

Friends of Fiji

News

Spring 2004 Vol. 13 Issue 1

A NEWSLETTER FOR RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS, STAFF & ALL FRIENDS OF FIJI

Peace Corps In Fiji

Twenty five Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Fiji in the Fall of 2003. Among other activities, they will provide educational and technical support on environmental preservation for Inter-Coastal Management and will also assist in developing youth programs. The Prime Minister welcomed the arrival. See page 2 for details. Volunteer Katrina Herbert tells about the challenges she faces on page 3. The Peace Corps Director, Gaddi Vasquez, visited Suva, Nadi and several villages. He met with Peace Corps volunteers Bekki Sallee and LaTifini McClinton. Read more on page 5.

In Other News

Fundraising Past and Present

Our fundraiser shall take place Oct 23 at the New Zealand Embassy. Details on page 9. Your support is always needed. Your membership in the 'Friends of Fiji' is not an idle affiliation. Our name says it all. These funds directly benefit people in Fiji. Raising them remains a central purpose since our founding. Each event has brought in more than the last. To gain perspective on your accomplishment, turn to page 8.

Interview With The Ambassador

Anare Jale, the Fijian ambassador to the United States talks about his tenure, his Mission and the things he has learned about how things are done here. (page 3)

Organization

Many of us have renewed our memberships, as well as those of us who have newly joined. (page 2). The annual general meeting of the Friends of Fiji was held in January. A good time was had by all. (page 11).

NPCA Chicago Conference This August

On August 5 to 8, 2004 at the Palmer House Hilton nearly 2,000 RPCVs from around the country gather in Chicago. Among the speakers are: Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle & First Lady Jessica Doyle (both RPCVs Tunisia); Afghanistan VP Hedayat Amin Arsala. Learn more on page 9.

News From Fiji

Trade issues with Australia and problems with urban squatters. See page 8. Wansolwara is a student training newspaper published by the Journalism Programme at the University of the South Pacific. Learn more on page 10.

PeaceMatch: Fulfilling The Third Goal

The third goal of the Peace Corps is "Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of all Americans.". You can meet this goal. People want to know your story. PeaceMatch connects you. Read how on page 11.

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Presidents Letter

Dear Friends of Fiji,

Thank you to everyone who renewed his or her membership following the last newsletter. We had an excellent response. We also signed up several new members at the Ambassador's party. Welcome, all.

Winter is almost over and we on the board of FoF are turning our sights to the fall fundraiser. Tommy Foster and Linda Ayers have graciously agreed to chair this year's event. Renovations are almost complete at the New Zealand Embassy and we look forward to a wonderful party there. Mark the date, October 23, 2004. Invitations will be mailed this summer. If anyone coming from out of town would like a place to stay, let me know and I will try to make arrangements locally. Likewise, if any in the Washington, DC area would be willing to host an out of town guest or two, please let me know. Send year of service information and I will try to match dates as much as possible.

We have been trying to get news of the new PCV Fiji volunteers since last fall. We finally received news from Katrina Herbert from Kalamazoo, MI who is serving in Sigatoka. She has sent a wonderful description of training and everyday life for FRE-1 (Fiji re-entry #1). We hope to

continue to receive letters from Fiji. It is wonderful to be reminded of the time we spent there. I hope that you enjoy her letter as much as I did.

The Ambassador from Fiji to the United States, Anare Jale, has completed his service in Washington and returned to Fiji. In this issue is an interview with the Ambassador with his feelings and impressions after more than two years in the US. Isoa Rabuli, a Fijian expatriate living in Baltimore, hosted a farewell party for the Ambassador. Several members of Friends of Fiji attended the party and presented the Ambassador with a small painting of Washington on July 4th - the Washington Monument with fireworks. Teresia Owens, a FoF board member and Fijian expatriate, has written on the event.

Please mark your calendars for the fall. If you have any items to donate for the silent auction, please contact Anne Baker. Contact information is in the newsletter. If you want to help in another way, Tommy Foster and Linda Ayers are also listed with the board members.

Cynthia Grant, President

Prime Minister of Fiji Welcomes Back Peace Corps Volunteers

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 2, 2003 –On Friday, November 28th, the Peace Corps celebrated its return to Fiji with the swearing-in of 25 new Peace Corps volunteers. These volunteers signify the re-establishment of a Peace Corps partnership and friendship with the people of Fiji.



Prime Minister Qarase congratulates new Peace Corps volunteers after their swearing-in.

The Prime Minister of Fiji, Mr. Laisenia Qarase, gave the keynote address at the swearing-in ceremony, stating, "The government and citizens of Fiji are grateful and proud to have you with us. We admire and welcome your generosity of spirit and sense of mission, purpose, and service so typical of Spring 2004

your nation."

The 25 volunteers completed three months of training in Fiji and will now begin work in the areas of Environmental Education and Youth and Community Development. In collaboration with members of the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) project, Peace Corps volunteers will provide educational and technical support on environmental preservation for Inter-Coastal Management efforts, Marine Protected Areas, terrestrial management as well as effective eco-tourism practices. Volunteers will work cooperatively with Ministries, Provincial and District Offices, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community members to build capacity and act as facilitators and catalyst for communities' involvement in preserving and protecting Fiji's natural environment.

In coordination with Ministries, NGOs and local government, volunteers will also assist in developing youth programs. A key aspect of their work will be to improve the quality of social outreach programs aimed at preparing youth for their future roles within the family, the world of work, and society. Volunteers will work with local partners to create programs and activities that develop positive life skills with community youth. In addition, volunteers will also work closely with both women and youth on income generation, information technology, environmental conservation, and on a healthy lifestyle.

Current Peace Corps Volunteer Reports on Fiji

Katrina Herbert is currently serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Sigatoka. She sends this report on her experience:

Ni sa bula vinaka from FRE-1! [Fiji Re-Entry -1]

To assure you all that you are gone but not forgotten, hardly a week goes by where I do not hear a story about (Insert your name here) and the funny/kind/strange/(adjective of your choice) thing you did while you stayed at (Name of your site.)

It seems like so long ago when I stuffed the last “essential” item into my already over packed suitcase and left my home

September 18-21: Staging in Los Angeles (our first taste of kava!)

September 21: Depart for Fiji

September 22: Arrive at 2am in Nadi Airport

September 21-28: PST Week 1 - Orientation

September 29 – November 8: PST Weeks 2-7

- Our Fijian Village Community Based Training

November 9 – November 16 : PST Week 8

- Supervisor/Counterpart Conference & Site Visits

November 17- November 22: PST Week 9

- Our Hindi Village Community Based Training

in Kalamazoo, MI for Staging in Los Angeles. On September 18, 2004, I joined an eager and diverse group of 25 other Americans and our whirlwind of activities began.

When we arrived at Nadi Airport around 2am, welcomed by the PC staff in true Fijian style, we each glowed in the excitement of our new surroundings and journey. We were whisked away in the darkness with our luggage, salusalus and smiles to Tubakula Beach Resort, right outside of Sigatoka Town. There we spent five days getting to know the staff, having medical sessions, and receiving our first lessons in language and culture.

That Saturday we met the families we would be staying with for the next 7 weeks. We arranged 26 chairs along one wall in the resort conference room and 26 more chairs directly across from them on the opposite wall. The volunteers sat and waited until a busload of host family members arrived and piled into the room. The excitement on their faces was very apparent. Ours however were more a mixture of excitement and tense nerves. One by one we were introduced to our new family members, packed up our things, and loaded the bus to be dropped off in our villages.

FRE-1 engaged in 7 weeks of community based training in Fijian villages. We were divided primarily by technical area, into 5 different villages along the coast: Namada, Tagaqe, and Komave villages for the environmental volunteers; Navutulevu village for the Youth & Community Development Volunteers and an NGO Advisor; and, my home, Vunaniu village, for the Health Volunteers and an additional NGO Advisor. There we each lived with separate host families
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along with our Language and Cultural Facilitator (LCF), who was also placed in the village with a host family.

Most of my Vunaniu days began around 5:30 am when I awoke to the roosters and the stereo of the next door neighbor. I left the house where I slept and walked 10 steps out the back door past the mini-house/kitchen and to another house where we ate our meals. In those few seconds of travel time I greeted quite a few women & children at the water tap nearby taking baths and filling water buckets. After breakfast with my family, I returned to the sleeping house where an empty cement room with a candle, chair, and a bucket served was the bathroom where I took my bucket baths (when I didn't have a river bath.)

Around 8 o'clock after a thorough slathering of insect repellent, I walked a few minutes down the road to the house of a fellow volunteer, that served as our classroom. Most mornings, we studied language until going for lunch, and meeting again in the afternoon for a cultural learning activity like fishing, farming or mat weaving. In the evening, we spent time with our families, attended community events, studied language some more, or got together to play cards and chat.

Once a week all of the volunteers met for a “hub day” in Votua Village, centrally located along the coast between our various villages. There we caught up with each other on village happenings, had technical presentations from community members and organizations, learned more about PC Administrative matters, had lectures on the Fijian culture, medical sessions and check-ups, discussed upcoming events, raced to use the phone up the road during breaks, and prayed that we had received mail from home.

The health volunteers decided that our technical project would be to give a health workshop in our village. So on our last Saturdays there, we each spoke on various health topics as people rotated in small groups to engage in 10-15 minute presentations and discussions. I talked about basic first aid procedures, like treating cuts and wounds and nosebleeds. We also discussed how to take care of a sick person, and the contents of a home medicine kit that I had assembled. My host father attended the workshop and it was great to hear him sharing all the information he learned with others who did not participate. The family really appreciated receiving the home medical kit for their own personal use.

Each volunteer also completed a cultural presentation, partially, or completely translated into Fijian. The topics ranged from uses of coconuts, to local plants and gardening tips, dating, death, and my topic, the first born in the family. We also were given a short language interview during the end of our stay to assess our progress.

When our time in the village came to an end and we gave our sad goodbyes, we headed to Suva for a workshop with our

counterparts and supervisors. We got to know one another, discussed differences between our cultures, our roles and responsibilities, and planned for our first activities after swearing in. Then we traveled with our counterparts or supervisors to our sites for a first visit, to see our living arrangements, and be introduced to our communities.

A few days later we headed back to Suva to prepare for to enter an Indian Settlement. Our two Indo-Fijian LCFs talked with us about cultural practices, basic words and phrases, and how our one-week in the settlement would be spent.

All of the volunteers were placed in the riverside town of Naitata with a host family, most of us with roommates. Here my days began about 5am when I happily jumped out of bed to help my host mom and sisters make roti. Cooking being one of my favorite hobbies, one of the things I enjoyed most about Naitata was the time I spent with my family preparing meals. We would laugh and joke, and everyday my roti more and more resembled a circle.

The week in Naitata went by fast. At least 3 hours a day were spent studying the language, another hour learning about the culture, and every day attending at least one cultural/learning activity like temple services, farming, and cooking demonstrations. During family time we would watch movies, play cards, talk, dance, and learn about each other. It was during this experience that volunteers began to understand the differences between the Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities, and the nature of their relationships with one another.

After our week in Naitata, it was back to Suva for last minute administrative matters, shopping, and quality time with each other before swearing-in and moving to our sites. Thanksgiving morning volunteers went to the houses of different staff members and Ambassador & Mrs. David Lyon to prepare our Thanksgiving feast. That afternoon we were treated to Thanksgiving Dinner complete with turkey, swimming, and an NFL game at the Ambassador's home. Our swearing-in ceremony was attended by host family members, counterparts, RPCVs, and community members. Speakers were Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, Ambassador Lyon, Country Director Mark Lewis, Training Manager Jeff Henry, and two volunteers selected by the group. That night we partied together one last time and departed the following day for our new homes. There were times during training when we thought it would never end, but looking back that night, we wondered how the time passed so fast.

What has FRE-1 been doing since swearing in? Trying to find our role in our jobs, integrating into our communities, learning how to cook, dealing with transportation difficulties, drinking grog, learning many names, *kana vakalevu*, studying language, promising ourselves to start studying language *mataka*, making friends, drinking grog, communicating openly with PC staff, having endless *talanoa* sessions, attending "short" 5-hour meetings, educating communities, making people smile, enjoying a 3 month reunion during 5

days at a beachside resort for Early Service Conference, getting homesick, reading "Where There is No Doctor" for leisure, swatting mosquitoes, supporting each other, being followed by children, learning cultural protocol...the PC Fiji life.

In the recommended reading, *A Few Minor Adjustments*, "settling-in" is defined as the first few months at site. Settling-in for me, physically, was into a room in the nurses quarters on the Sigatoka Hospital Compound. The best way to describe my quarters would be a co-ed dormitory. Everyone has their own bedroom, and share all other household facilities. Most days, I take a 20-minute walk or a 50-cent fare ride into town and work from the Health Centre. About ¼ of the volunteers are placed in and work primarily with one village. Many work in provincial offices, government and non-government offices, serving a sub-division or a province. There is even one volunteer working in the research department at the University of the South Pacific.

My role as a Health Promotion Officer is to work with the Western Division of the Ministry of Health and assist the health professionals and community members in health education and promotion activities. Since 1998, the Ministry has adopted the Healthy Island: Health Promoting Communities Project. It aims to improve the conditions of good health by working district to district. Within each district, schools, primary health care facilities, villages, settlements, town, and workplaces develop and implement plans to improve conditions affecting health. Health is defined to include physical, spiritual, mental, financial and social well-being. Thus far, most of my work has been developing new educational materials, supporting community health nurses, and making presentations to health workers and community members.

Outside of the primary work I do for the Ministry, it has been wonderful getting to know my housemates and others in my community. At home activities like cooking meals, exercising, playing cards and games, and discussing differences in cultures, have really helped me settle in well. Being adopted into the families of a few nurses and some of the members of the church that I attend have also provided invaluable support. Things like encouraging a young friend of mine for her college interview and giving her some helpful hints, encouraging my housemates to revitalize their workout regimen that had fallen to the wayside, and giving back a portion of all the kindness that I have received are what have mattered to me the most.

When I first arrived in Sigatoka, I placed on the wall behind my door a list titled "My Inspiration." Every day when I woke up I would look at the names of family, friends, some life experiences, my goals, and so many other things that keep me going from day to day and are the very reason I had the courage to join the Peace Corps. One of my housemates noticed this list one day and admired it. He said he never

really thought about those types of things for himself, or was encouraged to. I remarked that maybe he could make a list of his own, and he said maybe he would in a notebook somewhere, a little more private. About a month later after returning home from work, worn out from dealing with “Fiji Time” in the office where I worked, my friend asked me to come talk to him. He pulled out his pocket a small note card.

Interview with Peace Corps Director, Gaddi Vasquez

Gaddi Vasquez visited Fiji in late January 2004 to see first-hand the work of the volunteers in the program recently reopened after a five-year hiatus. Friends of Fiji board member Anne Baker spoke with Director Vasquez about his impressions of Fiji and his experiences during his visit.

FoF: Recently, you recalled meeting government officials in Fiji who had had close contact with PCVs as youth. Can you tell us a little about them?

GV: I met with the Prime Minister [Laisenia Qarase], as well as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade [Kaliopate Tavola]. They both mentioned how they have had contact with a number of volunteers over the years in Fiji. The Prime Minister spoke very fondly of the contact he has had with volunteers over the years, mostly during the previous years volunteers served in Fiji. They didn't mention any names, per se, but it really is amazing the number of people who are in seats of governance who have fond recollections of volunteers and their communities, often from the years before they went into public service. It really has created a strong legacy for Peace Corps Fiji.

FoF: What were your impressions of Fiji - the culture, the people, food and yaqona? How were you received?

GV: Yes, they welcomed me with a *sevusevu*. The hospitality was tremendous. The great welcomings that were extended to us at villages, communities and the Office of the Prime Minister and other Ministries, really were friendly and inviting. I think this bodes well for the future of the Peace Corps in Fiji.

It so happens that the U.S. Ambassador's wife is a returned Peace Corps volunteer, and so she is very supportive of the work we are doing there.

I think the conditions are such that the people are friendly, they are warm and the culture is inspiring. It is something that I will always remember, because people – notwithstanding some of the challenging conditions in terms of living and access to things we always take for granted – are vibrant and enthusiastic. Especially in communities where volunteers are serving, they are very enthusiastic about having their own Peace Corps volunteer.

FoF: Where did you go in Fiji on your visit?

On it was a bi-weekly schedule to reduce the number of cigarettes he smoked a day until he quit completely. Below that was a list titled “My Inspiration” and the reasons why he should quit and thoughts he has had to motivate him to do so. So every week I remember to ask him how he's doing and encourage him. It is the little things like that have, and will continue to mean, so much.

GV: The two big cities were Suva and Nadi, but we also visited several small villages. One of the villages we visited was Vunisinu village in the province of Rewa. There, we were able to visit a youth development center run by Peace Corps volunteers Bekki Sallee and LaTifini McClinton. They were able to put on a demonstration of the activities the girls are involved in. It was very moving, very impressive. I also visited the leaders of the village and had some great dialogue. It was just a beautiful setting. And, I think some great opportunities are ahead for the volunteers doing great work there.

Then we visited Navukavesi. The volunteer there is named Heather Shell, and I was very moved by what I saw there. When the village became aware that a Peace Corps volunteer might be coming to their area, there was a recognition made that there was no housing available for the volunteer. The committee got together and literally built a small house from the ground up to accommodate the volunteer. The women of the village crafted curtains for the house, and the local lumberyard donated the lumber. We visited this house, located in the center of the village where Heather now lives, and which is surrounded by the community in which she serves. It was just so inspiring to see the sense of desire that these folks have for a Peace Corps volunteer being there.

FoF: What had the strongest impression on you during your visit?

GV: One, the anticipation of Peace Corps returning to Fiji, which was something the country was looking forward to. The Prime Minister communicated to me that they were enthusiastic, and really anticipating, the return. I think the other positive impression is the opportunities we have to grow and expand in the future.

But also, the staff...I think whenever you are a staff that does a reentry into a country and has to reestablish – led by Mark Lewis who is the Country Director there – it is a real testament to your professionalism. And they are a great group of people, doing a great job. I think they are laying the groundwork for a positive and productive future in Fiji.

FoF: What do you see as the future of Peace Corps in Fiji? What area(s) will be the focus of Peace Corps programming? Barring any unforeseen circumstances, how long do you expect Peace Corps to remain in Fiji?

GV: Well, first of all, I see a very bright future for Peace Corps in Fiji. The fact that the communities and the country

are so welcoming and desiring of having Peace Corps volunteers, I think the conditions are optimum for volunteers to have a successful and fulfilling experience. The conditions are right for volunteers to be able to make a contribution in country. And our ability to expand and grow, I think, is significant there. And that is why I am optimistic that barring any unforeseen conditions or circumstances, we will be there for quite a while.

I think there is also potential for information technology and maybe some small business development, and I think the government is anxious to expand the programming side of it. We visited one volunteer, Jeffrey Faes, who is in Youth Development/NGO work. He is at the Centre for Applied Technology and Development (CATD). [The center has 60 full-time students and 36 staff. It has facilities to host organizational workshops and also provide short courses for interested groups.]

Interview with The Fiji Ambassador to the United States

An interview with Anare Jale, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

FoF: How long have you held your position as Ambassador to the United States

Jale: I have spent 27 months as Fiji's Ambassador to the United States of America and the United Mexican States. It has been a period of learning and experiencing, in a big way, what diplomacy is all about.

FoF: Is this a typical assignment for the position?

Jale: My return to Fiji before the expiry of my term of 3 years in November, 2004 was prompted by the fact that if I did not apply for one of the 23 Chief Executive Officers advertised by the Government of Fiji in November, 2003 I would find myself without a job when I return to Fiji at the end of my term. Fiji is going through a Public Service Reform, which has seen the abolishment of Permanent Secretary positions and their replacements by Chief Executive Officer positions.

FoF: When do you think that your replacement will arrive? Who will be in charge in the interim?

Jale: The announcement of my replacement will only be made after an Agreement has been received from the receiving State, the United States of America. In the meantime, Mr. Paula Navunisaravi, First Secretary, will act as Charge d' Affaires.

FoF: Have you and your family enjoyed your time in Washington?

Jale: My family has thoroughly enjoyed our stay in the US. The country is huge and highly developed. My two boys enjoyed attending school in Virginia where we reside.

He is building a system for the school, so they will be able to do something they have never been able to do, and that is to track their graduates, to see how they are progressing after they have had their vocational training. The school was established some years ago [it opened in 1980] by a German grant. Our volunteer is there working in that school and providing some really key leadership. He is just a really impressive volunteer who really understands business.

As of now, Jeff does training on the front end, some of the basic computer skills, information technology work, but the director of the school told me he is looking forward to future directions, which involves Jeff helping to develop the tracking mechanisms. Once their graduates are out of school, these tracking mechanisms will be able to assess and measure how effective the training has been in terms of how they proceed in their jobs, which is key for them.

FoF: Are there any special projects on which you have worked while here?

Jale: There were four (4) priority areas that the Mission focused on during my term:

- i) setting up a website to assist in our consular responsibility;
- ii) pursuing improved market access for Fiji products;
- iii) completing a survey of Fiji nationals serving as 'caregivers' in the United States to allow the matter to be pursued bilaterally;
- iv) trying to unite and bring together Fiji nationals living in the United States of America.

The Mission's website was opened on 5th November, 2002 and funded by Dr Donald E. Vinson, Fiji's Honorary Consul in Los Angeles. The website has greatly enhanced the Mission's consular responsibility.

Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, a consultant that specializes in trade, was commissioned to conduct a study and to recommend options to be considered by the Fiji Government to help the marketing of her products to the US. The Government of Fiji has decided to approach the matter on a Regional basis rather than Fiji doing it alone for obvious reasons. The matter is ongoing and still being pursued.

A survey of 'caregivers' was completed and a report submitted to the Government of Fiji. This survey formed the basis of a submission to the US Government lodged with the US Mission in Fiji. The announced intent by the Bush Administration to legalize the stay of foreigners working illegally in the US is being monitored closely by this Mission.

The first joint Fiji Day Celebration for Fiji nationals, former Fiji nationals and friends of Fiji was held successfully in Hayward City, San Francisco in October 2003. An

organizing committee is now working on the 2004 celebration.

An umbrella body to work with the Fiji Mission in Washington, DC in pursuing the interests of Fiji nationals in the US has been formed and registered in the State of California.

The Association's main roles are:

- 1] To promote understanding, unity and good relations amongst Fiji nationals, former nationals and friends of Fiji residing and living in the United States of America;
- 2] To promote co-operation and good relations between the Government of Fiji Islands and the United States of America;
- 3] To encourage the dissemination and understanding of various culture and traditional values that distinguishes Fiji people from other people of the world.

FoF: Peace Corps returned to Fiji during your time here. We understand that you supported this action. How do you see Peace Corps helping Fiji now and in the future?

Jale: I would like to see the US Peace Corps remain in Fiji for the next 10 years to allow us to train and replace skilled people that Fiji had lost to other countries. The Peace Corps served Fiji with distinction in the past and we are optimistic about its role in Fiji's development. As the new Chief Executive Officer for Fiji's Public Service I will work very closely with the US Peace Corps and will work to better focus the role of Peace Corps in Fiji.

FoF: One of the goals of Peace Corps is to bring knowledge of countries of service back to America. It is hoped that

returning volunteers will make Americans more interested in the rest of the world. When you return to Fiji do you think that you will take back a better understanding of America? If so, what has changed about how you view the States?

Jale: I have been able to appreciate and understand the fabrics of the United States Government, the legislators and the administration and how they operate and deliver to the people of the United States.

The role-played by lobbyists in advocating the interests of groups and Governments in order to be understood or gain favour is something new. Basically, from my assessment of the political system in the United States, there is no other option but to go through lobbyists.

However, I see lobbyists as obstacles to timely conclusions to things taken up with the US Government and pose unnecessary financial burden on those that seek decisions or favours from the government.

My experience in the United States has sharpened my ability to deal with diplomatic issues and had helped me understand the values that are dear to the hearts of the American people.

FoF: Ambassador Jale, thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. I hope that you and your family have a good trip home.

Jale: To the members of the Friends of Fiji in the United States of America I wish you all the best in the future.

NI SA MOCE.

Farewell For Ambassador Jale



Ambassador Jale and Cynthia Grant at his Farewell

Fiji celebrated a farewell party for The Fiji Ambassador Anare Jale and his family.

Ambassador Jale will be sorely missed, as the role he played here with the Fijian community was very important to the expats. The community has become very strong and he was always willing and able to lend his home whenever the local community had a need to get together. It is always sad to see good people leave.

The soiree was hosted in the beautiful city of Baltimore at the home of Isoa and Sonja Rabuli. Friends traveled from far and wide to come help us celebrate and to wish them well on their journey back to Fiji. Can you believe the party turned out to be a great success? There was of course lots of food (you will never see a Fiji party without that) and everyone was just jolly. We are sure it will leave the Jale family with fondest memories of new friends found here on the east coast of the USA.

Once again the Washington DC area Fiji expats, Viti DC and Friends of Fiji showed they are always ready, willing and able

Dear Friends,

Bula vinaka, and Namaste. On the 13th of March 2004 Viti DC, the metro DC Fiji expatriate community and Friends of Spring 2004

to support each other. Thank you all very much for a great evening. and on behalf of the Fijian Community, and all the friends of Fiji.

We wish to extend our thanks to Isoa and Sonja Rabuli, for the generous donation of their time and their lovely charm city home, to Carl and Liti Lewis of Las Vegas who could not attend but donated funds, to all those who traveled from Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey and California, and to everyone local who helped with pot luck that made this advent a rousing success vinaka vakalevu... and thank you all.

Teresia Owens



(from left) Lanieta Jale, Ambassador Jale's wife, Amelia Catanasiga (the long time administrative assistant for Fiji Peace Corp's Office) and Filemaina Koto

A Tradition of Support for the Peoples of Fiji

Who benefits from these fundraisers? Fred Mosher reflects on the history of the Friends of Fiji Fundraisers. Interested in the 'bottom line'? Read the article. Add up the total amount raised over our past five events. You'll be surprised at your accomplishment.

Since its beginnings in 1991, Friends of Fiji has had as one of its primary objectives, the raising of funds to support worthy projects in Fiji. As we gear up for another grand event, let's take a look back at our five previous efforts on behalf of the peoples of Fiji.

Our first fund raiser, held in May of 1993 at the residence of Ambassador Pita Nacuva and his wife Mere Nacuva, raised over US\$2500 for Fiji's Housing Assistance and Relief Trust (HART) which develops small, basic communities (houses, meeting hall, kindergarten) for destitute and near destitute families, mostly single women with children, who fall through the cracks in government social services. Our second fund raiser, held in May of 1995 at the New Zealand Embassy, raised over US\$3000 for KANA, a small Fijian organization working with 78 of the 130 boarding schools to improve the nutrition in student diets through the education of preparers and the development of fish ponds and gardens at the schools. Our third fund raiser, held in May of 1997 at the New Zealand Embassy, raised over US\$6,600 to help endow an "Outstanding Nursing Student" awards program named in honor of beloved and departed Peace Corps nurse Wainiu

Caginiliwalala. Friends of Fiji's fourth fund raiser, held in June of 1999 at the New Zealand Embassy, raised over US\$5400 for Habitat for Humanity Fiji to be used to finance the construction of the first new house of the new millennium.

The repercussion of the 2000 coup in Fiji made it impossible for the Friends of Fiji to utilize the facilities of the New Zealand Embassy for our fifth fund raiser, originally scheduled for the fall of 2001, but postponed a year due to the terrorist attack on 9/11. Finally held in September of 2002 at the Church of the Epiphany in downtown Washington, DC, the event raised US\$7000 for Pedals for Progress which was used to pay for the shipment to Fiji of about 400 bicycles, 200 tires, 200 tubes, 100 pumps, 300 locks, and assorted other spare parts which the Fiji Amateur Cycling Association used to train youth in bicycle repair and to help these youth establish small bicycle businesses within their small communities to help generate income and promote the use of bicycles to the benefit of the environment and individual health.

Please watch the mail for your invitation to the sixth biennial fund raiser of the Friends of Fiji. This year's event benefits our new Peace Corps Fiji volunteers by helping to provide funding for the Peace Corps Partnership projects that they develop. We again have access to the facilities of the New Zealand Embassy, including its spacious hall and "lovo" pit, helping to ensure that this year's event on Saturday, October 23, will be a fun-filled, tummy-satisfying evening for all!

News From Fiji

AUSTRALIA THREATENS DALO TRADE

(Radio Fiji, Friday March 05, 2004)

There are concerns that Australia might take over Fiji's dalo [taro] market as it has already challenged Fiji's sugar export to the world trade market.

The Ministry of Agriculture is aware of threats that may arise if Australia produces dalo [taro] on a large scale and has plans to counter the challenge.

The Ministry's Principal agricultural Officer Kamlesh Prakash says they are aware that Australia has started to produce dalo [taro] for local consumption.

Australia started dalo [taro] farming in Queensland State about 5 years ago.

FIJI URBAN SQUATTERS UP 14 PERCENT

SUVA, Fiji (Radio Fiji, Nov. 25) - Fiji's squatter population has increased by 14-percent in the last 18 months.

The Director of Housing, Dharam Lingam says the squatter problem facing the country today will soon get out of hand.

"It is growing at a alarming rate an increase of 14% in the last 18 months," says Lingam.

"We did a survey in 2001 and at that time our estimate was about 50,000 and now we are estimating that squatter population is around 80,000."

Lingam says, the urban growth rate has been spurred by rural urban migration, expiring land leases, unemployment, job losses and other factors such as opportunities for students to come and study at USP, FIT, better health services, sporting facilities and amities that are available in the cities and towns.

Lingam says the Government is in the process of developing a few of the squatter settlements based on the population and its density.

Lingam insisted the developments are based on the availability of funds to the ministry.

NPCA National Conference In Chicago This August

Mark your calendar for August 5 to 8, 2004 at the Palmer House Hilton as nearly 2,000 RPCVs from around the country descend on Chicago.

The list of confirmed speakers and performers includes:

- Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle & First Lady Jessica Doyle (both RPCVs Tunisia)
- Afghanistan VP Hedayat Amin Arsala (spouse of RPCV)
- Former Thailand Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan
- Tribune Correspondent Steve Franklin (RPCV Turkey)
- Ambassador Ronald Godard (RPCV Ecuador)
- Muntu African Dance
- Natya Dance Theater
- Latin Rhythms

Visit the website - www.rpcv2004.org - for information about the program, country of service events, speakers, hotel information and registration.

The Friends of Fiji will be gathering at the national conference of the National Peace Corps Association from August 5-8, 2004 in Chicago, IL. At press time, the details are as follows:

Friday, August 6

Sit with Fiji volunteers at the opening ceremonies at 10 a.m. Look for the flag.

Dinner: Join RPCVs from Fiji and India at 6 pm for a grand sumptuous Indian buffet at The Indian Garden, 247 E. Ontario St., 2nd floor, Chicago (312-280-4910).

Saturday, August 7

Fiji Country Update 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, August 8

Flag Ceremony. Meet at 8 a.m. March with Fiji RPCVs and friends behind the Fiji flag.

To RSVP for the dinner, e-mail Chuck Sheftel (India 69-72) at shef3886@sbcglobal.net. For more information about Friends of Fiji events, contact Anne Baker (Fiji 84-87) at anne@rpcv.org.

Updates to that information will be made to the conference website at <http://www.burnisongroup.com/rpcv/CountryofServiceEvents.html#fiji>. Be sure to check again mid-summer for more complete details. See you in Chicago!

October 2004 Friends of Fiji Fundraiser

Tommy Foster chairs this year's fundraiser. Linda Ayers is co-chair. Tommy reports the status of planning and make a call for your support in the following article:

The fundraiser will be held October 23, 2004 at the New Zealand Embassy – proceeds to projects identified by current Fiji Peace Corps volunteers.

FoF has been fortunate to obtain the date of Saturday, October 23, 2004 for our 2004 Fundraiser. Those of you who have attended these previously know what an event this is. So mark your calendars and save your pennies, dimes, quarters, dollars, bullion, family heirlooms and items you can donate to the Silent Auction. Please make the effort to come to the event, contribute your time, treasures and talents to make this

a memorable event for you and for the worthy cause that we are seeking to support.

The funds raised this year will underwrite Peace Corps Partnership projects proposed by our new PC Fiji volunteers.

The New Zealand Ambassador consents to use the Embassy on Observatory Circle and there will be construction between now and then but the renewed facilities promise to be a great place for our biennial activity. Due to the increased security in that area of DC we will have to have a list of attendees cleared about 2 weeks prior to the event. Everyone attending will need to present a picture ID.

All of the Board members are excited about this event. David Downes has written to Ratu Jo of the Fiji Visitors Bureau to

ask for his help again. In the past Ratu Jo has been instrumental in getting air tickets and a hotel for our raffle. Also, Ratu Jo was gracious in organizing the dancers for the last fundraiser; that was something to see here in Washington, DC!

Linda Ayers has agreed to help lead the coordination of the effort but we agree that we will need a lot of help from everyone to make the success that it deserves to be. We will need help in the following areas and ask that you contact us well ahead of time (like right now) to get the best choices of assignments for yourself and your friends. We will need help on the following areas:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Printed Programs | Guest List and Invitations |
| Publicity | Security & Hosting |
| Decorating | Food |
| Beverages | Food Service Items |
| Silent Auction | Raffle |
| Fiji Bitter | Entertainment |
| Clean-Up | Thank you Notes. |

Contact Tommy Foster at 703-960-5477 or email tommy@priorart.com



Pictured here is Janet Calais, winner of the Fundraiser's trip to Fiji. She was a volunteer in Korea (Korea IV). She is modeling jewelry from her trip to Fiji last summer.

Notes From the Web Master

Jim Reierson manages the Friends of Fiji Web page. He has new website suggestions:

Beachcomber Island

Remember beachcomber island? Visit <http://www.beachcomberfiji.com/resort/vr/quicktime/01.html> to see how things have changed, yet remain the same.

Links to South Pacific News

Wansolwara is a student training newspaper published by the Journalism Programme at the University of the South Pacific. Their website at <http://www.usp.ac.fj/journ/docs/news/index.html> has links to many South Pacific radio stations and newspapers, including the Fiji Sun at <http://www.sun.com.fj/>

Fiji Peace Corps Volunteer Stories, Pictures and Notes

Check out <http://www.fiji-peace-corps.us> where current Fiji Peace Corps Volunteers post stories, pictures and notes for friends and family.

NPCA News

Anne Baker, our correspondent with the National Peace Corps Association, assembled the latest news:

Nominations open for NPCA Board Positions

The annual elections to the NPCA Board are coming soon and nominations are now open. Nomination information is available on the NPCA website at <http://www.rpcv.org/pages/sitepage.cfm?id=291> (which is also linked from the Latest NPCA News page).

The current representative for the Asia/Pacific (and Friends of Fiji founder), Alice Alexander, has reached her term limit. Thank you, Alice, for representing us so well for six years on the NPCA Board!!

NPCA Online Career Center Debuts

The NPCA is frequently approached by organizations wishing to advertise job openings to the Peace Corps community. Concurrently, we know that targeted job listings are an important benefit that we can provide to our members. With this in mind, the NPCA is piloting its online career center at http://www.rpcv.org/pages/job_welcome.cfm.

This section of the NPCA Web site includes links to the Emergency Response Network, job postings, over 100 national and international organizations, general job search sites, listservs and publications, and other job search related information.

Members should check the Career Center periodically as the number of posted jobs increases. In the short term, users should click on the "browse all posted positions" option.

Ultimately, targeted searches will be feasible and further changes to the site are planned to make it more “user-friendly.”

Visit the NPCA website at www.rpcv.org and follow the link to the Latest News page for important announcements, deadlines and links to the conference registration, the NPCA president's monthly report and other upcoming event information.

Stay on top of NPCA and Peace Corps News

Receive weekly messages with NPCA news, information on issues affecting the Peace Corps, and upcoming events by subscribing to the NPCANews listserv. To subscribe, read the archives or manage your subscription for NPCANews and all NPCA public newsletters, go to <http://smtp.rpcv.org/mailman/listinfo>.

Peace Match

www.PeaceMatch.org

Connecting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers with the Classroom

Are you a returned Peace Corps Volunteer? Are you eager to share your experiences with others? Register as a **RPCV Speaker** on www.PeaceMatch.org.

Are you a classroom teacher looking for first-hand information on the culture and way of life of the people in the countries served by the Peace Corps? Register as a **Host** and search www.PeaceMatch.org for **Speakers that fit your criteria.**



Annual General Meeting

The Friends of Fiji Annual General Meeting, Elections & Pot Luck Dinner was held Saturday, January 10, 2004 at David and Willa Downes's home in Fairfax, VA. Around 40 people were present for the festivities. Participants included Dan & Mitsy Cantor, Dick & Jody Haig, and John Mitchell. New board members elected are Tommy Foster, John Smallwood, and Beth Shearer. Outgoing board members Robin Weaver, Teresa Saunders, and Dan Junker were given a vote of appreciation.



From left: Tommy Foster, John Mitchell, Jim Fitsimmons, & Jim Reiersen. (All were together in Fiji sometime between 1972 and 1975 and perhaps attended one or meetings of the “Royal Suva Yacht Club”!)



Business was also conducted

Friends of Fiji News is published by Friends of Fiji, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose goals are to keep Fiji RPCV's, staff, and friends in touch and informed about current affairs in Fiji and to raise funds for worthy projects in Fiji. Our general correspondence address is: Friends of Fiji, 10413 Kinloch Road, Silver Spring, MD 20903. Email us at femosher@erols.com, or visit our website at www.fofiji.org.

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