

# Fondo Q

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## Continuation of Caring

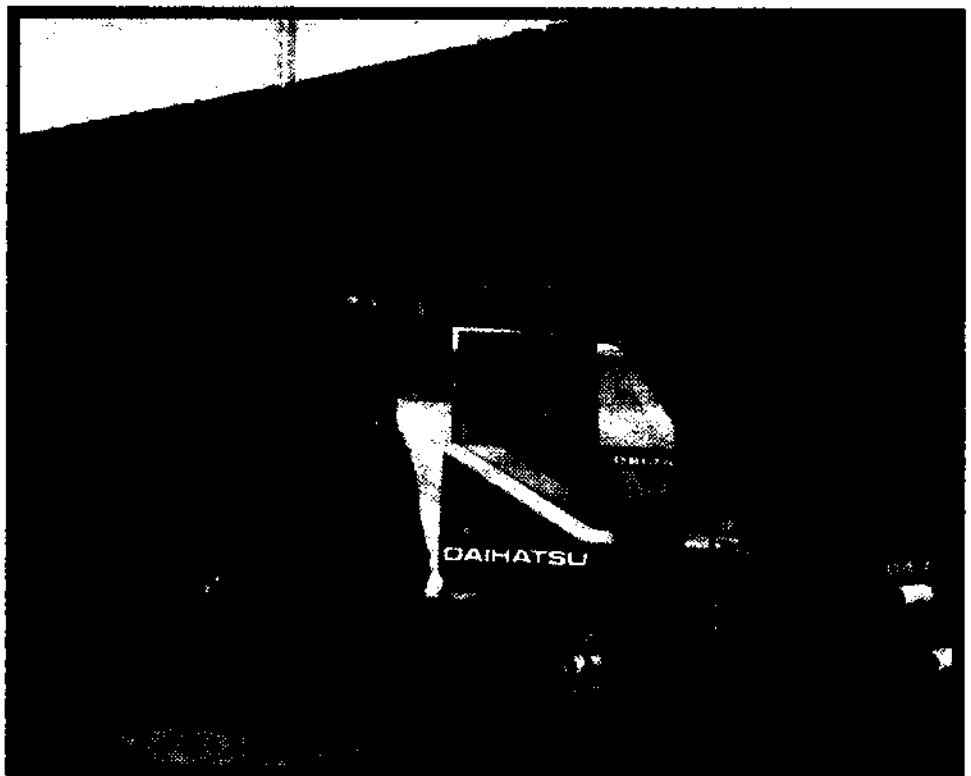
by

Mary Bosy, RPCV, Hato Mayor (1997-1999)

Phone calls after 10:00 p.m. always make me uneasy, but when my neighbor called me to her phone at 12:30 a.m., September 22, 1998 to take a call from the Peace Corps office in Santo Domingo, I was frightened. And when the PCV calling said that the anticipated Hurricane Georges had slightly altered its course and would now hit Hato Mayor directly with winds of 150 mph, I knew we were in serious trouble.

PCV's were evacuated from the northern coast of the island per the original storm trajectory, but the rest of us were given the choice of remaining at our site or going into the capitol. I opted to stay in Hato Mayor with my friends.

The town of Hato Mayor is ringed by hills and those 150 mph winds swirled overhead for 5 solid hours. We huddled in the inner hallway of a church (moving down as the roof blew off) and could watch while wooden houses collapsed, sheets of zinc whirled everywhere, and the rain rushed in horizontal sheets. Georges was my third hurricane, but it was the most destructive natural force I have ever seen in my life. Hato Mayor was devastated, and no one seemed to know anything about



*Part of the generous contribution from FQ donors pictures the food distribution system set up by Bosy and others. After setting up the food distribution sites, Bosy and others went to work in setting up mechanisms to repair the schools.*

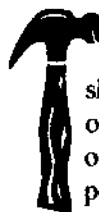
rural areas. In my capacity as Resource PCV, I had done a lot of work with rural schools and knew the margin for error in rural existence was even more tenuous than in urban environments, so when a friend said he was going to the

campo on his motorcycle to check on his school, I asked him to take me along.

I was appalled. If anything, the storm destruction was worse — fallen trees were everywhere; roads

*(Continued on page 2)*

were almost impassable from all the rain and debris; rivers were high and clogged with trees, but the worst were the homes.



Never much to begin with, some homes were shells, most were small heaps of lumber and a few sheets of zinc. Even sadder were the people. As we'd maneuver a way down a dirt path or road, we'd see two or three people here, maybe an old man there, a dog farther on, all poking at the rubble of what used to be a shelter. No one seemed to be talking. No one seemed to know what to do. When we talked to people in a labor camp in the sugarcane zone, they said that when the roofs blew off the camp barracks, they threw themselves on the ground. They had no where else to go.

There was food for the time being. Citrus was all over the ground; bananas and plantain were laid flat; and yuca and sweet potatoes were uprooted, etc. No one would be hungry for a week or two but then what? I thought about this that evening and decided to try the 2-3 hour trip by bus into Santo Domingo the next day. Surely the Peace Corps could help.

I wasn't disappointed. The President of the Republic had personally approached the Peace Corps and asked that they monitor and organize the distribution of 12 lb. food bags being made up by the Plan social. PCV's were put on helicopters for distribution to inaccessible areas and were in charge of setting up land distribution from Herrera airport. I was asked to reassess the situation around Hato Mayor, set up rural distribution centers, hire trucks (which I did through generous donations from concerned friends and family) and do all I could to alleviate the situation.

My friends and I road the campo for days, met with committees, set up 3 distribution centers. Over a 4-6 week period we were able to distribute 7,000 food bags.

Once the food distribution system was in place, we turned to the schools. Of the 91 schools in the Hato Mayor district, about one third were completely demolished; another one third were partially damaged (largely roofless); and, the balance were habitable and immediately taken over as refugee centers.

Back I went to the Peace Corps to talk to Domingo Valerio, my boss in Education, to see if we could help a dire situation. Again, I wasn't disappointed.

Using private donations, including most generous support from Fondo Q, Domingo worked out a wonderful program: the Peace Corps would provide materials to rehabilitate rural schools if the major damage consisted largely in loss of roof. In addition, the Peace Corps would supply paint (interior and exterior), barbed wire to enclose the schoolyard and seeds for a school vegetable garden. The community had to agree to provide all necessary labor and complete the work within a specific time frame.

The plan was a marvelous success. The school district cooperated fully; we organized a total of 8 rural communities, and before the end of '98, there were 1,550 rural students back in newly painted and renovated schools. Gardens were planted, and as I continued my rounds to check on progress, I was constantly regaled with lettuce, cucumber, eggplant, etc.

Prior to Georges in September, we were attempting to organize an "intercambio" between private schools in Santo Domingo and rural schools in the Hato Mayor area. We had hoped to start with an exchange of personal letters between students in like grades each explaining life in

his world. Post Georges, obviously this plan became simply academic, but we did have something of an organization in place.

In December, '98, I revisited these private schools and explained the dire straits we were in—virtually no un-damaged supplies or usable textbooks. Their generosity was overwhelming. We distributed carton after carton of school supplies and several thousand new textbooks.

All in all, I was so proud to have been a part of these Peace Corps efforts. Amid all the destruction and anguish of Hurricane Georges, el Cuerpo de Paz was truly a shining light. During community meetings to initiate the school reconstruction program, we continually emphasized the fact that so many of the funds used to purchase necessary materials came from former PCV's who had served in the DR over the years. Time and again someone would ask me if I knew the PEC who had served here or there and then proceed to tell me how they used to play dominos together, or how they taught the PCV to dance bachata. How lucky I was to have been the one to show them they weren't forgotten. I add my sincere gratitude to theirs. *FQ*

### **In Memoriam**

**Max Velasquez**

**A devoted friend and colleague  
to many Peace Corps Volunteers  
and staff in the  
Dominican Republic**

## Editor's Corner

Staff: Karen Clough  
Carrie Meyer  
Dick Clough

The Millennium (MM) will be here in a short time. What tasks did the equivalent of a PCV perform in 999 A.D? Whatever these hardy souls did/invented, etc., I am most grateful for potable water and sewage control, medical discoveries, and electricity. In January we were without electricity for 6 days while the more fortunate in our neighborhood had light. Dick built fires every morning and we lost everything in the freezer. However, we had water which is just the best convenience. Eventually, a neighbor plugged in an extension cord and dragged it over to our house. Happy *MM* to one and all!

The *FQ* Board is grateful to **Mary Bosy** who contributed our lead article for this newsletter. All of us can do more. *Karen*

## Scholarship in honor of Max Velasquez

The *FQ* Board decided to name an annual scholarship in memory of Max Velasquez. Max was well known to many generations of PCV's--serving on the PCDR staff in the 60's and again in the 80's. Max was instrumental in arranging the first PCDR reunion in SDO when *FQ* was founded. *FQ*

## Notes from the Board

by Carrie Meyer

### Fondo Q Annual Meeting

The annual meeting and picnic was held on June 26, 1999 at Tom and Sue Gittins' home in Falls Church, VA. The five board members whose terms were up (Minor Anderson, Kristin Fiske, Karen Clough, Tom Gittins, John Evans) stood for election again and were re-elected. Many thanks to Tom and Sue for hosting the meeting and picnic once again. The BBQ was superb as were the side dishes, and the conversation and libations flowed freely in their backyard between games of horseshoes. *FQ*



Happy Holidays!

### News of FDR

Friends of the Dominican Republic (FDR) established in 1998, raised some much appreciated funds for *FQ*. In 1998, eleven contributors donated \$380. And, as of November, 1999, thirteen contributors had donated \$600. The money has been forwarded to *FQ*'s treasurer to be used in Fondo programs.

FDR is composed primarily of Peace Corps Volunteers and Staff who served in the Dominican Republic, but it is open to all who are interested in the DR and share the goals of the Peace Corps. Thank you, FDR. *FQ*

## T-Shirts X and XL

Yep!

We still have some on hand, both vintage (red background) and avant-garde (very stylish).

These make handy gifts.

Only \$20.00, \$10.00 of which is tax deductible.