

iQué Pasa!

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An Incredible Happening



From Left: Fran Marino, Linda & Minor Anderson, Vice President Dr. Jaime David Fernandez Mirabel, President Leonel Fernandez, Eduardo Salaman, Technical Secretary to the President. The rest of us were lined along the walls of this large reception area.

By
Carrie Meyer

By all accounts, Fondo Quisqueya's (FQ) 35th Anniversary of Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic was a great success. Activities ranged from reuniting with other former volunteers, learning about current PCDR programs, and meeting the new President and other local leaders, to enjoying the beach, merengue, comida tipica, and visits back to former sites.

An enthusiastic local committee including John and Sobeya

Seibel from ENTRENA, Mike and Bili Benson, Jerry and Polita Dupuy, Diane Partl, Roberto Pineyro, Carolyn Bain, Maura McCarthy, and Michael and Ana Hirsh volunteered countless hours to careful logistical planning resulting in a truly memorable conference that came off with hardly a hitch. One time the "family" had to eat standing, but they never had to eat light.

Of course, the anticipated American Airlines' strike was due on the same holiday

travel weekend. Although the scheduled strike discouraged a few, (many of us, in fact, were hoping to be stranded!) canceled flights on Friday evening did keep a few registrants from joining us. (we missed you!) The vast majority, however, arrived safely and returned all too soon.

The program began Friday evening with an incoming reception at the Peace Corps Office on Avenida Bolivar. Meeting old friends and new, former volunteers were re-

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Notes from the FQ Board

From the members of the Reunion Planning Committees Stateside and in the Dominican Republic, we wish to thank you for being such a good-natured, laid back group. Your interest, enthusiasm and attendance remained high throughout the four day meeting, and made all of our planning and logistics efforts very rewarding.

The Dominican planning contingent used every resource available to make the meeting as smooth as possible. To recognize several members of the Committee, the reunion participants voted to name the next three FQ grant awards in honor of Mike and Bili Benson, John and Sobeya Seibel, and Jerry and Polita Dupuy.

There was generosity among the reunion participants who pledged over \$12,000 toward future FQ grants. Ten per cent of the total amount pledged will go into the Endowment Fund. In addition, an anonymous donor was prepared to donate to FQ 20% of the total amount pledged during the meeting. It was also noted that the FQ has no real property, nor does it have any administrative expenses



From left, Carolyn Bain, Minor Anderson, Bob Talfeski, and Mike Benson, plus other committee members not pictured, make a vallant attempt to look serious.

(except those concerned with the mailings) since the Board Members serve on a volunteer basis.

Fondo Projects A listing of all FQ awards made to date was distributed during the business meeting on Monday. The awards represent a total of DR\$ 114,000 (or about \$10,000 U.S.

allowing for inflation). The latest Treasurer's Report, dated May 10, 1997 has \$4,350 in its Endowment Fund; \$1,500 in the Andy Hernandez Fund (more about this later) and \$17,400 in its basic Grant Fund.

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which kept going

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ceived in our old stomping grounds by current Peace Corps staff and Dominican friends of Peace Corps. Thanks to Jerry Dupuy, Barcelo helped out with refreshments and caterers provided picadera.

An open afternoon allowed tourism and preparation for an invitation that evening to the National Palace to meet the Dominican Republic's new president, Dr. Leonel Fernandez. The President greeted us with moving words of sincere appreciation for the role that Peace Corps has played both by volunteers in the DR and by RPCVs back

home. Fernandez recalled his youth in New York, his memories of Kennedy's death, and his contact with RPCVs from the DR in the U.S. such as Senator Chris Dodd and his good friend Kirby Jones (whom he had met in Washington, D.C. at the World Bank). Jones, PCV 1963-65, was instrumental in arranging the reception. We appreciate your hard work and diligence, Kirby.

Country director, Michael Hirsch presented President Fernandez with a letter from Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan, and with a PC pin and a PC/DR cap. Fondo President Minor Ander-

son followed with the presentation of a reunion T-shirt and book of photographs of the U.S. signed by each of the RPCVs at the reunion. Other Dominican friends of Peace Corps also spoke in appreciation of our efforts and especially for the close relationships formed between so many volunteers and so many Dominicans over the last 35 years. We were reminded of the extent to which our hearts still remained in our towns and villages.

Each of us was offered the opportunity to shake the President's hand, and refrescos concluded the visit.

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and going on to our delight

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Sunday was a social day, and we headed for playa Juan Dolio east of Santo Domingo and enjoyed a day of sun, fun, good food and good fellowship. Following a short break at the hotel, we all piled into buses and head for ENTRENA, the Pantoja Training Center north of Santo Domingo. What a lovely facility. The hosts, John and Sobeya Seibel and staff, were most gracious and the food delicious.

The conference concluded on Monday, beginning with a stimulating panel of local experts who spoke to the challenges to be faced by the DR in the year 2000 and beyond. Lic. Frank Marino Hernandez, Sociologist with over 30 years association with Peace Corps and Director of the Instituto Dominicano de Estudios Aplicados (IDEA) led the round table discussion.

Panel members included David Luther, Architect, Director of Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (IDDI), an NGO focused on urban poverty in the barrios of Santo Domingo; Ana Tholenaar, counselor and trainer with Peace Corps since 1978, currently Director of the Comision Nacional de Drogas; Domingo Marte, Agricultural Engineer, head of Pronatura and representative of the Nature Conservancy in the DR, head of the Union Nacional de Voluntarios Dominicanos

(UNIDOS) and member of the Central Bank Monetary Board; and Horacio Ornes, Agricultural Economist, head of Fundacion para el Desarrollo Comunitario (FUDECO), an NGO specializing in rural development in the border area with Haiti.

U.S. Ambassador to the DR, the Honorable Donna J. Hrinak, (soon to be reassigned to Bolivia) spoke of U.S. diplomatic efforts to promote democracy, U.S. interests and security in the

Mirabel. He spoke to the new administration's agenda of sustainable development and the role that PCDR is expected to play. The Vice President has been an active supporter of Peace Corps and has worked with volunteers in Salcedo

The conference wrapped with FQ's annual meeting and election of Board members. In addition, a new fund in honor of Andy Hernandez was established. The fund is to be used toward awards of recognition for community leaders.

Before, after, and in between the official conference program RPCVs were able to reacquaint themselves with Santo Domingo. On the one hand, a booming tourist industry combined with Balaguer's penchant for investing in construction and the recent 500-year anniversary of Columbus landing on Hispaniola have all helped to give the capital a more modern airport, a spruced up colonial

district, and the monumental Faro de Colon. Many sites, however, were pleasantly familiar and others painfully so.

Many former volunteers returned to their sites of service, were greeted with abrazos and the familiar "esta es tu casa," and were invited to stay for a week or a month. In the end, reluctantly perhaps, we came back to our busy lives. FQ



Pictured here at El Conuco restaurant are all of us having a tasty lunch. Current PCV's were invited as special guests of conference participants who "sponsored" their meal. Merengues, cervezas, and refrescos flowed freely during the afternoon.

region. She depicted a country in transition, finally shedding the old guard and preparing to move ahead under a new administration with economic, political, and judicial reforms and new priorities in health and education. She asked for our support in communicating the message back home that the U.S. has real interests in the Dominican Republic, our 7th largest trading partner in the region.

The keynote speaker at lunch was Vice President of the Dominican Republic, Dr. Jaime David Fernandez

Recognition for Andres "Andy" Hernandez



Good friends at the reunion include from left, Thomas Pastoriza, Andres "Andy" Hernandez, former President Donald Reid-Cabral, Bob Kulstead, and Jerry Dupuy. The picture was taken at the Peace Corps Office in Santo Domingo where we enjoyed great hospitality.

Andres "Andy" Hernandez, first DR Country Director received a recognition plaque from Tim Persons (PC/ Washington) on behalf of Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan. Andy recalled the early PC days when then-President Donald Reid Cabral had been instrumental in allowing a Peace Corps presence through a difficult period of U.S. occupation and political upheaval.

An idea of creating an homage to Andy Hernandez, for his exemplary work was suggested by Jerry Dupuy and several former volunteers who wanted to honor the work done by Andy in those early years. This group had thought of creating an Andy Hernandez Foundation, but logistics made it more viable to create an Andy Hernandez Leadership Award (Premio Hernandez) to be channeled through FQ. Donations to FQ can be earmarked for the Award honoring Dominicans who have demonstrated leadership within the community or barrio. Nominations will be sought through community contacts such as priests,

Chamber of Commerce, Peace Corps, etc. (Note that the Hernandez Fund has grown to \$1,500.00).

Recognition Plaque

Former PC Director Andres Hernandez, 1961-1963, and RPCV Jerry Dupuy presented a recognition plaque to Donald Reid Cabral who was President of the Dominican Republic when the Peace Corps first arrived. He has supported and been an advocate of Peace Corps ever since.

Other FQ Projects

Katie Kelly and Kristy Jallinek, two current volunteers described their recent project, "Dia del Campo" funded by FQ for RD\$8,206. The idea had already been implemented before in the Bani area with three courses during 1995-1996, also funded through FQ grants. With 108 farmers participating, it had grown to be a success and therefore, the request for further FQ funding

to replicate it. Seven Volunteers from the Bani area will organize the courses and 70 Dominican farmers will be participating. Other PCV "clusters" in the DR are also interested in replicating the idea in their respective areas. (The Board would like to point out that the grant proposal submitted by the Volunteers was so well presented that it could serve as a model for funding requests).

FQ awarded a grant to David Antonio Polanco, bringing Fondo's assistance to Polanco to RD\$3,900. FQ's help has been put toward tuition for a six-month intensive computer course as well as covering transportation and books. Polanco was sponsored by RPCV Jennifer McGowan. FQ



An Afternoon in Villa Mella by Christine and Gene Snyder

We found the four days in the DR to be full of rich experiences. The conference program was very interesting, the outings fun, and we really felt like VIP's going to the Presidential Palace to meet Leonel and having the Vice President and the US Ambassador both come to speak to us. The beach outing was a treat; we finally got to see the colonial sights in the city, and we bought amber and larimar.

We hired a cab Monday afternoon and set off to find our site at Villa Mella, and that was an astounding experience. We had left 32 years ago during the war, and had not had any contact since. We doubted that there would be anyone there who would remember us. When we drove through the urban sprawl and located the old village center and identified the house where we had lived, there was the owner sitting on the front porch!



Coats and ties and dresses meant it was time to be off to the Presidential Palace. Pictured here at the far left and far right, are Christine and Gene Snyder, the authors of the accompanying article. In the middle are Steve Honoré and BJ Warren.

He and another (now old) man recognized us, called out our names, and the word of our arrival spread; and before long many of the young people I had worked with, now middle aged, appeared. It was amazing how much they

remembered about us, and it reminded me of how important everything we do and say as volunteers is as it will be remembered and discussed for years. The photo book which I put together was a real hit, and many delighted in finding themselves in the photos. We left it there, of course.

We stayed a couple of hours, walking around the square, where many remembered us, and taking a short drive to visit the "old" places and see the new gas stations and shopping centers and housing developments where the cattle ranches used to be. The "progree" of communities like Villa Mella evokes mixed emotions. After we left Villa Mella, the taxi driver took us home to meet his wife and family. It was all in all an amazing four days in the DR. We are really glad we went. The conference planners did a great job, and our return visit to Villa Mella was much more than we could have imagined. FQ

Board Notes, contd

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Promoting and Expanding FQ
Mike Benson raised the issue during the business meeting that "times have changed," but FQ by-laws governing grant eligibility have not. Consideration should be given to expanding FQ's focus (especially in vocational training areas) and thereby creating pools of potential candidates. So far, all applications have come through Peace Corps people; other groups haven't really responded.

In face of that reality, discussion

turned to the need to promote FQ, and make it better known as an available resource. Some of the resulting suggestions generated by the discussion were, make an FQ video; write articles for the Peace Corps newsletter, *Grita Gringo*; open the applicant pool through an organization/project called "Women in Development;" circulate the FQ mailing list at Close of Service Conferences (COS); and, make a special note in the next FQ newsletter that names of DR RPCV's, not currently listed in the FQ database, are wanted. FQ

A Busy Time in El Seibo by Carrie Meyer

With a busy conference schedule and classes to teach back home, I had less than a day to make it out east to my former site and back. I caught an early guagua and chatted with the other pasajeros on the two-hour trip.

I would have only four hours in El Seibo and would need to limit my visit to several special friends. It was not my first visit back to the town where I served as a volunteer in the early 1980's. I had returned in the late 1980's by rental car while doing dissertation research and had made more extensive rounds at that time. This time I planned to see only my Dona, two families I had been close to, and a friend who owned a novelty shop.

Dona Julita was getting old and was in failing health the last time I had seen her. I wasn't sure she was alive. Milqueya had sent a Christmas card but hadn't responded to my last letter either; she was 15 when she and her two siblings asked me to teach them English. She had repaid me by teaching me how to play the guitar. To my knowledge, she now lived in the capital with her husband. Marta and her children had written many times over the years, and I knew they still lived in the house I had visited so often. Miguel, I hoped to find tending his shop. But, unsure of my plans, I hadn't confirmed my visit with anyone. Milqueya's family owned a panaderia near the bus stop and as I walked over her father recognized me immediately, hugged me, and invited me into the house. To my surprise (and hers!), Milqueya was there with her young son. Only that week had she separated from her husband and returned from the capital to her parents' home. Now she was a woman of 30, with an engineering career, a child, and a broken home. We were both so happy for a chance reunion on that St. Valentine's Day.

When I first met Marta, she was thin like a child although she may have



A friend of PC in the background, Carrie Meyer, Gene Lane and Kay Feichter-Thistlethwaite enjoy the reception at the Peace Corps Office.

been older than I. She had five equally skinny children under the age of 12, a husband who was exceptionally tigre even as tigres go, and a difficult life of washing, cooking, and trying to make ends meet. Despite our different lives, Marta had a twinkle in her eye that made me love her and an insight that taught me many things. From the panaderia I walked towards her house.

Dona Julita lived farther away, and I had already been told of her stroke. They said she was bedridden and wouldn't know me.

As I walked a young woman bonita y gordita intercepted me - she was the youngest of Marta's five children. Kati was a child of four when I knew her, now she was 19. We went to her home and found David and Koki. David was now a man of 25 and finishing a law degree. Koki was bonita y gordita like

her sister, now 21 and hoping to continue her education. Marta, however, was out in the campo teaching in a Haitian batey among the sugar cane fields. David offered to take me to see her on his motorbike.

A ride through the Dominican campo on the back of a bike would have been enough to fill my heart with happy memories. But in addition it was right in the middle of cane harvest, and the roads through the cane fields to the batey were filled with carts drawn by teams of oxen and piled with cane still hand-cut by Haitian laborers. It was a beautiful and moving journey. Even more so to greet Marta however briefly, and meet her class of primary students. She was now well-dressed and more matronly looking, but with the same twinkle in her eye.

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Visit with Janet Mena in Monabao, Jarabacoa by Neil Ross

To locate Fondo grant recipient Janet Mena, I visited Monabao late one afternoon. After crossing two narrow log bridges over the fast moving Yaque del Norte, we arrived at the Mena's simple home and were treated to an orange drink while we visited with Janet and her mother.

Janet was able to complete her Saturday high school classes, thanks to a 1995 Fondo grant of RD\$2,860 that was used for tuition and transportation to and from Jarabacoa. She was among the few from Monabao to graduate in 1996. While Janet is a shy girl she is also a serious student and passed her school test on the first try, while according to her mother, "her brothers took 4 to 5 tries before passing."

Currently Janet is not working -- Monabao is primarily a farming area with little industry, and some tourism spillover from visitors to Pico Duarte. She does volunteer work with the church and some youth groups in the village. When asked about her future, Janet quickly responded that she wants to study accounting at the new univer-

sity in Jarabacoa. Her mother emphasized Janet's dedication to her studies and her lack of interest in boyfriends at this stage of her life.

I believe that Janet is an intelligent and dedicated young woman who would benefit from higher education, although her family cannot afford it. I strongly suspect, that with more education, encouragement and experience, she could return as a teacher or agent of change to help the villagers in Monabao.

I contacted the two PCV's in Jarabacoa --Meadow Davis and Phoebe Wellburn -- and they plan to follow up with a visit to try to involve Janet in some of their work. Perhaps in the future other sources of grants can be found for university education. There is no question that the Fondo grant helped Janet to rise above the norm, and to believe that she can do much more. Her family is rightfully proud of her. FQ

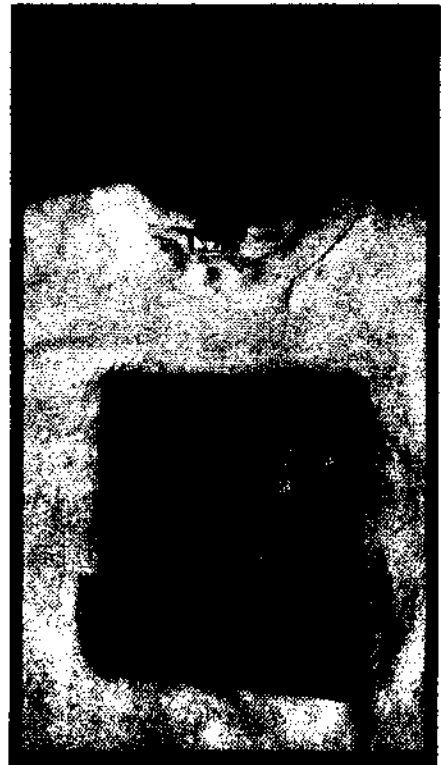
El Seibo, cont'd

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As David brought me back to town and to Dona Julita's house, I prepared myself for a grim bedside visit. When we arrived, the Dona's daughter-in-law greeted me warmly and showed me to her room. Dona Julita was now blind; she couldn't walk; her hair was shorn off, and she was literally skin and bones. But, despite her stroke, her mind was still good and she was so happy that I had come to see her. The tears streamed down my face in joy and pain.

Finally, before I left town, David dropped me by his older brother's new home. Huascar was now a lawyer with an office on the new side of town. Obviously the whole family was benefiting from his income. I had one disappointment: Miguel, my personal handyman, friend, fuerte, was not tending his store. I was shocked to learn that he was in the capital with life-threatening health problems.

Still yearning to see others, I caught the afternoon guagua and headed back, full of gratitude and tears. FQ



Here is the T-Shirt. See coupon on back page for details.

ORDER A T-SHIRT!

The winner of the T-shirt design contest mentioned in the last news letter was Kirby Jones, a talented graphics designer, who is the son of Kirby Jones (PCV 1963-65). At the Presidential Reception, young Kirby presented a T-Shirt to President Fernandez. You may order the classy looking shirt pictured above by sending in the coupon on the back page of this newsletter. The cost is \$20.00 including postage. Please note that \$10.00 may be deducted as a charitable contribution on your income tax.

We also have a few FQ red T-Shirts available. To save hassels, the price will be \$20.00 postage paid. FQ

