



# El Bochinche

## Peace Corps Panama Friends

Issue: 19

2011 Quarter IV  
Fall Edition

### Dear Friends of Peace Corps Panamá,

November 3<sup>rd</sup>, *Día de Independencia*, a Panamanian tradition for now 108 years. The majority of us remember *desfiles*, *polleras*, *bailes*, *sancocho*, *fuegos artificiales*, and LOTS of Panamanian flags everywhere. It is a time of celebration when every Panamanian shows their pride in the country.

And Panama has a lot of be proud of in 2011. The economy is growing. Statistics on crime and violence are significantly lower than neighbouring countries. Panama's image is one of a burgeoning metropolis; the center of tourism, banking and international cooperation for the Americas.

Yet on this 108<sup>th</sup> birthday, let us remember the other side of Panama. The Teribe struggling to define a new way of life with a now dried-up river because of hydroelectric damming. The Coclesanos sifting through ruins after devastating floods, and wondering how to survive with the loss of their entire rice crop. The Ngöbe in a fight to keep their land free from mining ventures. The hundreds of thousands of Panamanians who work daily to keep their children fed and a roof over their heads.

And where is the Peace Corps in this? It may never be that there is equality among all, regardless of race, gender, or family lineage. However I believe that we, as Peace Corps Panama volunteers, can say that we have helped the citizens of Panama get closer to this ideal.

I was recently speaking with an RPCV friend of mine who was frustrated by the fact that so much of the Peace Corps' work in the Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé seems to have been forgotten. It was in the 1960's that the first volunteers lived in the mountains of Veraguas, Chiriquí, and Bocas. This was before the Comarca was born, when the people of those mountains were still referred to as "Guaymí." It was over 10 years ago that patient, dedicated volunteers and Peace Corps staff worked with the Ngöbe and the Buglé to create their comarca, to sign treaties between each other and with international organizations (such as the Peace Corps). And today, in 2011, despite the fact that the people of the Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé are still fighting for their rights, we now see proud Ngöbe women in naguas picketing in front of congress, shutting down the Interamerican highway in protest.

In no way do I believe that the Peace Corps volunteers who worked with these communities are the sole reason that the Ngöbe protesters have now found their voice and are exercising their civil rights. Nor am I under the illusion that all of the US's interventions in Panama have been positive. Though much of the work with the Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé has been lost on paper, I would like to believe that in the fabric of their culture and in the messages of empowerment that are now coming from within - that this could be testament to the work of hundreds of volunteers who have lived in these communities. That this is the result of WID/GAD seminars for indigenous women and small business volunteers who worked to bring self-sustained income into the homes.

Peace Corps has now been a part of Panama for almost 30 years. That's almost a third of the entire life of

this nation. Almost 2,000 volunteers have spent at least 2 years 3 months living with Panamanian families. That would be the equivalent of 4500 YEARS of Peace Corps volunteers partnering with Panamanian communities. And you were part of that collective experience.

Wherever you may be on this November 3<sup>rd</sup>, I invite you to celebrate this country's growth and prosperity, to contemplate its continued struggles and inequalities, and to reflect on how you, personally, have contributed to this 108 year history. And if you are not currently connected with Panama, I invite you to rejoin the dialogue: through PCPF's website and Facebook page; through donations to Peace Corps Panama projects; through return visits to your communities here in Panama. As always, we are here to facilitate that continued relationship in whichever way you may need.

Sincerely,

Valerie Whiting  
PCPF President

## About PCPF

[www.panamapcv.net](http://www.panamapcv.net)

**Peace Corps Panama Friends**

Peace Corps Panama Friends (PCPF) is a non-profit organization founded in 1986 consisting of returned and current Peace Corps volunteers, Peace Corps Panama former and current staff, and families and friends. Our mission is to help our members continue their commitment to international service and understanding, support the Peace Corps mission in Panama, and share knowledge of Panama and the Peace Corps with others.

The PCPF Directiva consists of:

President - Valerie Whiting

VP - Sarah Schmidt (on leave of absence)

Treasurer - Jaime Clark

Panama Liaison - David Modzelewski

Secretary - Hugh Smith

PCPF website:

<http://www.panamapcv.net/>

Facebook group:

[https://www.facebook.com/#!/home.php?sk=group\\_45282360232](https://www.facebook.com/#!/home.php?sk=group_45282360232)

LinkedIn group: <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Peace-Corps-Panama-Friends-2316292?home=&qid=2316292&trk=anet Ug hm>

E-mail: [president@panamapcv.net](mailto:president@panamapcv.net)

You can help support PCPF by donating to either the PCPF Community Development Fund or the Bud Keith Scholarship Fund for the Blind.

**Donate**



## PCPF and Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary Events

On September 22nd, PCPF and the Embassy of Panama in Washington D.C. collaborated to offer PCPF members and guests a reception in Ambassador Mario Jaramillo's residence to

celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps. There was an outpouring of interest in this event, but due to embassy space constraints PCPF had to limit the reception to 70 people. Donations from this event will go to support Peace Corps Panama volunteer projects.

"Good food. Good ambiance. Short speeches" lauds one attendee.



Those that missed the embassy reception gathered at Murphy's Grand Irish Pub to reminisce, and were later joined by some from the reception.

PCPF organized a community service event during the national Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary weekend with Bikes for the World. On September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> volunteers helped load a container of 500+ bikes, sewing machines, and Braille embossers headed to Panama. Goodwill Panama offers the bikes at a discounted price (between \$20-\$40) and the proceeds of these sales go to support Goodwill Panama's work training programs for people with disabilities and special needs.

Director of Bikes for the World, Keith Oberg expresses his gratitude in the following e-mail:

Bikes for the World was privileged to work with two alumni groups of the Peace Corps, as this national volunteer program celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this weekend, and with long-term collection partners including two area churches completing their 17<sup>th</sup> annual collections. Many thanks to all of the following:

*Friends of Panama* - this alumni group of returned Peace Corps volunteers, who served in Panama-fielded two teams on successive mornings loading 500 bicycles (including in this number a couple of children's tricycles and scooters), 11 sewing machines and a whole lot of spare parts (and a rumor of braille typewriters). The contents are heading for our long-term partner in Panama City, the Panamanian Association of Goodwill Industries. Many thanks to Steve Spangler for organizing. For a view of the loading, visit <http://youtu.be/2Z3uB6JbQ1E>.

*Friends of Guatemala* - the returned Peace Corps volunteers who served in Guatemala joined with Bikes for the World publicizing, managing, and staffing a collection at Recreational Equipment Inc (REI) in Rockville MD. The rain held off, and the bikes didn't - 43 bikes, a bike stand, one sewing machine, and more. I can personally testify that we had a great time! Many thanks to Eric Madsen and Annella Auer. Bikes for the World anticipates making a shipment to Eco-Bici, a youth program in a low-income neighborhood of Guatemala City, later in October

The *Pennswood Village Residents Association with George School and Newtown Friends School* at Pennswood Village, Newtown PA, celebrated their fifth annual collection, with more than 150



bikes donated. Many thanks to George Kurz and his crew, and to Andrew and Keith Grover, who came over from Tinton Falls NJ to assist, and contribute additional bikes collected in northern NJ. Many thanks, too, to operations manager Nick Colombo for getting up before 5 am to make sure the truck was running and complete the three-hour+ journey to Bucks County PA.

Marking another milestone were two area churches which held their 17<sup>th</sup> annual bike collections this weekend. Both churches have collected in the ballpark of 2,000 bikes, with individual events ranging upwards of 200 or more bikes.

1. *St John the Evangelist Catholic Church/St John's United Methodist-Presbyterian Church, Columbia MD* - more than 65 bikes came in yesterday, brought back to King Farm via truck driven by Bikes for the World volunteer Phil Ruth. Many thanks to Phil, and to St John's long-time event manager, Tom McCarthy.
2. *Herndon Friends Meeting, Herndon VA* - this collection is going on as I write, and certain to be another in a long run of successes. Paul Murphy and the members of the Herndon Friends have done a consistently outstanding job.

We would not have done all this without the participation of Bikes for the World staff and volunteers, including Phil Ruth (who covered the collection in Columbia), Nick Colombo (who covered Pennswood and Herndon), Yvette Hess (who scheduled much of the work), and Rich Robinson, Bob Evans, and Woody Woodrich, who lead the Panama Goodwill loading at Springfield.

*"A bicycle can get someone someplace...like from poverty to self-sufficiency."*



On September 25th, Panama RPCVs carried the Republic of Panama flag during the Walk of Flags for the Peace Corps 50th anniversary. RPCVs and friends walked from from Arlington National Cemetery across the Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln Memorial, with flags from 139 Peace Corps countries. The event was organized by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C.

## **50 Years - 50 Voices: Stories from Peace Corps Panama 1963-2013**

Upcoming Anthology by Meredith Cornett



Meredith and husband Ethan in Tranquilla,

*50 Years-50 Voices* is a brand new project inspired by the Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Washington, D.C. (September 2011). Along with more than 200 other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), I attended several events organized by Peace Corps Panama Friends. RPCVs at the event were incredibly generous with their stories. Many shared more than one, from the deeply personal and moving to the downright hilarious.

*50 Years-50 Voices* will bring together in one volume the wisdom, humor, and heartbreak of RPCVs across five decades of service in Panama. The book will be published in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Peace Corps Panama - available for distribution by September 2013. The plan is to include stories and poems from at least 50 contributors - as the title implies - touching on each decade in which the program has been active in Panama: 1960s, 1970s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s.\*

*50 Years-50 Voices* is by, for, and of RPCVs who served in Panama. Its success depends on you. Beginning October 23, 2011 (deadline is May 1, 2012) please send your best Panama tales. Looking forward to working with you!

Guidelines:

- \*Must be a Peace Corps Panama RPCV to submit
- \*Submissions must be based on first-hand experience(s) in the village of service.
- \*Accepted genres include prose (non-fiction, memoir) and/or poetry
- \*Send to [meredith.w.cornett@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.w.cornett@gmail.com) by May 1, 2012
- \*Up to three submissions, maximum 1,200 words each, per author
- \*Put your name on every page
- \*Use Microsoft Word or compatible format
- \*Double-space
- \*12 point Times or Times New Roman font only

We hope to work with Peace Corps Writers Imprint / CreateSpace. Check them out at <http://peacecorpsworldwide.org/pcw-imprint/about/> and stay tuned for details.

*\*I'd love to include a story or two from any RPCV that returned to Panama to visit during either the Torrijos or Noriega years in the 1980s. Otherwise I'll likely add a short piece that explains this hiatus.*

For more information on this and related projects visit [www.meredithwcornett.com](http://www.meredithwcornett.com).

## PCPF Media



PCPF Facebook has 453 friends! Only 47 away from our "500 for 50th" goal. Recommend PCPF to all your [Facebook](#) friends and help us keep everyone updated on things like:

- RPCV Jacob McClelland reporting for NPR's Morning Edition
  - Red Cross [North to South pole runner Pat Farmer](#) ran through Panama in September
  - Peace Corps response in Panama
  - [Native Future](#) non-profit org works with Wounaan and Ngäbe Buglé indigenous communities in Panama
  - [Bikes for the World](#) sends bikes to Panama
-

Are you a part of LinkedIn? Be sure to add [PCPF on LinkedIn](#) to your networks. Relevant job postings and group discussions can be found here AND it's another way to connect to your fellow RPCVs.

---

### **New book and e-book releases:**

Chen, J. (Ed.). (2011). *A small key opens big doors: 50 years of amazing Peace Corps stories: Volume Three: The Heart of Eurasia (Peace Corps at 50)*. Traveler's Tales.

Crouch, E. (2011). *The mola: Traditional Kuna textile art*. Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. - Nice coffee-table book.

Hatting, R. (2011). *Murder in Panama*. (Jimmy Hart Series). [Kindle Edition] - Good for those interested in adventure novels, or anything Chiriqui!

Roche, T. (2011). *The Panama laugh*. Night Shade Books. - Good for those interested in sci-fi action, or just love a good zombie slaughter.

Freer, I. (2011). *Panama girl*. iUniverse Publishing. - Good for those interested in the Embera.

Alí, M. (2011). *En estado de sitio: Los Kunas en Urabá. Vida cotidiana de una comunidad indígena en zona de conflicto*. Universidad de los Andes.

### **Videos/movies to look for:**

[Paraiso for Sale](#) documentary, directed and produced by Anayansi Prado. [Impacto Films](#).

*One life for another* documentary, directed by Zach Litwack (son of RPCV). Contact Zach to order \$15 DVD at [zachlitwack@yahoo.com](mailto:zachlitwack@yahoo.com).

[Burwa Dii Ebo/El Viento y el Agua](#), 2007 filmed by Panamanians about Kuna youth.



## ¡SE VENDEN! Peace Corps Panama and PCPF Items for Sale

Starting November 19th you will be able to purchase the items listed below from the [PCPF website](#). Credit card, PayPal, or check payments are accepted; and all prices below include free US shipping (shipping to all other countries will have additional shipping charges, but will be at cost).

PCPF t-shirts (\$20)

Peace Corps Panama polo shirts (Price TBD)



Peace Corps Panama GAD baseball hats (\$10), frisbees (\$12), notecards (\$10), and recipe books (\$5)



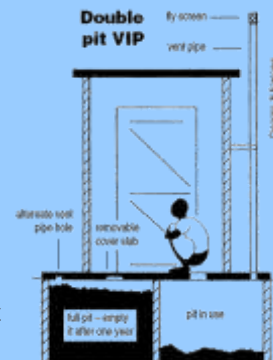
Peace Corps Panama VAC 2012 calendars (\$20)

These items make one-of-a-kind holiday and birthday gifts that noone has to feel guilty about since you know intimately what kind of non-profit you are supporting.

## Peace Corps Panama Updates

Did you know that you can contribute directly to Peace Corps volunteer projects? You can search the [Peace Corps site](#) by country, PCV home state, or project type.

You'll find five active volunteer projects in Panama, ranging from a multi-day business seminar, pit latrines, renewable energy for a school, and tourism projects. For specific questions on each project you can e-mail the [Peace Corps office](#) and they will forward your questions to the volunteer. For security and safety measures, specific site locations are not divulged.



Have you ever considered serving with Peace Corps Response?

Peace Corps Response provides returned RPCVs the opportunity to serve again in rewarding, short-term high-impact assignments around the world. When you serve as a Peace Corps Response Volunteer, you bring your skills and experience to projects in places where you are needed most.

As a RPCV, there are three Peace Corps Response open positions that you can apply for at this time in Panama: Arts Program Coordinator (8 months), Amphibian Educational Conservationist (6 months), and Ecosystem and Biodiversity Assessment Specialist (8 months). And there are many other positions in other countries ranging from 3-12 month stints. Check out all the positions at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=response.openpos>.

---

*¡Felicidades* to Group 64 on your completion of service (COS)!

Michelle Aguilar, Catherine Aiello, Catherine Basham, Derek Bloor, Daniel Cole, Lucinda Cooper, Bremen De Haan, Jonathan Kittle, Angela Lim, Scott Page, Maureen Peterson, Austin Quig-Hartman, Caitlin Shankle, Aleah Sommers, Jannick Taboada, Harold Whitaker, Melissa Young

Along with kudos to those extending their service:

Louis Gram, Karen Lee, Kathryn Peebles, Ian Robbins, and Aaron Winston

## **Bocas del Toro: Paraíso For Sale**

By Steve Spangler

My wife Barb, daughter Libby, and I saw the independent film, "Paraiso for Sale" at a special showing in October. We were impressed and touched by the Bocas del Toro story told by Panamanian filmmaker, Anayansi Prado.

I've seen 46 years of change in Bocas del Toro. I first visited Bocas del Toro in 1965, when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer. I returned in 1993 with Bud Keith to visit Panama RPCV Luther Tucker and his wife Cordelia. In March of this year I spent four great days there with my daughter Libby. We bicycled to Playa Bluff, visited Libby's friends who are building a tent camp on Red Frog Beach, and did the canopy zip lines (my first-ever) at Bastimentos Sky.

Three PCPF friends, Neal Jacobs, Tony Masso and Rob Samuels were volunteers in Bocas in 1964 - 1965. At the PCPF Reunion in September, they said their self-assigned goal back then was to "increase tourism" in those unknown islands.

With low property values and crystal-clear water, Bocas del Toro is the newest hot spot for American developers and retirees. Anayansi Prado documents the effects of fast-growing migration on Bocas in her engaging and revealing documentary film, [PARAISO FOR SALE](#) as seen this fall on PBS. She tells the personal stories of the people who call the Bocas archipelago their home:



- A local businessman turned political hopeful.
- An indigenous leader fighting for his land.
- An American couple who've invested not just in their home but in their Panamanian community.

Full trailer at <http://vimeo.com/23611470>.

You can help fund screenings of PARAISO FOR SALE to indigenous and rural communities in Panama. Go to [www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com) to donate to this project. No donation is too small - \$10, \$20, or \$30, it all goes a long way. For a \$50 donation you get your own DVD of the PARAISO FOR SALE. If you're interested in borrowing a copy, Steve Spangler can mail it to you; e-mail him at [stephen.spangler@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.spangler@gmail.com).

## Panama Tourism

Want to start research on your 2013 Peace Corps Panama Reunion vacation already? Planning a trip to PTY before then? Here are some organizations that you might be interested in researching for an organized Panamanian adventure:

Birding Panama <http://www.birdingpanama.com/ecotourism.html> (eco-tourism wildlife viewing, nature hikes, jungle boat rides)

Classic Journeys <https://www.classicjourneys.com/panama/> (eco-adventure family journeys)

Extreme Panama <http://www.extremepanama.com/> (camping, caving, mountain biking, river rafting)

Gone Fishing Panama Resort <http://gonefishingpanama.com/> Boca Chica, Chiriqui (fishing, scuba diving, surfing, birding, jungle tours)

LADATCO Tours <http://www.ladatco.com/Gate%20-%20Panama.htm> (10-12-14 day tours)

Panama Horizons Tourism Agency <http://www.panamahorizons.com/services.php> David, Chiriqui (boat, bus, or SUV tours)

Panama Travel Corp <http://www.panamatours.com.pa/>

Tours in Panama, <http://toursinpanama.com/> (check out the Chocolate Farm Tour in Bocas del Toro!)

## Happy Days for the Bud Keith Scholars

By Jerry Lutes



Sr. Alejandro Martinez in the classroom

Our first Bud Keith scholar, Alejandro Martinez, is about to finish college! PCPF's program of scholarships for the blind began assisting Alejandro in 2008 when he was a senior in high school. Determined to become a teacher, Alejandro went to college 12 months a year and has now finished all the classwork he needs. He is completing his training by doing student teaching which he'll finish in December, although his graduation ceremony won't be held until May. He hopes to teach in Kuna Yala, a place where most non-Kuna teachers refuse to go.

Other good news is that Bud Keith's friend Janiece Kent donated two Braille typewriters to Erika Pimentel and Melfín Guevara, both Bud Keith scholars. We shipped them to Panama in the container of bicycles that we loaded during the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary through Bikes for the World. Erika and Melfin had learned Braille but neither had the equipment to make notes in Braille as they studied.



Srta. Erika Pimentel with her new Brailier

Please help us continue our work with Panama's blind students by donating to the [Bud Keith Fund](#).

## PCPF Group Liaisons

If you are an RPCV from one of the groups below and have not contacted your liaison yet, please do so today.

Group 4 - David Fishlow, [david@fishlow.com](mailto:david@fishlow.com)

Group 6 - Joe Looby, [jtlooby@gmail.com](mailto:jtlooby@gmail.com)

Group 7 - JoEllen Day Keating, [jw4dk@aol.com](mailto:jw4dk@aol.com), 540-882-3217

Group 14 - Carol Ritter, [carolritter@ofp86.org](mailto:carolritter@ofp86.org)

Group 15 - Mike Webb, [mmwebb53@hotmail.com](mailto:mmwebb53@hotmail.com)

Group 17 - Harry Fierman, [harryfierman@gmail.com](mailto:harryfierman@gmail.com)

Group 43 - Kim Pasnik, [pasnik09@gmail.com](mailto:pasnik09@gmail.com)

Group 48 - Claire Stienecker

Group 50 - Dost Bardouille, [dost.bardouille@gmail.com](mailto:dost.bardouille@gmail.com)

Group 52 & 58 - Tess Sparks, [tmsparks@gmail.com](mailto:tmsparks@gmail.com)

Group 55 - Mark Husfeld, [mhusfeld@hotmail.com](mailto:mhusfeld@hotmail.com)

Group XX (1998-2000, Small Business Group) - Brenda Almodóvar, [balmodov@yahoo.com](mailto:balmodov@yahoo.com)

If you were in another group, please contact David Modzelewski at [davidmodz@gmail.com](mailto:davidmodz@gmail.com) or 413-736-4187 to find out who is the liaison for your group or to volunteer to be "the one." A new shutterfly site, [Mi Querida Panama](#) has been created for liaisons.

## Our Friends Remembered

From Ron Green (RPCV Buenos Aires de Bejuco, Panama 13): With great sadness, I report the death of John Rossetti, RPCV from Panama 12. John and I lived near each other in the Chame area during the late 60's. He was a certifiable character. At a meeting with one of the Washington suits the question of motivation for *campesinos* came up. John, just completing a road project in El Nancito, responded, "I just whip them. Good enough for my horse, and it gets the job done."

John had a fancy for 5 cent cigars. We enjoyed our occasional trips to the capital, climbing over an 8 foot wooden gate after 1:00 am one night to get into our \$4.00 rooms near the Plaza de la Catedral. But he didn't enjoy the city; he preferred to stay in the countryside *con la gente*. He projected the image of a very humble guy with a quick wit and encyclopedic knowledge of folk medicine.

Together with Norm Sharp, the Sora trumpeter, we rented a room in Bejuco on the Panamerican as a second home. We could change clothes after walking down from our communities up in the hills or perhaps spend the night. There was a bed and table and a light bulb. None of us remember changing the sheets during our 2 years. And we lived through it OK.

John had an inspiration to walk across the isthmus one day. After first wetting his boots in the surf in Nueva Gorgona, he set off with a couple of friends from Nancito. Next thing I heard of him, he emerged on the northern shore of Lago Gatún -- tired, sore of feet and bug bitten.

Following the Peace Corps, John enrolled in Outward Bound (Colorado version), University of West Virginia Dental College and the US Air Force. He was a dentist in Thailand at an air force base, but found time to travel with a clinic to surrounding villages, and to trek the Himalayas. His career continued as a dentist on an Apache reservation in New Mexico, followed by an extended stint with the National Health service where he retired with the rank of Captain in the Navy.

He was an exceptional father, husband, and friend -- we remained close as he married my sister-in-law. He is the only person I know who has degrees in Pharmacology, Dentistry, and Public Health Administration, as well as the only person likely to have a commission in the Air Force, Navy, and RPCV.

His death in August 2011 resulted from pancreatic cancer. When last I talked with John, he was still full of life and joy, vacationing with his family on the Outer Banks. He was my friend and the world is a lesser place without him.

---

Panama mourns the passing of Lucy Jaén, "La Faraona del Tamborito." Born in Calle Arriba, Santo Domingo, Los Santos in 1928, Lucy Jaén began her rise to folklore fame in 1944 as the female lead singer for the *conjuntos típicos* of José Vergara and Alfredo Escudero. Throughout her 67 year career she won numerous prizes, was an instructor at various institutions, and judged hundreds of competitions. However, above all else, she kept Panamanian folklore alive and young, even producing a CD ("El Tamborito es para Siempre") in 2010, at the age of 82.



Lucy Jaén, la Faraona del Tamborito