable humanity.

I now had one mission left: to find the homeless family I had encountered that morning, with their children and their rabbit.

I had begun to walk away when I heard a woman's voice calling out from behind.

"Señor!"

I turned back and saw the vendor rushing from her pushcart.

"This is for you!" she said, and she handed me a steamy bag overflowing with *buñuelos*.

And with that she also gave me a wide, delightful smile.

José Castañeda is a judge in Port Chester, New York. Contact him at jjurist@aol.com.

Ready to Serve Again?

By Mary Ray

August, 2007. My first visit to Colombia in 35 years started with lots of hugs, tears and laughter. The plane to Medellín was three hours late, but my two Colombian "brothers"—friends from high school exchange-student days—were waiting for me. Forty-six years had passed since we first met. I'd seen them a few times during my Peace Corps years (1966-68), and they were here to welcome me back, renew our friendship, and take me to familiar places that weren't so familiar any more.

After a wonderful week, I flew to Manizales on a different kind of mission. Right off, I spotted a Juan Valdez jacket. Juan Valdez is the symbol of the Fed-

eración de Cafeteros, who had come to greet me with another RPCV, Merrily Beyreyther. We would spend the next five days following a whirlwind schedule set up by the Cafeteros that included a day-long orientation to their projects and visits to five schools, rural and urban. We also met with the Secretary of Education for Caldas and other education specialists. The goal was to determine what ex-Peace Corps volunteers might do to help train Colombian teachers to carry out the government's decree that all schools provide English classes.

The Cafeteros were gracious hosts, providing comfortable accommodations, great meals, and drivers to take us everywhere. Accompanied at all times, we never felt a sense of danger. We met many dedicated professionals who were anxious to help us plan some meaningful teacher training.

To begin, there will be a one-to-two week course in ESL methodology for 50-60 teachers. These teachers will then continue as teacher trainers for other teachers of grades K-11 in the Caldas schools. If you're interested in helping to develop the training content, contact me at mary.ray@fcps.edu. If you're keen to travel to Colombia to help deliver the training, contact Maureen Orth at morth@k12wired.com. We especially need RPCVs with experience teaching ESL at any level and/or those who have experience training teachers.

Calling New (Old) Volunteers

By Maureen Orth

Four teaching volunteers are being sought to teach better classroom techniques to English teachers in Caldas, Colombia. People who know how to teach English as a second language on both primary and secondary levels will spend two weeks at the Coffee Federation's headquarters near Manizales instructing Colombian teachers of English in a workshop with follow-up in the classroom.

Exact dates of the workshop are not yet known, because recent elections in Colombia at the departmental level brought personnel changes among the Secretaries of Education. One possibility is early October, 2008.

If interested, contact me at morth@k12wired.com.

The Federación de Cafeteros is also partnering with former Colombia PCVs to work on an English curriculum for primary schools.

Other more informal ways former Colombia volunteers can assist at Centro Colombo Americano and Escuela Marina Orth, both in Medellín, are being planned and will be discussed at the conference in Cartagena. See you there!

Tall Ship *Gloria* Visits D.C.

By Ned Chalker

I got a call from the Colombia Embassy in early July asking if I would help bring their tall ship *La Gloria* to Washington on July 22. The Colombian government wanted to show the flag while the free trade agreement was being negotiated. I'm past president of the Potomac River Pilots Association and am currently with the National Maritime Heritage Foundation, so they thought I might be able to help.

The first obstacle was getting the ship through the new Wilson Bridge, which crosses the Potomac just south of the city. The river had been closed to river traffic for the past six months while new draw spans were being put in place. The eight draw spans, at 200 tons each, are a marvel of engineering, but were not scheduled to be tested until July 17.

Gloria left San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Friday, July 13, heading north. The plan was that if the new bridge spans had trouble opening, *Gloria* would turn around and go back to its home port in Cartagena.

Fair winds and favorable currents brought *Gloria* into the Potomac several days early, before tests were completed. They anchored off Mount Vernon and used the time to spruce up the ship—polish the brass and put new coats of varnish on her bright work.

We scheduled the bridge opening for Sunday morning, July 22, when traffic on I-95, the main north/south artery on the east coast, would be at a minimum.

Gloria showed up at the bridge at her appointed time, Wilson Bridge opened, and she became the first

vessel to pass through. But she faced a second obstacle—water, or rather, lack of water. *Gloria* came through the bridge at low tide. There's a sand bar at the entrance to the Washington Channel, and at low tide the depth is only nine feet. *Gloria* draws 12.5 feet. So we had to drop anchor and wait six hours while the tide came in.

At 3 p.m. we docked at the city pier, where about 1,500 enthusiastic Colombians were on hand to greet the ship. A party *con música típica* ensued, and Arleen Cheston and I had a chance to chat up the Ambassador and the Minister of Defense about our planned visit to Cartagena in February. Being gracious hosts, the Colombians offered FOC the use of the *Gloria* for a cocktail party during the conference. Needless to say, we accepted their offer. See you aboard *La Gloria* in Cartagena!



Captain Ernesto Durán, Ned Chalker and Mauricio Suárez, Counselor of The Colombian Embassy, on board *La Gloria*.

Overseas Volunteerism—A Response

Editor:

I just read your August 2007 newsletter with the information about efforts to create new U.S. overseas volunteer programs, followed by Jerry Norris's commentary. I have lived in Guatemala the past 10 years, and for the past seven have volunteered pretty much full-time for two small but successful non-profits, one of which I founded. We receive many offers from people in the U.S. and some who are visiting Guatemala as volunteers. Unfortunately, it is very hard to take advantage of most of them—either they can volunteer for only a few hours or a few days, or they have no

skills, or they do not speak enough Spanish, or they want to work only in the field rather than the office. Many of them think that they are offering something of value to the receiving country, when, in fact, accommodating, guiding and supervising them is time-consuming and demanding. (As one friend remarked to me, "If there's anything Guatemala does not need, it's more unskilled labor!")

Normally the volunteer experience is much more useful for the volunteer than for the receiving organization, which is also an important component of volunteerism, as we RPCVs know very well. But it's important for potential volun-

teers to realize that their presence often represents a burden, at least initially. They should approach the opportunity with considerable flexibility and willingness to do what may be boring, non-scintillating work.

As the Guatemalan Coordinator for a non-profit working in community development in Mayan villages, my life has come full circle back to my PCV Colombia experience: family planning, water systems, school construction, latrines, leadership development. I love it, and Peace Corps prepared me well!

Sue H. Patterson
Colombia 35

December, 2007



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Santa Marta Connection

For those who are interested in traveling to Santa Marta after the February Conference, there is an opportunity to share a van that will take people directly from Cartagena to Santa Marta, scheduled to leave at 7:30 a.m. on Friday, February 8th, arriving in Santa Marta in time for lunch.

At 3 p.m. that afternoon, The Magdalena Foundation will present its scholarships in an awards ceremony to which RPCVs are invited. Alba Lucía Moreno, who administers three programs supported by Friends of Colombia, will be there and available to meet with RPCVs.

The per-person cost of the one-way trip to Santa Marta is approximately \$25, with the option to negotiate an additional charge to hire the van to take people from their hotels to the awards ceremony.

For updates and additional information, check the FOC website at www.friendsofcolombia.org.

In Fond Memory

Members of Colombia 22 will be saddened to know that Dwayne Jelinek, whose Peace Corps-Peru group trained with them in California, died July 25, 2007 of ALS. He lived in Billings, Montana. Dwayne is survived by his wife, Janet (Hinckley), a son and daughter, and three grandchildren.

To view photos of Chick Tooker's memorial service earlier this year, go to www.chicktooker.wordpress.com. Contact his widow, Gerry Zalkovsky, at gerryzt@msn.com or 415-383-5929.

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