A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Fiji,

It has been a great pleasure to serve as President for the last two years and to lead strategic planning discussions that are now bearing fruits. I am pleased to pass the baton to Lalesh Nagy, who will be the first Indo-Fijian President of our organization. As I prepare to step aside, I am pleased to reflect on our collective accomplishments.

While we all look forward to a more peaceful and prosperous 2012, 2011 was a remarkable year in that it was the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps by President Kennedy and the 20th Anniversary of the organization of the Friends of Fiji. The 50th Anniversary was marked by a number of celebrations, from house parties across the country and around the world in March, to the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival and national celebrations in Washington, DC in July and September. I (and many others) had a great time teaching others about drinking grog and carrying the flag of Fiji in the Peace Corps Parade of Flags. Wherever you were, I hope you celebrated in your own special way. And remember, every day is a fine day to reflect the beautiful cultures of Fiji and the spirit of service that has led so many to serve in the Peace Corps.

Friends of Fiji is also immensely proud to have sponsored a return to Fiji service trip in 2011 that included a Habitat for Humanity project. The trip coincided with the Close of Service and Swearing In for new cohorts of Peace Corps Fiji Volunteers. We put our Dan Cantor Memorial Fund to good use, feting all of the new and retiring volunteers and staff at Peace Corps Fiji. A special thanks goes to Fiji RPCV Ben Raterman for serving as the organizing chair for the return to Fiji service trip. Congratulations to Ben and the cadre of some 30 volunteers who participated.

On a more personal note, I know I speak for many of you when I say that we are sad to see Sili Lomalagi complete his term at the Embassy of Fiji, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Sili during his first week here at post, when he accompanied me on a scouting mission with our guide Sala Suu, as she showed us both where to find the freshest rou rou and dalo in Metro DC. Of course, that shopping trip was in preparation for the lovo for our 2008 Gala Fundraiser, and Sili and his cousin Kitiane were immensely important in helping us prepare that lovo as a tropical storm approached! Oi Lei!

Speaking of our Gala Fundraiser, Friends of Fiji will hold our 2012 Gala Fundraiser on Saturday, September 15, 2012, at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in Arlington, Virginia. Mark your calendars, reserve your raffle tickets and start planning your reunions now. Don’t miss your chance to win the trip to Fiji!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Nuti for his editorial leadership of this newsletter for the last two years. He has done a great job and we hope he will remain a regular contributor. With this issue, Kelly Roy has taken the editorial helm. Vinaka Vakalevu! Bahut daanyvaad!

Sota tale. Fir Melenga. ~ Ropate

The 2012 Gala Fundraiser will be held on Saturday, September 15 at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association facilities located at Ballston, Arlington, Virginia. Volunteers are being sought to play vital roles in the planning and logistics of the event, including ticket sales, the lovo and banquet preparation, fundraiser raffle and silent auction. Email Cynthia at grantc@gao.gov for more info.
MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members & those returning after time away.

Ratu Meli Tunisau  
Michele Coyer Joliat  
Richard Mehus  
Chris Grant  
Jay Bagia  
Barbara Junge  
Douglas & Paula Fong  
Mark Langberg  
Michael Dacey  
Barbara Mutz  
Thomas Montalbine  
Stephen Naughton  
Keondra Bills  
Kathleen Coyne  
Josh Kutz  
William Lutwick  
Palden Schmidt

Deceased  
David Rhudy, Fiji II survived by his wife Carol.

DONATIONS

We would like to thank the following for making donations to Friends of Fiji.

VINAKA VAKALEVUI

Kathy Fischer  
Sandy Davis  
Michele Coyer Joliat  
John Wilmot  
Becky & Dana Trytten  
Barbara Mutz  
Dave & Sally McClure  
Norm Schoenthal

Donations are received for three funds: Friends of Fiji general funds (pays for newsletters, fundraiser invitations, and minor administrative costs), Dan Cantor Memorial Fund (supports social events for staff and volunteers in Fiji), DC Area Entertainment Fund (supports occasional social events in the DC metro area).

FROM BURE TO IGLOO

by Graham Gaines, FRE7

I am currently CEO for an igloo building firm in Ísafjörður, Iceland. So far I have built one igloo and was paid in hugs. You can see a video here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvMJu1CX2QU. We are still looking to expand our clientele network to Fiji but are having a hard time - I think due to the competitive tin roofing and bamboo panelling industries. However, many of my Fijian skills have come in handy - especially the skill of constructing a “vale” in less than a day from local materials. Mangrove mudball fights have translated nicely into snowball fighting skills. And of course my Fijian language skills have served me well while here in Iceland; especially the time I emailed the only Fijian living in Iceland (an Indo-Fijian dentist that spoke no Fijian). When not building igloos I am trying to earn my masters degree in coastal resource management at the University of the Westfjords. I will most likely be here doing research until December, possibly March ’13.
Fifty years of Peace Corps.
Twenty years of Friends of Fiji.

It’s been quite a year of celebrations, all culminating in the events held in Washington, DC the weekend of September 22-25. Why that weekend? It started with the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Peace Corps Act on September 22 - appropriately a day of advocacy in the halls of Congress for Peace Corps funding, the Kate Puzey Volunteer Protection Act and the Peace Corps Commemorative. Thank you to all who advocated!

That evening found Friends of Fiji and their friends gathered at the Taj of India Restaurant in Georgetown. The packed room included a large number of early Peace Corps Fiji volunteers and staff, Fiji Embassy staff and friends, some Tonga (and other country) RPCVs invited by their Fiji friends and even the two children of FOF founders Alice Alexander and Fred Mosher. Throw in the live Fiji music (and thus taralala) and yaqona and it was a true Fiji evening. A great way to start off a packed weekend of events!

The rest of the weekend was a whirlwind, with events planned by NPCA, Peace Corps, multiple RPCV groups, and individuals. A highlight was the Saturday evening Promise of the Peace Corps Gala. Eight hundred dressed up in their host country finest (or black tie) in the Ronald Reagan Building to hear RPCV emcee Chris Matthews, Sargent Shriver Distinguished Humanitarian Award winner Sam Goldman (founder of d-light), the inaugural Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award winner Atiku Abubaker (by video), Peace Corps Director Aaron Williams and singer-songwriter Crystal Bowersox.

If the Thursday dinner was one bookend for the weekend, the other was the closing event at Arlington Cemetery on Sunday morning. The event, emceed by Maureen Orth, celebrated all who served in the Peace Corps, including tributes by family members of two Fallen Peace Corps Volunteers. The ranks of the 5,000 in the amphitheater swelled as everyone made their way across Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln Memorial - led by dignitaries from Peace Corps, the National Peace Corps Association and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, DC. And what a sight it was - with thousands of RPCVs, friends and families carrying the flags of all 139 countries ever served by Peace Corps spread out from Arlington Cemetery, across the bridge and to the Lincoln Memorial!

Thank you to all who participated throughout the weekend and throughout the year. You’ll find lots of blog posts about and photos of the events on the NPCA website at www.peacecorpsconnect.org. Here’s to the next 50!

SAVE THE DATE
September 15
Friends of Fiji
GALA

need to update your info? renew your membership?
Check us out on the web!
http://fofiji.org
http://www.facebook.com/groups/13309240876/
http://community.peacecorpsconnect.org/group/friendsoffiji

on twitter? follow us @friendsoffiji
**How did you meet?**
We met in 2007, while working in the same building. Matt was working as a security officer (while he was going to school) and I was working in the fitness center. As a new employee, my manager was really slow about getting me an access badge, so Matt had to let me in to work every morning. I kept coming in a little early just to chat with him, even after I got my badge.

**Why did you join PC?**
We joined Peace Corps for several reasons: to challenge ourselves, grow professionally, share our skills and knowledge, learn from others, live in a different part of the world, meet new people and improve our future in America.

**What is it like serving as a couple?**
We are very fortunate to have a steady source of support and friendship coming from serving together. We both realize how difficult it could be to serve as a single volunteer and are thankful for the everyday comforts we share in a common language, food, affection, etc... It is, however, much more challenging to be married as a Peace Corps Volunteer than it was back in America. We get a little bit too much time together! :)  

**Tell us about your site? projects?**
Matt and I live in a small rural village in Vanua Levu. Matt works with the children on environmental issues, gardening and technology. Within the community he is helping to develop small business opportunities and financial management. Alyssa works with the community on preventing non-communicable disease, making healthy lifestyle choices and healthy relationship skills. Alyssa works with the women on selling of handicrafts, making virgin coconut oil and knitting. Together we run a village kids club and school letter exchange program.

**Any plans after PC?**
We are both interested in going to graduate school through the Peace Corps Fellowship program. Matt is interested in Community Development and I am interested in Public Health. We have strong Midwest roots and want to end up back there within a few years and have kids. Hopefully those kids are as carefree, happy and cute as the ones here in Fiji! :)

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**Love From the Field - Alyssa & Matt Wolf, FRE8s**

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**PEACE CORPS UPDATES**

One of the PC Partnership projects we supported had a large budget reduction and was not able to utilize $1,000 we donated. That money will be redirected to another PCP project yet to be identified. FoF is always looking for new projects. We hope to see more requests submitted through Peace Corps Partnership soon.

**PCV Lisa Driscoll** sent us a note of thanks and pictures of a footpath project we contributed to for Narikoso Village in Ra:

“The village is extremely grateful for the footpaths. They finished the project within a month, and the whole village, men and women alike, came together to help. I noticed a lift in spirits every time I went to check on the progress. After the project finished, they continued to express their gratitude and even built a podium in the middle of the village to commemorate the donors, with each name engraved on the top. Even though there isn’t electricity in the village yet, they strung a light bulb out from a nearby house so that the podium lights up when the generator comes on at night. I feel very lucky to have been a part of this project, and only wish that the donors could feel the heartfelt gratitude the village conveyed to me.”

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**2011 PROJECTS**

FoF disbursed a total of $8,800 in 2011 to support projects in Fiji. $4,000 of that went to Habitat for Humanity and the 2 projects that 30 RPCV’s worked on last summer. We sent a deposit of $1,000 to Habitat in late 2010, making our total contribution $5,000. The individuals who gave their time and financed their travel to participate contributed much more. Thanks to Ben Raterman for initiating the idea and for his persistence in making it happen.
BEN BRYAN THEN & NOW

My Peace Corps stint in Fiji ranged from 1981 to 1984, where I specialized in Health Education - Hansen’s Disease. My assignment was at the P.J. Twomey Hospital in Tamavua; a facility supported by the World Health Organization. As a member of the mobile team, I participated in facilitating treatment, clinics, education and training venues in villages, in addition to local medical personnel and throughout the South Pacific Islands. During my leisure hours, I enjoyed being involved in sports, and was a member of the YMCA, LDS basketball teams, and the Veimatagali (All Kinds!), Cricket Club. I also was involved with coaching the YWCA Basketball Club, and the representative Fiji Women's Basketball Team, in the South Pacific Games, where they won their first gold medal.

For the past 18 years, I have been working for the Maryland State Department of Education - Division of Rehabilitation Services. The agency provides services to individuals with disabilities throughout the state of Maryland, with the ultimate goal of gainful employment. The passing years have determined my specific physical activities which, currently, are cycling (easier on the knees!) and scuba diving, which has allowed me to expand my love and exploration of the water and outdoors. Our kids completed college here in the early 90’s, with Graeme at St. Mary’s College of MD and Elizabeth at the College of Notre Dame at Baltimore; both now residing in New Zealand. As empty nesters we now only have two Jack Russell Terriers that keep us entertained and constantly on our toes.

The Barbarians will, no doubt, be a formidable force to contend with in the future; with young players Junior Sucu and Meli Lomalagi rising unquestionably to the challenge when replacing one of their comrades on the field. As a result of the team’s brilliant play and interaction, Coach Sucu was questioned by the press regarding the team’s obviously demanding practice regimen prior to the tournament. Coach tried to restrain his amusement, while having to admit that this was the first time they had played together as a team!!

It should be noted here, that a highlight of the tournament for both the fans and team, was the father and son duo of Viliame Vakasisikakala, (who came out of retirement briefly as an accomplished premier rugby league star) to play alongside his son, Chris Vakasisikakala. It was a moving moment, during the final hours, to see Vili pass the winning trophy over to Chris. In addition, our sincere congratulations to Chris, and his family, for his successful recruitment on scholarship, by the Nittany Lions Men’s Rugby Team, at Penn State University. A great achievement.

For those who are still only contemplating attending the 2012 Tournament, it can safely be promised that there will be lots of fun, lots of sun, heart stopping excitement and, best of all, the joy of experiencing the camaraderie and pride associated with being part of the South Pacific Islands Culture.

July 2nd and 3rd, 2010
Ogden Park in Wilmington, NC
Coach: Saula Sucu

The Pacific Islands Barbarians, very ably coached by Saula Sucu, traveled south to Cape Fear, North Carolina, to defend its 2010 championship title at the 37th Annual Cape Fear Sevens Rugby Tournament held during the July 4th holiday weekend. The competition featured the return of Team Kenya, Chicago Lions, Georgia Collegiate Allstars, Florida Allstars, Team RFC and the Southern Gentleman (South Allstars).

This year’s play remained equally as exciting, with the remarkable speed and agility of veteran players and brothers Fili Botitu and Isimeli Daveta, combined with the power of Toshi Palamo, William Rasileka and Sailesi Tongomao. Most Improved and Most Valuable Player of the tournament, Alfred Qaranivalu, perfectly complemented the speed and power of the starting squad, with his brilliant tackling and finesse while running with the ball.
It isn’t every day that RPCVs get to pull out the sulus and vinivos, parade around with a Fiji flag, and speak Fijian. So when the call came to do so at the Las Vegas IRB Sevens Rugby tournament, seven of us FRE-07s (plus a few significant others) answered that call. We did it with style. And with beer.

The tournament started on Friday, February 10th, but since we had absolute faith that our Flying Fijians would advance beyond pool play and since some-of-us had jobs, we arrived Friday afternoon and evening missing the first bit of pool play. We hadn’t seen each other in the better part of a year, but when we finally got together, it was as if no time had passed at all. Despite considerably more stylish haircuts and an almost complete absence of body odor, we were still the same people we had been in Fiji. Staying at the cheapest hotel we could find that would allow us to cram people into two rooms and that had a free shuttle to the stadium, we found that will we did as we had a team to support. We came with all our Fiji gear, and a post-breakfast pre-party, we were ready to go come game time.

On the field, our boys were tough. After beating up on Argentina and the US on Friday, on Saturday Fiji put the smackdown on Canada to end pool play and then on Wales in the quarterfinals to the chorus of our incessant chanting of “Go Fiji Go.” I think that most will agree that the last game and the bus ride back to the hotel are a bit hazy, but after a power nap and some liquid courage, we rallied to hit the town. Opting to skip the extremely gaudy strip for the mostly gaudy Fremont street, the night was typical Vegas mayhem including a zip line, an absurdly sized Whitney Houston tribute, a bad Gwen Stefani cover band, and winning a lobster from one of those claw machines that are usually used for kids to catch toys. And, it being Vegas, of course some money was won, some was lost. Mostly, it was lost.

The tough part about waking up after a day and night such as that on a weekend rested heavy on us. On Monday morning, we scattered back to our four corners of America, worse for the wear, and back to our lives where we try our best to assert that we can live in this country again—that we can keep decent jobs, drive cars, and shop at Target without openly weeping. But it just takes a weekend with RPCVs and the people of Fiji to remind us where at least a bit of our hearts still lie. Even in the desert of Las Vegas, hearing the Fijian language around us, rooting for the boys in black and white, and just being with Fiji and Hindu and fell right into the conversations about where we served and made connections based on cousin brothers living in those communities. While our Fijian and Hindi has gotten a little rusty over the last year in the US, speaking them made us instantly celebrities: white people who live(d) in Fiji and spoke the language. Ah, to be famous again.

With the tournament over, Sunday night included continued merriment but aura of imminent dissolution of the weekend rested heavy on us. RPCVs and the people of Fiji to remind us where at least a bit of our hearts still lie. Life is calling. How far will you go?” I know my answer— at least to Las Vegas in 2013. Go Fiji Go.
WHERE ARE THE 2.5K?

According to the Peace Corps website (www.peacecorps.gov), 2, 294 people have served as Peace Corps Volunteers in Fiji since the program opened there in 1968. Add in those from Fiji and from the US who served on staff and we probably have closer to 2,500 people. What happened to everyone? And where are they now?

In parallel with the National Peace Corps Association’s effort to locate all returned Peace Corps Volunteers and former staff (about 250,000 - or 250K - by the time they finish their campaign in 2016), we’d like to find the 2.5K! Will you please help us? Here are some ways how:

1. Go to the NPCA’s “Find the 250K” page (http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/findthe250k/) and enter your information. Then share the page with your Peace Corps friends and neighbors and encourage them to do the same.

2. Still have your mug book for your training group? Scan it in and email it to jim3311@gmail.com for our website (http://fofiji.org/). It’s even better if you can annotate it for us with information on who is where now. Don’t have a scanner? Mail the book (or a copy) to our group address in this newsletter.

3. Send us a list of former PCVs and staff that you know. Include their contact information and anything you know about their years and place of service (and training group number, if you know it). We have some lists, but there are gaps. And, yes, we do want to know if they are no longer with us in body, but now only in spirit. We will compile what we have and what we get later this year to see where we are in the count and the best way to allow people to access that information. We’ll keep you posted through this newsletter and our social media channels.

IN LOVING MEMORY - DAVE RHUDY

A long time Friend of Fiji, David Rhudy, died on February 20, 2012 at the age of 65. David was from Riverside, California and a graduate of UC Santa Barbara. He first befriended Fiji in 1969 as a Peace Corps volunteer with Fiji II. Following his two years in Fiji, Dave became a Vista volunteer serving in Hawaii and Arizona, later becoming a VISTA director in Indiana where he met and wed his lovely bride, Carol Mayse. After these ten years in public service, Dave moved into the private sector and became co-owner of the family hardware in Goshen, Indiana; but before getting too settled, he took his new wife on a vacation to Fiji where he introduced her to land and people he had learned to love a decade before.

Dave maintained contact with fellow RPCV’s from Fiji while working, raising a family (daughter Meredith and son Mark) and serving his community on the school board and active member of the local Kiwanis Club. Immediately upon retiring, Dave initiated a “roaming reunion” when he and a fellow Fiji volunteer traveled the southeast visiting other former Fiji volunteers and renewing friendships. Discussion during that excursion led to Dave co-organizing a more formal Fiji II 40th anniversary reunion in 2008 reengaging twenty-four former volunteers. Dave did not limit his “keeping the spirit of Fiji alive” to only Fiji II veterans. After retirement, he became a consultant and travelled throughout the country. Before leaving on any trip, he would check the Peace Corps listing of returned volunteers for former Fiji associates who might live in the area he was visiting; and he would always call. Not surprisingly, almost all of those calls resulted in a dinner with lengthy conversations on Fiji. Two years ago, there was a second “roaming reunion” with Dave visiting former volunteers in the northeast. Last summer in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity and Friends of Fiji, Dave returned once again to Fiji as a volunteer. He took great joy in visiting the two sites where he had served forty-five years earlier. Dave participated in the Peace Corps fiftieth anniversary celebration in September where he attended the Friends of Fiji dinner and marched with others in the Fiji delegation under the Fijian flag. Dave Rhudy, a great friend of Fiji, will truly be missed.
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if couple, name of second person __________________________

Optional Donation _________________

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