

El Tiempo

Spring 2004

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photo by John Zorovich

Since 1986, Friends of Ecuador has kept the returned Peace Corps community informed and engaged in strengthening ties to Ecuador. After a temporary lapse, the group reconstituted in 2001 at the 40+1 National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) meeting in Washington, D.C.

The primary purpose of FOE is to link Ecuador's friends to the country and to each other. We offer support to the Ecuadorian people by maintaining awareness of events in the country, sustaining personal connections to organizations and individuals, and coordinating material support. While monetary support is not a panacea for development problems, we believe that small, targeted donations have an important role. In 2002 FOE was able to support six organizations in Ecuador, many of them with RPCV connections.

Recently Tad Baldwin ('63-'65) stepped down from a long and well-served tenure as president of Friends of Ecuador. The organization continues to build on the momentum of 2001 with the much anticipated launch of a new website: www.friendsofecuador.org.

Your new website will provide:

- on-line donations with nonprofit tax deductions
- member directory
- historical archive of the Peace Corps activities in Ecuador
- current community project descriptions and contact info
- market for Ecuadorian products
- trip reports and volunteer opportunities to Ecuador
- regional and national reunions
- news headlines related to Ecuador and the Peace Corps
- on-line discussion board
- calendar for social events among the members

We have the technology to allow each of you to add content. Whether it be discussion of favorite recipes, the current political climate in Ecuador, or how to help a PCV with a question, the site is yours. We'll be adding some content, but we hope to make it easy for you to do the same. So, get involved!

- Josh Busby ('97 - '99)

Carnaval in the Sierra

Steve Church '96-'98 - Azogues, Canar

Reprinted from PeaceCorps.gov

Here in Ecuador, the celebration that stands out most in my mind is that of Carnaval. When I first heard it mentioned by Ecuadorians and fellow Volunteers, images of loud music, festive parades and people celebrating throughout the night filled my mind. As I pressed for more details, both Ecuadorians and veteran Volunteers responded with an mischievous grin, pausing to savor the memories of Carnivals past, muttering something to the effect of, "Just wait. You'll find out soon enough."

Samba isn't quite as popular in Ecuador as it is in Brazil, and Quito isn't quite Rio de Janeiro, but does that mean they can't celebrate Carnaval in Ecuador like they do in Brazil. After all, both South American countries have a celebration called Carnaval before Easter. Isn't it logical for inexperienced Volunteers and travelers to assume that it would be celebrated the same way? Well, surprise — it's not.

Throughout the country, from the hot and humid coastal lowlands to the cool and dry Sierran highlands and down into the wet Amazon basin, Ecuadorians celebrate *Semana Santa*, the week leading up to Easter, by dousing each other with water, and among friends, anything else that happens to be handy. Walking down the street, you become fair play for children and teenagers hiding in doorways and waiting on balconies with buckets, balloons, local versions of the famous Super Soaker, and anything else that will hold water long enough for them to take aim and let fly. Traditionally, Carnaval is only celebrated the three days before Easter, but each year it seems to start a day earlier. The

beginning of the week is more *tranquilo* with things getting more intense and less dry as the week progresses.

On the street, there are some unwritten guidelines that most Carnavaleros adhere to. For example, the elderly and those in business or other formal attire are usually ignored, but there are always exceptions. Also, those who find themselves on the receiving end of things are supposed to laugh it off and continue on to their destination dripping all the way. Once wet, they will generally be avoided as a target, at least until they start to dry off again. After all, who wants to soak someone who is already wet when there are plenty of dry or almost dry people wandering around?



Friends often get together to celebrate Carnaval with a picnic or a barbecue, listening to music, hanging out, and having fun before people start to get wet. Water, of course, is the favorite weapon of choice, but

eventually it runs out. Whatever else happens to be handy, liquid or otherwise, is often poured, thrown or dumped on whoever happens to be nearest. Some common additions are flour, corn starch, and eggs among others.

Another important part of Carnaval is the food. At home, after the water stops flying and everyone has towed off, it's time for the traditional meal, beginning with a serving of *motepata*. *Motepata* is a soup made with *mote*, a stewed corn similar to hominy, other grains, *patas*, and other cuts of pork. In some homes, the traditional *pata* is left out in favor of more bacon and pork. The *motepata* is followed by the main entree of *cuy* served on a bed of rice. Most prefer their guinea pig barbecued, but roasted or baked *cuy* is also common.

Dessert comes last consisting of *dulce de higo*, or candied figs, in a sweet sauce.

After the big meal I had a feeling similar to the one I get after a big Thanksgiving meal in the States. All I wanted to do was relax and watch some football. Of course in Ecuador I would be watching *futbol*, but what better way to end my Ecuadorian Carnaval!"

Update from the Loja Animal Welfare Project

Reprinted from www.fpa-ecuador.org

Fundacion Proteccion Animal (FPA) was started on the streets of Loja, Ecuador, in 1998 by a small group of people willing to defy cultural norms and confront the plight of stray dogs. Led by Peace Corps Volunteer Elizabeth Daut, DVM, ('97-'01) and local environmental activist Byron Alvarez, the group banded together to stop the daily poisoning of dogs on Loja's streets which at the time was part of the national strategy to control the stray animal population.

FPA is the first animal-welfare organization dedicated to improving the lives of animals in southern Ecuador. We were legalized as a nonprofit organization by the Ecuadorian environmental ministry in March 1999 with 17 founding members. Today, we have over 60 local members, a five-member board of directors and growing national and international recognition for our animal-welfare activities.

Since its conception, FPA has steadily broadened its focus from stopping the cruelty plaguing stray dogs to include all

aspects of welfare affecting both domestic and wild animals. Today we are the largest and most active animal-welfare organization in Ecuador. Due to our efforts, deliberate poisoning of animals is now an illegal act of cruelty.

Every day we struggle to persuade the community to abandon their traditional perceptions of animals and adopt a more benevolent view of all living creatures. We have had notable success. The Loja municipality has passed ordinances calling for the first anticruelty and leash laws in the country. Now we need to ensure that animal-welfare legislation is enforced and the community begins to improve its treatment of animals.

FPA would not be successful without the support of our volunteers and members. Concerned citizens - from veterinary students to lawyers to housewives - participate in our animal-welfare activities and ensure that our message is being heard. With their dedication, and your generous support, we will continue to lead Ecuador toward a more humane and compassionate future.

Further information can be found at the Friends of Ecuador website (www.friendsofecuador.org) including a link to directly volunteer or donate to ongoing projects.



OTHER WORK ONGOING IN ECUADOR *News from the river*

When Colorado resident Matt Terry first went to Ecuador for a bit of kayaking he never imagined he would be the founding director of the Ecuadorian River Institute (ERI), an NGO dedicated to promoting riverine sports and culture among the residents of Ecuador's numerous rivers. In part because of his contact with Peace Corps Volunteers, he found ways to connect with the local communities and make a difference.

The ERI was founded in August, 2002 to encourage sustainable natural resource management by educating the people of Ecuador about the importance of protecting their watersheds.

Local communities are empowered by direct connections to their land and water resources to bring about positive change in their environment.

Through education, Ecuadorians are motivated toward economic development that is sustainable and compatible with watershed conservation.

By increasing awareness of watershed issues in Ecuador, we hope to minimize the exploitation of the environment and the people who depend upon it.

The ERI targets river drainages which are important for recreational river use and advocates protecting river corridors for the benefit of maintaining the high levels of biodiversity and realizing sustainable, tourism-based economies in these areas.

In the past year, the Ecuadorian Rivers Institute has established a presence as the leading river conservation organization in

Ecuador and has proven itself as an effective actor in watershed management issues. Here are some of the key accomplishments that the ERI has made since 2003.

* ERI is starting up a regional water-quality monitoring program that directly involves Ecuadorian students and citizen groups modeled after Riverwatch programs in the USA.

* The ERI organized the 4th Annual Napo River Festival held near Tena January 2004 to celebrate the Napo watershed and its importance to everyone. Over 3000 people attended over the weekend, the event received extensive media coverage, and was commemorated and recognized as a new official event for the Napo Province by the local government authorities.

* The ERI proposed recreational and historical river use as key components for watershed management criteria, and introduced a system for designating rivers as protected areas at the Ecuadorian National Watershed Conference in April, 2003.

* The ERI preserved the world-famous paddling section on the Upper Jondachi River, by successfully negotiating with development planners to relocate a hydro electric project to the lower section of the river, which receives less use by paddlers. A new access will be created at the downstream powerhouse location, and natural flow schedules have been arranged, which may enhance recreational use on the lower section of the Jondachi River.

The ERI presented a tourism development plan for the Quijos River valley to local



municipal governments in Spring 2003, followed by an orientation to whitewater recreation for local government leaders and community members by Rafting the Linares Gorge section of the Quijos River. November 1-2, 2003, the ERI helped the town of El Chaco organize the first Quijos Rafting & Kayaking Competition to help raise awareness of watershed issues in the Quijos Valley. There were 48 local raft teams which competed, with 6 participants on each team.

The 5th Napo River Festival will be held January 14-16, 2005.

The ERI is a US non-profit 501c3 organization incorporated in the state of Colorado. More information at: http://www.kayakecuador.com/ERI_Home.htm

News from the PCV committee: Gender in Development (GAD) Ecuador

The work of the GAD committee in Peace Corps Ecuador emphasizes the role of women and gender in the development process through programs characterized by three overarching objectives: 1) To support and encourage education for young Ecuadorian women, 2) To concurrently foster gender awareness and leadership skills for young Ecuadorian men and women, and 3) To advocate and enhance the involvement of Peace Corps volunteers in gender and development issues. GAD spearheads a number of projects, primarily offering scholarships to motivated young women who demonstrate superior academic performance but lack the financial resources to finish their last three years of high school. In Ecuador, only 56 percent of young women finish high school, and four out of ten indigenous women are illiterate. Many girls do not finish their education for financial reasons or to contribute to their family's labor responsibilities. In addition, a high teenage pregnancy rate forces some

girls to drop out of school and assume primary childcare responsibilities.

On behalf of the Gender and Development (GAD) Committee of Peace Corps Ecuador, we would like to invite your support in our annual raffle, proceeds for which help further educational opportunities for Ecuadorian high school girls.

One of GAD's primary objectives is to provide three-year scholarships for young financially underprivileged, yet highly motivated Ecuadorian women so that they can finish their high school education. Working in partnership with Club Kiwanis Chuquiragua in Quito, Ecuador's scholarship program is one of only a handful worldwide. The scholarship recipients reflect the rich ethnic diversity of the country, including representatives from Afro-Ecuadorian and indigenous communities such as Shuar and Saraguran.

This year's raffle, scheduled for **July 30, 2004**, will help to provide scholarships for 120 young women, as well as funding for our annual leadership conference of scholarship girls and Camp ALMA (Activism and Leadership for Ambitious Women), a five-day Outward Bound-style camp giving young women the opportunity to test their potential and gain valuable self-esteem as they take part in rigorous outdoor adventures.

The GAD committee sponsors an annual 3-day leadership conference for the scholarship recipients in which we focus on helping them plan for their future, as well as on forging friendships with other young women from around the country. Last year, GAD members led the first annual Camp ALMA for the scholarship recipients: a five-day outdoor recreational and motivational program for teenage girls from each of our respective coastal, sierran, and jungle

communities, designed as an outdoor leadership camp.

As we consistently see, the social structure in most rural and urban sectors of Ecuador routinely denies women opportunities for education and advancement. Those of us committed to working on gender and development issues were enthusiastic about the opportunities such experiences would offer to young women in Ecuador.

For a few participants, Camp ALMA marked the first time they had ever stepped outside the confines of their home villages. The girls camped out in the wilderness and flourished in a variety of new and challenging experiences, such as forest orienteering, mountain trekking, white water rafting, and high ropes courses. Each of the girls in their own way and at their own pace learned to conquer their self-doubts and fears through patience, bravery and teamwork.

The girls experienced wonderful boosts of self-esteem and self-worth, formed lasting bonds with other ambitious young women, developed their knowledge about Ecuador's extremely rich geological and cultural diversity, and learned how to set goals and overcome personal challenges. The committee conducted a special follow up ALMA trip in April that made this prodigious event more enriching and sustainable. The most outstanding participants from each of the three camps embarked on a backpacking adventure in which they received training on how to facilitate sessions and provide leadership training directly to their peers. These girls will lead future national trips and form the bedrock of what we hope grows into a formidable and tight-knit Camp ALMA alumnae network.

A year ago, GAD Ecuador raised over \$6,000 in our annual raffle and was able not only to maintain sponsorship of the approximately 100 scholarship recipients, but also to accept an additional 16 young women into

the program. Last February we began reviewing another round of scholarship applicants, in hopes of continuing our established and successful programs, as well as dedicating our energies to promoting sustainability within our projects, expanding our work with young men and boys, and initiating region-specific gender trainings for volunteers and community leaders.

If you would like to support the work of GAD, please get in touch through e-mail:

widgad_ecuador@hotmail.com

Thank you so much for your support!

Sincerely,
Caitlin Gerdts & Colleen Kudla
Co-Presidents, GAD Ecuador

P.S. Prizes for the raffle include **two** (separate) **round-trip plane tickets** from Ecuador to any destination in the United States or from the United States to Ecuador, as well as other prizes such as gift certificates to Quito and Cuenca restaurants and hotels. Each ticket costs only \$1.50. If you buy **100 tickets**, you will automatically sponsor a woman's education for a full year and be a member of the GAD 100-Club where you will receive a photograph and information regarding the young woman whom you are sponsoring.

Donations are tax deductible!! Checks should be made to: **Club Kiwanis Chuquiragua**

Please write GAD Rifa in the Memo of the check

Mail to:

Attn:GAD

Casilla 17-08-8624

Cuerpo de Paz/Ecuador

Quito, Ecuador

South America

Historical Perspective: A School for San Juan Bosco (1960s)

*John Zorovich ('98-'01) -
Quininde, Esmeraldas
Reprinted from the 40th anniversary
Peace Corps in Ecuador booklet*

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION: James Agett organized the construction of the first cement school house in Morona Santiago province and in so doing unified a community and won the love of its residents.

Peace Corps volunteer James Agett has a rare distinction few volunteers share. Well into the Oriente, in a small far-removed town, James has a street named after him. The simple wooden signs painted green with yellow lettering identify San Juan Bosco's main road as "Jaime Agett." The street is a symbol of the town's love and gratitude for the volunteer that organized a community to build the first cement school in Morona Santiago province some 35 years ago.

James may have never set foot in San Juan Bosco if it wasn't for Pomilio Maldonado. In 1966, the San Juan Bosco resident found James helping construct a school in his hometown of Remigio Crespo Toral. Pompilio was familiar with the work of Peace Corps and invited the rural community development volunteer to San Juan Bosco.

The trip was not an easy one. The pair left before the break of dawn on a bus ride from the sierra down into the Oriente. When the road ended, they traveled the rest of the way by foot.

Pompilio and James spent the entire day trudging through the knee-deep mud and thick vegetation of the rain forest. "All you saw was a piece of sky and the jungle, nothing else," Pompilio remembers. When

James arrived at the tiny outpost hacked out of the jungle, the town of 120 residents received him graciously.

Although a two-roomed wooden schoolhouse existed, the five-year-old community saw the need for a bigger and more modern building for the school's 60 students. "The people wanted to have a better and brighter future for their children than from the place they had left," James says.

Touched by the warmth and motivation of the community, he committed himself to the task. James left for Quito for several months and solicited donations from his hometown high school and Kiwanis Club in New York. While his contacts contributed \$3,000 to the construction costs, the community would provide all of the labor.

When James returned to San Juan Bosco, however, he found the working conditions to be unlike anything he could have ever imagined. Cut off from the rest of the world, all of the building materials had to be brought into San Juan Bosco by mule. James required each family to make the 40-mile round-trip trek to bring back cement. The actual cement block maker had to be carried in by hand. "We had more work getting everything to the job site than actually building the school," James says.

Since concrete construction was new to the area, James taught the men how to mix cement and make the blocks using sand from a nearby river. Each family volunteered one person to work a full day during the week.

In July of 1968, however, James was drafted and had to return to the United States. The school was three-quarters finished when he left, but the community continued working.

Over the course of the two years it took to make the three-roomed school, the workers produced more than a thousand blocks. The

construction helped unite the community. The cement-block school, the first of its kind in the province, became a symbol of admiration for other towns.

Although James was not physically present for the school's 1969 inauguration, he was in the town's heart. The community decided to name the main street after the man who showed them that they could work together, by themselves, for their own progress.

"For a person - a foreigner - to come to this place and work with good faith and determination on a project from which he will receive nothing in return is admirable and exemplary," Pompilio says. "We named the street after him because he loved San Juan Bosco and the people of San Juan Bosco loved him like few things."

POSTSCRIPT: When James returned to San Juan Bosco in 1999, more than 25 years had passed since his last visit. The small remote enclave was now a county seat, accessible by road. Although the town had grown and changed immeasurably, James found comfort that certain things remain the same. San Juan Bosco's warmth and gratitude were as great as ever. Even more, the school he and the community built is still in use on the corner of Jaime Agett Street.

NPCA Updates

If you are a RPCV, remember to keep your membership current with the NPCA and to specify "Friends of Ecuador" as your affiliate group. \$15 of your NPCA dues go directly to Friends of Ecuador, supporting community projects in Ecuador. Further information about specific projects can be found at: www.friendsofecuador.org under "Projects Supported".

FACTS

Peace Corps Ecuador currently has 148 volunteers serving in country.

5,264 Americans have officially volunteered in Ecuador since 1962.

It is estimated there are more than 1,000,000 Ecuadorians living in the United States. There are 14 million people living in Ecuador.

Friends of Ecuador is a registered 501c3 non-profit.

Friends of Ecuador is dedicated to strengthening understanding and community development between the United States and Ecuador.

*Please direct correspondence to:
www.friendsofecuador.org*

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Join Us in Chicago for the 2004 NPCA Conference

"Celebrating a Legacy of Service"

Come to Chicago to participate in the 2004 National Peace Corps Association Conference, running from August 5 to 8 at the Palmer House Hilton! Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from across the country and globe will gather at the conference to share great stories, learn about a variety of topics at exciting workshops and enjoy presentations from top-notch speakers. This year's conference will be especially enticing as it celebrates both NPCA's and the Chicago Area Peace Corps Association's (the host agency for this conference) 25th anniversaries.

Events at the conference include:

Country of Service Events: A highlight of the conference will be the multitude of country of service reunions. Join your country mates for reunions, dinners, flag march, country update and more. Details of activities being planned by the "Friends of" groups are on the website.

Workshops: Dozens of exciting workshops are being planned that cover topics from world events to self-help and careers. Workshops and panel discussions include: Understanding Islam; How to Get Into the Foreign Service; Stress Management; Afghanistan & Iraq; RPCVs Role in Peace; Writing Your Peace Corps Story; and Socially Responsible Investing.

Opening & Closing Ceremonies: Selected speakers along with African dancers, Latin musicians, Indian performers, Romanian dancers, bagpipers and conference participants will open and close the conference with a bang!

There will be an International Marketplace, Career Fair, Business Symposium, Global Education symposium & more!

Impressive Speaker List

The impressive list of speakers continues to grow. Conference participants include: MSNBC Hardball Anchor Chris Matthews (Swaziland 69-71); Afghanistan Vice-President Hedayat Amin-Arsala; Former Thailand Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan; Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul & Mary; Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle and First Lady Jessica Doyle (both Tunisia 67-69); and Ohio Governor Bob Taft (Tanzania 63-65) and more.

More Information & Registration

For more information about the conference and online registration, visit the conference website at: www.rpcv2004.org. Badges will be required for entry to all conference activities, so registration is a must if you plan to attend. There is a Friend Finder on the conference website so that you can check to see who else has registered. Overall conference and Country of Service activities will continue to be updated on the website. For more information contact chicago2004@rpcv.org or 773/472-3370.