



Friends OF COLOMBIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE COLOMBIA RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Colombia,

FOC celebrated the 55th Anniversary of the Peace Corps September 22–25 in Washington, DC. We began on the 22nd with a Country Update at the Democratic Women's Club, followed by a festive reception at the Colombian Ambassador's residence, co-sponsored by FOC and the Embassy of Colombia. Ambassador and Mrs. Pinzón graciously received us, the Colombian conjunto played, and we danced. On the 24th FOC sponsored a major event at the National Peace Corps Association conference held at George Washington University. This newsletter contains articles and photos about these events. I hope you will take time to open the various links. Perhaps you will see yourself in some of the wonderful photos provided by the Embassy.

The conference celebration was an opportune time to reconnect with friends, some of whom we have not seen in 50 years. It amazes me how those Peace Corps friendships of earlier years can be easily rekindled after so many years. This certainly happened to me when Suzanne

Adam and family members stayed at my house during the conference. Although we had not seen each other for 50 years, we reconnected immediately and could have talked for days with so much to share.

Over the years the Peace Corps has congregated such an amazing group of people. When you listen to the stories of recent returnees as well as the tales of the more seasoned returnees, it is obvious that we all gained a depth of understanding of foreign cultures that has been transmitted to those around us. The world is definitely a better place as a result.

FOC has not only brought these experiences home but its membership continues to be involved in projects helping the Colombian people at the grassroots level. Shortly we will be sending a letter to our membership explaining the projects and asking for your continued support as we move into 2017.

Wishing you the joys of the holiday season,

Arleen Stewart Cheston
President, Friends of Colombia



FALL 2016
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After PEACE CORPS

CELEBRATING PEACE CORPS' 55TH ANNIVERSARY

SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS PROJECTS

Dozens of Colombia RPCVs gathered in Washington, DC September 22 in advance of the Peace Corps Beyond 2016 conference to learn about the work of their current compatriots—PCVs now serving in Colombia—and to celebrate the aid their donations have given to projects that provide education and family support to needy Colombians. Since the early 1990s, Friends of Colombia, the U.S. based RPCV group, has provided more than \$250,000 to organizations, schools and individuals in Colombia as well as the Colombia Archive at American University.

The projects include:

Paso a Paso, which supports children attending K–12 schools in the Santa Marta area, and the **Magdalena Foundation**, which awards college scholarships to qualifying students who otherwise could not attend university. The Foundation scholars become tutors for Paso a Paso students.

Marina Orth Foundation, which supports eight One Laptop Per Child schools in and around Medellín. Through its unique educational model, the foundation also supports English language and technology instruction as well as leadership skills. The program is expanding into the Nuquí, Choco region.

The Colombia Project (TCP Global), which—over the past seven years—has provided almost \$60,000 in small business micro-loans to Colombians, particularly those displaced by violence.

Also, FOC supports PCV projects in Colombia and the Friends of Colombia Archive at American University.

FOC invites RPCV support for these projects. Send donations to Friends of Colombia, P.O. Box 15292, Chevy Chase, MD 20825 or online at www.friendsofcolombia.org.

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(At right, from top to bottom)

Colombian conjunto; Ambassador Pinzon welcomes FOC President Arleen Cheston and RPCV Michael Band to the podium; Band (second from left) with Ken Yamashita, Peace Corps Assistant Director of Global Operations, and David Band; (from left) Missy Gilbert, Response Volunteer, and RPCVs Andrea Doyle and Katie Johnson-Davis.



“ On the evening of September 22, more than 100 RPCVs attended a reception at the Colombian Embassy in Washington, DC, hosted by Ambassador Juan Carlos Pinzón and Mrs. Pilar de Pinzón. ”

AFTER PEACE CORPS (CONTINUED)

55TH ANNIVERSARY (CONTINUED)

SHARING MEMORIES, LOOKING FORWARD

On the evening of September 22, more than 100 RPCVs attended a reception at the Colombian Embassy in Washington, DC, hosted by Ambassador Juan Carlos Pinzón and Mrs. Pilar de Pinzón. Ambassador Pinzón greeted FOC president Arleen Cheston and FOC member Michael Band. He then expressed his gratitude to those present for their years of service and acknowledged that Colombia would continue to need their support as the then potential peace process appeared to be nearing a successful conclusion.

Band, who served as an English teacher trainer in La Boquilla, Bolivar from 2011 to 2014, told those assembled: "One thing I am certain of is that after we all finished our service and headed back to the U.S., we each brought back a piece of *nuestra querida* Colombia with us. Perhaps it was a painting that now hangs in your living room. Perhaps it was a James soccer jersey, or maybe it was a significant other, but we all stand here this evening with a love for Colombia and a desire to continue serving the country that has given so much to each of us."



(Far left) Ambassador Pinzon.
(Far right, from top to bottom) Ken Yamashita with Bob Arias and others to their left; FOC board member Gale Gibson (left) with his wife Eloina Chica and Ambassador Pinzon; Helene Dudley (left) and attendee.

JOHN F. KENNEDY SERVICE AWARD

presented to

BOB ARIAS

Colombia, 1964-66; Peace Corps Response
Panama, Paraguay, Colombia, 2009-13



"The John F. Kennedy Service Award ceremony gave me a special moment to be with Peace Corps Director Carrie (Radelet) and two former Volunteers that served with me in the Darién peninsula of Panamá... Bridget Fields and Charles Kramer. Three of my dearest friends...and the Bridget and Bob dolls came thru as always. Great moments!"

—Bob Arias (second from left)



'... we all stand here this evening with a love for Colombia and a desire to continue serving the country that has given so much to each of us.'

AFTER PEACE CORPS (CONTINUED)

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS: THE GREAT SURGE AND BEYOND

REPORT FROM THE PEACE CORPS 55TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

BY PATRICIA A. WAND

As theme speaker in “The Great Surge and Beyond” panel, Steve Radelet held listeners spellbound with a litany of good-news facts about the development progress around the world. The panel, sponsored by Friends of Colombia, was part of the “Global Development Trends” track during Peace Corps Connect, the conference celebrating Peace Corps 55th Anniversary, September 21–25, 2016, Washington DC.

Steve Radelet, (RPCV Western Samoa 1981–1983), author of *The Great Surge: The Ascent of the Developing World* (2015), tracked the most remarkable progress to the two decades following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the passing of Mao Zedong, the disintegration of Apartheid and the overthrow of various dictators around the world.

His carefully compiled statistics underpinned convincing graphs illustrating progress. For example, since 1990 data from developing countries show:

- The number of people living in absolute poverty (less than \$1/day) has decreased dramatically
- GDP per capita increased globally in developing countries (in constant dollars)
- Deaths of children under five years have decreased
- Life expectancy in developing countries has increased
- Number of years of schooling has increased for both men and women
- More people are being educated
- More girls are in school
- More countries have some form of democracy
- Number of civil wars has decreased

After Radelet’s mind-blowing and myth-busting presentation, two respondents had a chance to refute his theses. They did not. Instead Constance J. Freeman and Gary R. Burniske

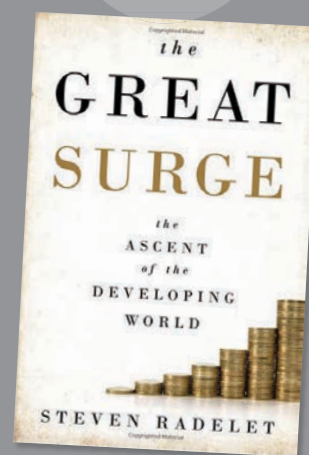
spoke from their specializations as Africanist and Latin Americanist respectively and gave further examples of progress being made on each continent.

Constance Freeman (Peace Corps Country Director Congo Brazzaville and Cameroon 1978–1981) pointed to remarkable progress in specific African countries, acknowledging the outliers who seem to get all the attention, and ended with the thought that in the next version of Radelet’s book she expects to see even more African countries highlighted as examples of progress. She referred to Radelet’s earlier book *Emerging Africa; How 17 countries are leading the way* (2010) which she uses in her teaching.

Gary Burniske (RPCV Guatemala and Costa Rica 1977–1981) related how some developing countries are to the point where they can cooperate with one another to resolve their own development challenges which they understand better than do experts from the North. His example focused on the resolution of land disputes involving indigenous peoples in Guatemala who were later invited by indigenous Colombians to consult about conflict resolution.

Arleen Cheston (RPCV Colombia 1964–1966) as President of Friends of Colombia began the session by welcoming the audience of over 200 people and Patricia A. Wand (RPCV Colombia 1963–1965), member of the Friends of Colombia Board, served as moderator.

Much to the regret of all, the hour-long session was over too quickly and precluded the lengthy discussion for which everyone was primed. Despite the need to clear the room for the next tightly scheduled event, people did not want to leave. Instead they stood around in groups talking about what they had just learned and had to be repeatedly encouraged to vacate the room, eventually. Throughout the remainder of the conference individuals remarked about the value of the panel content and how refreshing and enlightening it was to hear a ‘good news’ story these days.



Radelet tracked the most remarkable progress to the two decades following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the passing of Mao Zedong, the disintegration of Apartheid and the overthrow of various dictators around the world.

FROM THE *Field*

HOPE FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA...ON HOLD

Hope....even confidence....was high at the Colombian Embassy in Washington, DC during a reception the Ambassador hosted for RPCVs September 22, just ten days before the Colombian people cast their votes on the peace accord. The result is now history: the accord failed by a narrow margin. The process will go on, President Enrique Santos has announced. But what happened?

Certainly, Congressman and Colombia RPCV Sam Farr was confident in advance of the vote. He had traveled to Cartagena with Secretary of State John Kerry and representatives from the State Department, the White House, USAID, the Defense Department and U.S. Ambassador Bernard Anderson, who brokered the accords on behalf of both sides. Their group joined the heads of 15 Latin American countries to witness the signing of the accord between President Santos and the FARC. This ceremony, which took place September 28—before the plebiscite—was full of joy, Farr said.

“I watched as the head of FARC stood in front of thousands of people and apologized for 52 years of death and land mine injuries, while President Santos accepted it on behalf of an entire nation,” Farr said. “Children sang, bells rang, jets screamed overhead, and thousands of Colombians—all dressed in white guayabera shirts, waved white flags. Everyone who performed, including the choir and orchestra members, was dressed in white. All the presidents from different countries were also dressed in white—this was not just a sea of white but a nation showing its pride. I have never seen so many people so proud of the moment—so many in tears of joy from past sorrows and losses.”

The moment did not hold. On October 2 Colombians voted against the accord. Colombia RPCV Harry Wing, who has lived and worked in the country over many years, offered his perspective. Those who voted

“no”, said Wing, considered the terms of the agreement far too generous to the FARC, especially provisions for amnesty for FARC leaders, guaranteed seats in Congress, payment to FARC leaders and reserved zones of land.

Many voters appeared to be following the lead of former President Alvaro Uribe, who strongly opposed the agreement and urged his supporters to vote it down. A Colombian university student in Medellín said the “no” vote was that simple: “Most people I know who voted ‘no’ didn’t really know what the content of the agreement was; they were merely following Uribe and his people. Some of them just do not like Santos and that was their main reason for voting the way they did.” He added, “University students are pushing a lot for the changes proposed by Uribe’s party to be made as soon as possible so the ceasefire does not stop.”

In Washington, observers also cited the fact that opinion polls predicted the “yes” vote would win by a strong margin, which allowed supporters not to bother to vote, thinking it wouldn’t matter, while providing impetus for opponents to cast their “no” votes. In addition, the populous Atlantic Coast, home to many “yes” voters, was hit by heavy rains from Hurricane Matthew on election day, which reduced turnout. After the vote, Secretary Kerry promised continued U.S. support for Colombia and for a broad dialogue as the next step towards achieving a just and lasting peace.

Note: Six weeks after the vote, President Santos unveiled a revised accord that, according to The Washington Post, “is a testament to what can be achieved through dialogue and compromise, even in a deeply polarized society. The deal, incorporating several suggestions from critics...was reached after marathon negotiating sessions in Havana. It is unclear whether the government intends to hold a new plebiscite or simply have Congress approve the agreement.”

“As the sun set over the colonial steeples of Cartagena, the joy of peace rose like a rocket. I am glad that I had this chance to experience a country in joy at the same time that I watched a country saddened by its choices.”

—Congressman Sam Farr



Project UPDATES

PCVS HELP TRAIN TEACHERS

BY MICHAEL OWEN

Serving as an education volunteer through the Peace Corps has its challenges, along with its perks. In late October, three current Peace Corps volunteers in Colombia had the chance to experience one of these said perks.

PCVs Alexandra Reed, Michelle Dilesio, and I were given the unique opportunity to collaborate with both the Marina Orth Foundation and RPCVs who served in Colombia during the 1960's on a week-long English Immersion experience for over 100 local teachers in the city of El Carmen de Viboral. This was the first time that the Peace Corps had officially been to the interior of Colombia since the 1980's, when the program was unfortunately disbanded due to civil distress in the country.

The Marina Orth Foundation, founded by RPCV Maureen Orth, who served in Colombia in the 1960's, is dedicated to providing a model of education that is both accessible and sustainable to both primary and secondary students throughout Colombia. Through the use of technology and English language skills acquisition, the foundation strives to be an example for the rest of the country on how to make higher education an attainable goal for all the children of Colombia.

During this week-long experience, local teachers gained new ideas on how to interactively teach their students English. The current PCVs were paired up with RPCVs and together



(top) A student showing off her diploma from our class at a family dinner. (right) Maureen Orth with students.

delivered dynamic ways to teach grammar, vocabulary, and conversation. Participants also received helpful ideas on how to incorporate technology into the learning environment in their schools. The teachers who participated finished the week equipped with new materials and a different outlook on how to encourage their students and further engage them in learning English. This once-in-a-lifetime experience helped bridge the gap between current and former volunteers, while also providing a different work environment in which the current volunteers could gain valuable knowledge to take back to their sites.



Photo: www.fundaorth.org

“The teachers who participated finished the week equipped with new materials and a different outlook on how to encourage their students and further engage them in learning English.”

Books, BOOKS, BOOKS

BLOOD UPON THE SNOW

BY MARTIN R. GANZGLASS, RPCV, SOMALIA | A REVIEW BY JERRY NORRIS, GROUP VI

Given the blockbuster reception of “Hamilton” on Broadway, and the current book *Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Chernow (which has been on the Bestsellers List for most of this year), readers will find Martin Ganzglass’s *Blood Upon the Snow* a continuation of our nation’s renewal of interest in the Revolutionary War. This book is the third in a four-part series on an oft-forgotten period in American history, to be followed soon by *Spies and Deserters*.

Blood Upon the Snow, a historical novel, is based on an impressive body of research that described actual events as recorded in diaries, letters, and publications of that era. Through two fictional brothers involved in opposing sides to this conflict, Will—serving in the enlisted ranks of the Continental Army and the other, John—an officer in the British Army, the author conveys the conflicting partisan passions in our War for Independence. By drawing his characters from many different published sources, Ganzglass succeeds in securing the reader’s eye to imagine real-time events, often lost to every child’s seventh-grade history book. For instance, in a previous book in this series, *Cannons for the Cause*, we learned the answer to the question: Who was that African-American in uniform, seated at the gunwale on Washington’s right in that famous painting of his Crossing the Delaware on Christmas night? He was a member of the Marblehead Mariners, a freed-slave unit that served General Washington during this conflict. Most historical novels of this period focus on a binary aspect of the belligerents, either they are with the Continental Army or the British Army. Seldom, as in *Blood Upon the Snow*, do they include the mercenary Hessians, the Loyalists waiting on the fence to see which side would win, and almost never the role of the Quakers, caught by their religious beliefs between each of the warring parties. Yet, when large numbers of Hessians are captured by the Continental Army and penned up in an open stockade without blankets or rations in the height of winter, it is the Quakers who bring them food. Their religious convictions are strong enough to weather constant social abuse and condemnation from all sides in this conflict. At one point, prominent Quakers were actually placed under arrest by the Continental Congress. In 1848–50 the Quakers reprised their

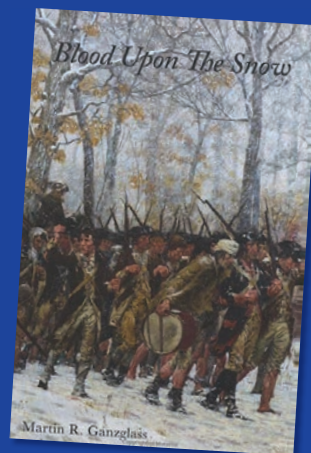
role in the War for Independence by being one of the very few external groups to ship food to Ireland during the Great Famine.

In the opening chapters of this book, the two brothers meet coincidentally after a battle. John is in the rear guard protecting a British baggage train as it retreats down a road, with Will among a group of victorious Rebels in pursuit, hoping to capture some booty. As they close in on the wagons, Will recognizes his brother and both proceed to desperately but unsuccessfully try to kill each other. As career opportunities expand during the war, John becomes Senior Aide to the Civil Governor of Philadelphia, then under occupation by the British Army. His job is to ferret out spies and prevent subversion. Will becomes a Sergeant of Artillery but in effect is a confidant of General Knox, commanding officer of artillery units in the Continental Army.

Into this milieu, the author manages to introduce a love story. General Knox has an infant daughter, and he hires a young woman named Elizabeth as an in-house babysitter. Will and Elizabeth meet and ... things happen. Upon instructions from General Knox, Will succeeds in convincing Elizabeth to remain in Philadelphia when it is captured by the British and act as a spy. She readily agrees to do so and is quite accomplished in her tasks, especially in communicating her findings to Will via invisible ink transcripts, a technique that he had taught her.

John, in his role as a British espionage chief, picks up Elizabeth’s trail, suspecting her of subterfuge for benefit of the Rebel cause. In turn, Will develops a case of the jitters, feeling that Elizabeth is at increased risk of being exposed. It is at this point that the author teases the reader’s imagination. Can the Continental Army recapture Philadelphia in time to save Elizabeth from arrest and execution as a spy by Will’s brother—and what is the fateful outcome when the two brothers meet once again! The answer to this enigma can be found in Martin Ganzglass’s forthcoming new book: *Spies and Deserters*.

If it is as gripping a story as his past books on this subject, and as deeply researched from sources contemporaneous with the narrative, then readers are in for a complete tour de force on the American War for Independence.



Note: This is a Peace Corps Writers Book, printed by the Peace Corps Writers of Oakland, California. Other RPCVs and staff are encouraged to use these publication outlets for their books. In order to qualify for these publication services, one has only to have been a RPCV or staff member, and the publication itself does not have to be about one’s service in the Peace Corps. *Blood Upon the Snow* is an excellent example of that criterion.

IN MEMORIAM

JEROME FREDERICK PARKER GROUP 22, CO-OPS, 1964–66

BY ROBERT ARCHER, GROUP 22

Jerome Frederick Parker, known as Jerry, a member of the Olympia Washington Planning Commission, died of a heart stoppage on August 18 while on a bicycling trip in Montana. He was in the seventh hour of a nine-hour ride ascending Badger Pass.

Jerry was a Colombia Cooperative Development volunteer in 1964–66, following graduation from Pomona College in California. He received a Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin upon return from Colombia.

His affection for Colombia was life long and he often noted with pride the progressive urban initiatives in Bogotá and Medellín.

Jerry was connected to all things outside—kayaking, hiking, biking and stone construction, including his “wall of Olympia”. He shared all with his partner, Mary Ann Firmin, an RPCV from the Philippines.

He lived a life aligned with his beliefs, including sustainable ways to live with environmental values. Keen of mind, inquisitive and probing, he read voraciously and engaged all in dialogue.

He was the fresh voice who looked at things differently. His connection to our Group remained strong through email and reunions over the years.

GERALD P. MCMAHON GROUP I

Gerald McMahon (Jerry, “B”) passed away unexpectedly on September 26 in El Dorado Hills, CA. Jerry was a third-generation San Franciscan, attending Andrew Jackson Elementary School, Presidio Middle School and George Washington High School. Upon graduating from Washington he joined and served in the Marine Corps until 1958. He then attended San Francisco City College and began studies at San Francisco State but once again he was sidetracked when chosen for President Kennedy's first group of Peace Corps Volunteers. He was a member of Colombia I.

After serving as a volunteer, he joined the Peace Corps staff and was relocated to Honduras as Associate Director. Determined to finish his education, he returned to San Francisco State for his BA and then went on to earn an MA from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC.

Upon graduation he took a job at Harvard (LASPAU). From Boston, he moved on to Chicago to run the Illinois offices for Senator Charles Percy. In 1978 he returned to his beloved “City by the Bay” where he remained until taking the position of Vice President with the American Waterways Operators in Seattle, WA. Upon retirement he

returned to CA to be close to his family. Jerry was married to Cynda Hart, a Peace Corps volunteer in the Colombia III group. They have two children, Timothy and Amanda.

Jerry was an active runner, cyclist, hiker, dog lover and sports enthusiast. He was a fixture in an early morning spin class; in the Candlestick parking lot watching his beloved 49ers; in Arizona for spring training to see what was happening with the Giants. Always busy, always eager to learn more. He was immensely proud of his four grandchildren. Nothing meant more to him than supporting them in all of their endeavors and receiving updates of their accomplishments. He traveled extensively both home and abroad. Fortunately, he was able to enjoy trips to Cooperstown, NY as well as Italy and a cruise of the Dalmatian coast during his final summer.

His beautiful life will forever be cherished in the lives of his wife Cindy, his daughter Mandy (Bill) of El Dorado Hills, CA; son Tim (Kathy) of La Grange Park, IL; his grandchildren Rhys and Kylan Kennedy, Charlie and Jack McMahon; and his brother Tom McMahon (Carolyn) as well as by his extended family and his many long-time good friends.

“
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... He was the fresh
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”



Membership FORM

FRIENDS OF COLOMBIA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please complete one form for each member.

Date _____

Name _____

Name in Peace Corps _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____ Fax _____

Dates of Peace Corps Service _____ Group # _____

Site (include city, village, department) _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

☐ New ☐ Renewal

☐ Annual Individual \$ 25.00 \$ _____

☐ Annual Couple \$ 40.00 \$ _____

☐ Lifetime Individual \$ 500.00 \$ _____
(payable over a two-year period)

☐ Donation to FOC for projects in Colombia \$ _____

☐ Donation specifically for *Paso a Paso* \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

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PO Box 15292
Chevy Chase, MD 20825

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Consult your tax accountant regarding personal tax deductions.