



Check your label to see when your dues are due. Don't let your membership lapse!

Proyecto Inglés en Caldas

By Merrily Beyreuther

Following preliminary discussions in the spring and summer of 2007, a team of 12 men and women headed to Manizales in September 2008. Team members were RPCVs from Colombia and experienced ESL teachers. Our mission was to help teachers strengthen their English proficiency so they could better prepare their students in rural Caldas schools.

We worked with *multiplicadores* (trainers) for a short time and then provided training to 100 teachers (*docentes*). With our Colombian partners from the Comité de Cafeteros de Caldas and from the Fundación Manuel Mejía, we visited schools for two days, then began training. The 20 *multiplicadores* and *docentes* were very enthusiastic about the project and after a short while were laying out strategies to continue supporting each other. The *multiplicadores* loved that the training was all in English. The *docentes* were eager to learn and to practice their English. We showed them teaching approaches, played games, sang Beatles songs, distributed lots of teaching materials, and provided extensive internet resources. By the end of the two weeks, 120 Colombian teachers were eager to get back to their schools and try

out their new skills.

We are working with our Colombian partners to see how we can build on this promising beginning. Stay tuned!



The instructors were Mary Ray, Coordinator, Merrily Copeland Beyreuther, Anne Kenison, Patrick King, Nancy McLaughlin, Beverly Moskowski, Barbara Muchisky, Robin Schrage, Gale Gibson, Eloina Gibson and Arleen Cheston.



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

Volume 22, Number 2

December 2008

Letter from the President

Dear Friends of Colombia,

Change is upon us and I hope that we can rally our spirits of younger years to have faith that we are moving in a positive direction. I feel certain that the current economic and international situations have affected all of us in some way. We have faced difficult times in the past, we have lived with those who have a lot less than we do, and we know how to rally in times of stress.

We can confidently say that FOC has made and continues to make a difference in the lives of Colombians. I frequently hear stories of how our efforts have had a snowballing effect and reach more than those originally intended; or how those individuals who received assistance are now doing the same for others.

When you read Haroldo Suárez's report about the successes of The Magdalena Foundation college graduates and two of our Paso a Paso students who are in line for college scholarships, you will know that we continue to make a difference in Colombia. Our Paso a Paso program supports students in elementary and high school. Without this program it is clear those two students would never have had the opportunity to get a scholarship for college.

With our support, Helene Dudley's Colombia Project is expanding in new ways and collaborating with more Colombian entities.

In October the first group of Colombia RPCVs returned to work in a teacher training project in conjunction with the Federación de Cafeteros and Fundación Manuel Mejía. It was a pleasure working with Mary Ray, who spear-headed the project, as well as with Maureen Orth and Merrily Beyreuther. We were able to recruit experienced ESL teacher trainers who paid their own transportation to Manizales for a two-week session in which they worked with over 100 Colombian teach-

ers. Merrily Beyreuther's report in this issue should be of interest.

Our donations for 2008 are as follows:

Magdalena Foundation	\$3,000
Fundehumac/Paso a Paso	\$5,000
The Colombia Project	\$5,000
K-12 Wired	\$4,760
American University FOC Archives	\$1,000
NPCA	\$ 500
Total:	\$19,260

In the months to come, FOC Board members will be contacting RPCVs to encourage them to join FOC if they are not members, and to become involved in the planning for the 50th Anniversary Peace Corps celebration and the future of FOC.

The FOC Board has added Regional Directors to the team. They are: Bob Arias for the West, Don Goldberg for the Northeast, Helene Dudley for the Southwest, and Stephen Michael Murray for the Midwest.

I look forward to working with you in 2009. The best to you and your families in the New Year.

Arleen Stewart Cheston

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Update on Projects in Colombia

By Haroldo Suárez

1. The Magdalena Foundation, Inc.

The work of the Magdalena Foundation continues to produce good results. This year, seven students will graduate. Rafael Redondo and Orlando Tejada will become teachers. Francisco Redondo will graduate as a doctor in medicine from the University of Magdalena on December 22. Daniel Mendez will be a paramedic, firefighter, and first aid technician in Medellín. Daniel has worked a lot as a volunteer and should have no difficulty in getting a job. Roberto Carlos finished as a computer engineer, works and is helping with the education of a sister. María Lopez graduated as a special education teacher, works in Pamplona, and helps a brother who is in college. Elkin Bolaño is a computer engineer who works in a virtual radio TV station as a programmer and film producer.

2. Paso a Paso

This educational program for young children had a healthy year. While some children present a challenge because they have attention problems, in general they enjoy their affiliation with Paso a Paso. MFI scholars have done amazing mentoring work with the children. Paso a Paso supported 25 children in 2008 but in fact, 45 children benefit from all the mentoring activities, and many aspire to continue in the program. A remarkable fact about Paso a Paso is that most parents are involved and support their children's involvement in the program.

Paso a Paso has attracted the attention of many people. Gunhild Schwittalia is a young German woman who worked in Colombia on behalf of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (NGO) and became enamored with the program, and with the children and women who have been victims of the violence. She is back in Germany now, working on behalf of Paso a Paso. She is hoping to secure support from family members and friends, each of whom may sponsor a child in Paso a Paso. Some have already pledged to finance a youngster through college.

Colombia Project Successes

By Helene Dudley Chairman, RPCVSF & The Colombia Project

Since 2002, approximately 250 displaced families in five communities have received over \$80,000 US in micro-loans through The Colombia Project, improving 1,250 lives. The \$50,000 repaid to date continues benefiting displaced Colombians, with 50% reinvested as loans.

In addition, an AMB Foundation grant funded an indigenous coop, giving work to 90 Wayuu and Arzario weavers who are now guaranteed a fair price for their labors. On trips to La Guajira, the coop truck brings back salt, fish, shrimp and jewelry to sell in Santa Marta. Thanks to the increased income from these diverse

Such support will enhance the size of this great program. In addition, Gunhild is trying to get financing for a project with Fundehumac to work with women victims of the violence in Colombia.

Members of Club El Nogal in Bogotá, who belong to the most affluent circle in Colombia, have also promised to help with Paso a Paso. They would like to build a school to improve the quality of education for these children and offer a clinic to look after their health. They would run the school, as Fundehumac does not presently have the infrastructure to run such a program.

3. Fundehumac

This is the organization that implements The Colombia Project micro-enterprise loans in Magdalena, Paso a Paso (initiated by FOC), and the Magdalena Foundation, Inc. (higher education scholarship program).

The president, Alba Lucía Varela, was named *La Mujer Cafam*, which is the highest Colombian recognition to a woman who works on behalf of those less privileged. Fundehumac received an honorary mention at the peace prize award ceremony in Bogotá. In December, Fundehumac will host a congress of representatives who work on human rights initiatives in Bogotá. Fundehumac will introduce about 80 women who are now being assisted under a program funded by UNDP in Colombia. Some of those attending the congress want Fundehumac to work on yet another project next year.

All of these developments show that FOC is associated with a very respected, recognized, professional, and honest group of Colombians.

The Peace Corps may not be in Colombia now, but the work of Friends of Colombia is benefiting a great number of Colombians in a very positive way. Education and employment are the pillars of human empowerment and this is the most effective way to eradicate poverty. Friends of Colombia and The Colombia Project are doing just that.

sources, children in these families now attend school. The 30 families in the city have electricity and running water and the 60 families in La Guajira now have latrines for the first time—another 500 lives improved.

The Cartagena program's communal banks operate in two neighborhoods, providing 160 families access to both savings and short-term credit services. Once a bank has 10M pesos, the community is virtually self-sustaining, since the bank can satisfy loan demands without outside assistance. This has improved 800 more lives.

There is still the need to make our partners self-sustaining so that they can continue to develop programs in

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December 2008

The Reconnection

By Ned Chalker

For me it was 45 years ago when I left Colombia. My site was Titiribí, Antioquia.

After the conference in Cartagena my wife Beverly, who was visiting Colombia for the first time, and I, along with Barney Hopewell, our Peace Corps Leader in Antioquia, and his wife Luz, traveled to Medellín.

A few months before leaving for the Cartagena conference, I had made contact with one of the little girls who played around our house – Fanny Rico Jaramillo. When Fanny turned 18, she spent two years in California with my old partner, John Tweten, learning English. Now little Fanny Rico is 52 and retired from teaching English for the last 30 years in Medellín.

Fanny said she would meet us at the airport and



Fanny and Ned, Titiribí, Antioquia, 1962

drive us to our hotel. To our great surprise her whole family was at the airport to greet us...along with all the other "little kids" who used to play around our house in Titiribí. They all had placards with their names on them so I would recognize them... "Don Ned, I'm Gloria" (and Nelly, and André Felipe, son of Fanny), "Bienvenidos." Of course some were grandmothers by now. They gave us beautiful bouquets of freshly cut flowers introduced us to all their kids. What an emotional moment. They all had remembered. Tears flowed. It was pure joy.

Saturday Fanny and her husband Fabio Gómez took the four of us to their *finca* near the airport in Rio Negro where we were treated to sumptuous lunch of *frijoles antioqueños, con chicharrón, y arepa...y aguardiente Antioqueño*...of course. Everyone gathered around to watch us eat and drink.

The little girl from Titiribí and her family have made it. She and her husband live in Medellín and have a weekend place in the country. Life is good for them. They worked hard and now in retirement, are living out their dream.

The next morning we piled into two cars and headed out for Titiribí. As we rounded the corner just before Titiribí, you can see the entire town and many of the *veredas* laid out against the mountainside. But the

view had changed. Now there were roads everywhere. You could only get out to the *veredas* on horse back in 1961—63. And the center of town had expanded in all directions. The road to Titiribí was now paved as were the streets in town. The church looked in better shape and the teatro/bull ring (the world's smallest) had been restored but there was that certain familiar look to whole place.

As we walked down the main street leading to the plaza many of the old *tiendas* and watering holes were still there. A woman came out of one of the small shops and said "I remember you". It was like coming home.

I met my old friend Ramiro Rico in the plaza. Ramiro has spent three weeks at my home in Connecticut 45 years ago and hadn't been back to the States since. More hugs, more tears, more joy.

Fanny's mother had prepared a huge lunch for us. When we entered the house there were balloons and *bienvenido* signs everywhere. This time we were treated to a fantastic *sancocho*. Fanny's whole family was there. The brothers and sisters that I remember as well as those

that were born after I left were there along with their children and grandchildren. Fanny's younger sister, Mirián, along with her music teacher, put on a guitar concert of classical Colombian songs for all of us. The previous day she had sung for us, all the songs we had taught the kids in English. Who ever said we had no lasting impact?



Mirián

The son of the man who had sold me my horse 47 years ago showed up on horseback to put on a show with his trick horse. The word was out.

As the sun set in Titiribí we headed back to Medellín. Early Monday morning Fanny and her husband drove us to airport and made sure we got through the maze of airport check-in without having some one run off with our luggage. The kindness, cheerfulness, friendliness, and the hospitality were overwhelming. We had truly reconnected.

Colombia is on the move. Colombia is passion. There is a spirit in the young people of Colombia that is catching. Between the cell phones and the internet the world just got smaller and there's no excuse for us not keep up with old friends and help where we can.

This reconnection is off to a good start. Thank you, Fanny! I'm ready to go back.

NPCA Western Regional Meeting

By Abby Wasserman

On Saturday, Oct. 4, 2008 the National Peace Corps Association held its Western Regional Meeting in San Francisco. Its purpose: to build NPCA's capacity to achieve its goals of facilitating networking and improving communication within the greater Peace Corps community.

Friends of Colombia was represented by David Miron and Abby Wasserman in addition to NPCA Board Member/FOC advisor Pat Wand, who flew in from Dubai. There were some 70 RPCVs in attendance and another half-dozen following the proceedings during part of the meeting via conference call.

Key topics were membership, fundraising, projects, leadership succession planning, NPCA's relationship to Peace Corps Washington, and the new Virtual Peace Corps Community, a social networking site and community-driven open platform with an inspirational brand and design. Planning for this project dates back to 2005. Endorsed as a concept by the NPCA Board in 2006, with a proposed budget of \$400,000, it has received contributions totaling \$11,000 from regional PCV groups towards a matching grant of \$21,000. In 2007, early deliverables were articulated: database of all individuals who have served in the Peace Corps; online self-service membership; and a system of direct deposit membership dues to regional

group accounts. The two latter items are on hold.

In January 2009 the group plans to launch a social networking site powered by NPCA and driven by the community. Although there are many networking sites already (500 Peace Corps Yahoo groups alone, not to mention Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace). This new site will be more comprehensive than the others, acting as an umbrella and also an interface, connecting and engaging with issues that are important to all RPCV groups. It will be horizontal, not hierarchical. NPCA will build the platform and provide tools and models, and local groups and individuals will use it for what they want.

Another topic of discussion was More Peace Corps and its strategy for mobilizing our PC community. The group has pledged to double the number of overseas volunteers by our 50th Anniversary in 2011, and to make improvements that address the needs of the 21st century. A few fundraising ideas were articulated. Right now the PC budget is only \$300 million, and it costs \$40,000 or more per volunteer. We must let legislators know how important the program is. Doubling the budget is a priority. See morepeacecorps.com

Participants also discussed the third goal of the Peace Corps: to support projects of service in countries in which we served, and suggested a

mentoring program for volunteers arriving home after their Peace Corps service, a crucial transition period.

NPCA is not affiliated with Peace Corps Washington. It is a "robust advocacy program" that can accomplish as a community what PC Washington cannot do, including asking for money or food. NPCA only does projects with the Peace Corps that are consistent with NPCA's goals and strategies, and the two often diverge.

The FOC newsletter hopes to feature a column by the NPCA board in future newsletters in order to provide updates on projects and progress.

Dave Miron and Pat Wand also attended the NPCA Board Meeting on Friday, Pat as a Board member, David as an observer. Dave's observations:

"NPCA is in the best shape ever: strategic focus on the "new Peace Corps"; diversified and healthier finances; aligned Board, and people stepping up.

"The World View magazine, Fall 2008 issue, lays out a provocative vision for how the Peace Corps could operate as a much larger and more effective organization. There's a lead story by President-elect Obama: 'A Quantum Leap: Peace Corps and the Next President' (www.worldviewmagazine.com). It's good reading."



Colombian Successes continued from page 2

new neighborhoods. In order to do that, The Colombia Project will have to build the revolving loan pools to the level at which the interest on the loans will cover the salaries and expenses associated with the program so that 100% of the repayments stay in the revolving loan pool. To fuel the necessary level of growth, The Colombia Project is seeking matching funds from corporations and foundations in the U.S. and Colombia.

During an October due-diligence visit, thanks to an introduction by Colombia RPCV Mike Spivack, representatives of The Colombia Project and Fundehumac met with members of Reservas Profesionales, a Colombian organization of professionals that has expressed an

interest in supporting our efforts to help displaced people. Initially this support would likely be "in-kind" professional services, but with the possibility of financial assistance in the future.

Since donations in 2008 fell short of projections, The Colombia Project will increase fundraising efforts in 2009 in order to provide our four partners sufficient resources to continue their excellent work.

Wisconsin RPCV Peace Corps Calendars are available for \$10 plus postage costs. Proceeds benefit The Colombia Project. Contact helenedudley@yahoo.com to place an order.

More Peace Corps: Bigger and Bolder

By Rajeev Goyal, Campaign Coordinator

The More Peace Corps campaign is the best opportunity we have seen to not only scale up but also revitalize the Peace Corps experience and inspire a new generation of the best and brightest to serve. And President-elect Obama has promised to do just that (see www.change.gov/americanerves). The More Peace Corps campaign has built a powerful grassroots activist movement to keep the pressure on him to meet this pledge, with over 5,000 online supporters and 100 prominent champions, including Jimmy Carter, Senator Chris Dodd, and Representative Sam Farr.

Where will 8,000 additional volunteers go and what will they do? There are more than 20 countries asking for Peace Corps, a list likely to grow during President Obama's term in office. But More Peace Corps is advocating not just for more volunteers, but a doubling of the funding of Peace Corps, and resources to improve its performance. The next director, RPCV or not, must be willing to innovate and take chances.

The bigger, better, bolder Peace Corps we are fighting for must make a greater difference in protecting the environment, building potable water systems, and combating HIV/AIDS. I personally feel that Peace Corps must invest much more in environmental protection campaigns by training volunteers in alternative energy technologies and sustainable architecture concepts. Imagine Peace Corps volunteers working on building greener capital cities in developing nations, or working with world governments to combat the depletion of wildlife in the oceans. In the 1960s, volunteers in Tunisia designed entire cities. This is what we mean by bolder. Peace Corps volunteers must be willing to fight difficult problems in challenging conditions. They must be willing to learn.

But what is our strategy for moving the campaign forward? How can we achieve a better and bolder Peace Corps and what can you and I do for the campaign? President-elect Obama alone cannot double the Peace Corps budget by 2011. Support must be built in the Congress, particularly the House and Senate subcommittees for state, foreign operations, and related programs. If you can do only one thing for this campaign, that should be downloading a sample letter from the home page of morepeacecorps.org and contacting your lawmakers. Many of you are born activists who do not need to review our letter and can probably write something much better. I ask you to please take action. A hundred letters to each of the subcommittee members, if personalized, compelling, and professional, will make a splash. If you can meet with your lawmaker (not a staffer) and present the case for greater investment in the Peace Corps, that would make an even greater difference. I can help you

prepare for that meeting.

How far are you willing to go for the Peace Corps? Think about what it has meant for your own life and consider that hundreds of applicants are being given one-year deferrals because there's an \$18 million shortfall. Imagine if that had happened to you when you applied. Consider that the Defense Department may ask for billions of extra dollars this year. We cannot afford to sit still. We must all be leaders in this movement.

Why is this congressional outreach so important? Even if a bill to expand the Peace Corps budget is passed, the subcommittee is not required to increase the Peace Corps budget! This is why past efforts to grow the Peace Corps have failed.

I have talked with some 40 Capitol Hill staffers in the last nine months and many say it will be difficult to increase Peace Corps this year because of the "economic crisis." So we are very concerned, because we have only 5,000 activists and 200,000 former volunteers and staff.

In terms of the Better and Bolder strategy, questions remain as to whether legislation is needed to implement the changes or whether a bold new director with more funding in the Peace Corps treasury and a new, more innovative culture in the Peace Corps can do the trick. To capture as many ideas as possible, More Peace Corps will roll out a survey, organize town hall meetings, and develop a letter to the new President and the next PC director based on what we hear is most important to you. The More Peace Corps forums are also a great way to express yourself.

More Peace Corps belongs to all of us. President-elect Obama's message is about hope and idealism. Revitalizing service in the Peace Corps is a cost-effective way to inspire a generation of "Obama's Kids." When you build a movement to double the Peace Corps budget, you inspire the best and the brightest to get involved.

Contact Rajeev at www.MorePeaceCorps.org, or call his cell phone: 516-984-7138.



Have an item or suggestions for the FOC newsletter? Send by email to abby@abbywasserman.com



James Michael Scott (Mike), PCV in Cartago, Colombia from 1963 to 1965, would like to hear from others he served with. His sports development group, Colombia 20, trained in Tucson. Email him at miscott@uidaho.edu.

Return to Dibulla

By Abby Wasserman

Part 1 of 3

My little Ana is a grandmother. There's white in her wiry black hair and she is missing teeth. It wrings my heart to see her so fragile. Ana was my *compañerita* for a year in Dibulla, La Guajira, in 1964 and 1965, when I was a PCV there.

Ana's younger sister, my goddaughter Clea, is tall and robust. Mentally, she is still a child. She lives under the watchful eye of her mother, Ida. The last time I saw Clea she was a plump baby, light-skinned and blue-eyed. Her mother and I joked that she was my child. Now, one blue eye has migrated to the right and there's a cavity in a front tooth. Upon seeing me, she cries, "*Aquí está mi madrina! Te quiero, Madrina!*" ("Here is my godmother. I love you!")

My *comadre* states that Clea has been talking about me for the last three days. Since I haven't been in touch since 1966, I figure she found out about my return to Dibulla about the time I did, a few days earlier on February 5 in Cartagena, when Haroldo and Pat Suárez told me I could visit my site. I'd been advised it was too dangerous to travel to Dibulla and had swallowed my disappointment and attended the PC-Colombia reunion anyway. So when Haroldo said, "You are going," I burst into tears. For more than a minute I couldn't speak. My depth of feeling surprised me.

Alba Lucía Varela of Fundehumac and Haroldo, President of The Magdalena Foundation, had arranged my visit—one day *ida y regreso* in the company of a TV journalist and native Dibullera named Lilibet Roca Redondo; her brother Carlos, her cameraman; the driver, Armando; and María Choles Toro, a native of La Guajira who lives in Santa Marta. A victim of violence during the recent tragic decades in Colombia, María has suffered during the last decade. Through Fundehumac, she and her family are going forward with their lives and helping others.

Ida is in her 80s but I recognize her at once: the humor in her eyes, challenge in her shoulders, determination in the set of her mouth. She utters glad cries as we embrace, and then pronounces, "*Si me muero, Comadre, tu eres la mamá de Clea*" ("When I die, you are Clea's mother"). Whoa, I think. Aren't godmother duties over when the godchild reaches 21? Clea's twice that age. But if the child never grows up mentally? In the midst of my joy at being in Dibulla again, I'm sobered by Ida's statement. It doesn't help that Maria immediately challenges me within everyone's hearing, "*Qué vas a hacer para Clea?*" I keep quiet. I've just returned, after all. I need time to digest what's happening before making new commitments!

In my PCV days I was wary of requests for personal help. I knew that if I was generous to one family, others

would hear of it, and I didn't want to play favorites or be known as *la gringa rica*, either. Dibulleros were resistant to change and there were many feuds in town. I could call a meeting of mothers and girls to talk about forming a girls' club, only to find that few attended. Some had been enthusiastic in conversation, but they wouldn't attend a meeting if their enemy, Fulana de Tal, was going. The people were extremely resistant to working together in those days.

When I lived in La Guajira, July 1964 to November 1965, the only way to get from Dibulla to Santa Marta was by sea. From the Guajira side, a dirt road petered out at Palomino to the west. I once made the trip to Santa Marta by *cayuco* (motorized canoe), 10 hours, as I recall, during which a crew member bailed constantly with a coconut shell.

In our snug taxi, the five of us breeze along the highway that links the state of Magdalena to La Guajira. It's a proud and beautiful road. Carlos, Lilibet and Armando assert that it's the best in all Colombia. I wonder why a first-class highway has been built to one of the country's most remote regions. Since I was here, coal has become a big industry, and daily loads of it are transported by road and rail. What else? Contraband from Venezuela? There was plenty of that when I was in residence. How about cocaine processed in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta? Is this the road that drugs built?

During one of our stops en route, near the entrance to Parque Tairona, Lilibet prepares a batch of questions and Carlos tests the light. I notice my hands clutching each other. I breathe deeply, trying not to let nerves paralyze my Spanish, which has lain largely dormant for decades. The fact that the words flow more or less correctly is a tribute to the classes I received during PC training at the University of New Mexico.

I was the first female PCV in La Guajira, joining Howard Converse and David Fletcher of Colombia XV who had gone a few months earlier to identify possible sites for *acción comunal*. We had trained together in Albuquerque, and after talking with them about opportunities in La Guajira, I requested a transfer to RCD from ETV. My six months in Bogotá working in elementary schools to help teachers utilize the new ETV programs had been productive, but I didn't like city life and longed for a "classic" Peace Corps experience—a rural one. In those days, CARE was administering the urban and rural community development programs for Peace Corps. The new CARE-PC director, William Rayman, after getting country director Chris Sheldon's approval, okayed my reassignment.

I was sent to train with Faye Hooker and Joan Mansfield in Usiacurí for some weeks before embarking for Riohacha, a hot, dry outpost with a newspaper, a gor-

geous beach, a working pier, and an uneasy and unequal relationship between the *costeños* and the native Guajirano (Wayuu) Indians. Howard decided a male-female team would be effective in Dibulla, while Dave moved to Barrancas in the interior of La Guajira. I made contact with the teachers and started forming relationships with women and girls, and we both consulted with town leaders. The beginning was promising and I relied on Howard's experience to guide me—but soon he was made a Volunteer Leader and left the Guajira, and I was alone in Dibulla for six months before another PCV, Willie Dow, was assigned to the site.

Our taxi crosses from Magdalena into La Guajira. The day is warm and fragrant through our open windows, the foliage on either side is lushly green. We get our first glimpse of polychrome sea—greens, blues, a touch of turquoise. I feel so happy, like I'm coming home. Along the road there are *hectares* of banana trees, clusters of fruit covered with blue or white plastic, like bagged, hanged men; and many cattle, thin and hardy, with a Brahma-like hump behind the head.

We pull into Rio Ancho, where I used to go nearly every week to do *acción comunal*. The bucolic village I knew is gone. In its place, sprawled on both sides of the highway and along the river that gave it its name, there's a chaos of lean-tos and dilapidated stucco buildings, the paint worn or pocked with bullet holes. We turn to the right onto a road of deep ruts but don't drive more than 20 or 30 yards before it peters out.

Rio Ancho in 1965 was a settlement of a dozen or so new wood and palm huts, rudimentary but practical, sides open to catch the breezes. The site suffered from biting *sancudos* (biting flies), and all the girls and women wore trousers underneath their dresses. There were no latrines, no infrastructure, but there were a general store, a small junta, and a nascent sense of community.

Unlike Dibulla, a stable town built on a grid with its own church and police station, where people were born, grew up, and stayed to raise families, Rio Ancho was a new place mixing refugees and fugitives from La Violencia. The best house in the village belonged to Manuel Martín, nicknamed El Martillo, The Hammer. A formidable, silent man who never smiled, he was from Antioquia, where he had been (people said) a bandit. This did not frighten me away, but I treated him with respect. I came by bus to Rio Ancho once every week or two, and though I hung my hammock in the home of Clara and Berto, a kind and generous couple, I usually ate breakfast at *El Martillo's* house. His wife made oatmeal with milk, lemon peel and a cinnamon stick, and she and her daughters generally sat around watching me as I ate, talking companionably. The fields were planted with pineapples. Clara and Berto once took me on a horseback trip through the jungle to the sea, during which we had a quick, magical glimpse of a jaguar.

In the old Rio Ancho you could sit outside with other women making blood sausage—packing rice and blood into cleaned intestine—and watch the world go by. Aside from swarms of the tiny, vicious *sancudos*, Rio Ancho was a kind of Eden. Some of the people were even willing to work for the good of the community, having come from cooperative communities in the interior. José de la Paz García, for example, took a leadership role, helping me and a few others organize a school.

As Armando turns the taxi around to leave, Lilibet and Carlos tell me that the people of Rio Ancho were vulnerable when the violence began in La Guajira because their village lay right on the path from the Sierra Nevada. Their relationships were loosely woven, so paramilitaries and drug lords could divide and conquer. There were killings and kidnappings and stolen land. I would like to ask someone if José, Clara and Berto survived, and what happened to El Martillo and his family. But the ghost of recent violence, and the knowledge that we will have only a few hours in Dibulla, hasten us along. We have been told to return to Santa Marta by nightfall. So we bump back on to the highway. There's a sense of unease in Rio Ancho, as though violent men have only moments before passed through and will soon return.

To be continued.

First Public Bilingual School in Colombia

By John Coyne

The Instituto Educativa Marina Orth, located in the mountains above the city of Medellín near where Pablo Escobar used to hide out, is becoming the first public bilingual school in Colombia. It has 350 children from kindergarten through high school. As Maureen Orth (Colombia 1964-66) writes, "We began with two classrooms and 35 kids in the 'sixties. Chevron donated the money for 230 laptops through the One Laptop Per Child Foundation for the primary school students; the Motorola Foundation has helped donate



the wiring so the whole community can be wired. We have other computer donations from Intel and Seagate. These computers are transforming our *vereda*."

When Maureen was a PCV, she and her community built this school in the mountains. She has continued her involvement in its development. This is another (great!) example of how a PCV doesn't just "move on," but continues to be involved with her community long after the Close-of-Service Conference.

The school's websites:

K12Wired.com or escuelamarinaorth.com.