



Friends Of Malawi Newsletter



Winter 2011

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F. O. M. GRANTS REPORT

Women Against HIV/AIDS and Poverty Organization (\$500)

The organization named above, (WAPHO) works in collaboration with several other organizations to intensify income-generating activity to promote economic empowerment and positive living with HIV/AIDS amongst women, guardians and teen mothers. External resource persons will train about 12 individuals in business management skills for grass root economics, care treatment and support activities. These individuals would then work with WAPHO to ensure sustainability. It is anticipated that approximately 500 widows, orphans, guardians and teen mothers will benefit from this intended project.

HIV/AIDS Impact Mitigation Through Integrated Agriculture & Aquaculture Initiatives IAA)

Green Livelihoods (\$965)

The goal of this project is to contribute to the promotion of sustainable agricultural and aquaculture to mitigate the impact that HIV/AIDS has on rural communities, to improve food security and nutritional status and increase household incomes. To this extent, progress has been made in 21 villages in the Mchinji District with six pigs, a goat kraal, a mushroom growing center and fish fingerlings. Future needs include school fees for orphaned children, building a nursery school,

mushroom production, fruit-juice extraction for marketing purposes and the purchase of more pigs.

This grant is to develop training of beneficiaries to ensure bottom-up participation, promote farmer's innovation and to set up a monitoring and evaluation system.

Medicinal Gardening for Orphans & People Living with HIV (\$664)

PCV Steve Karanga and local officials initiated this project after identifying a gap in access to medicine. People living in the villages surrounding Kamphala trading center lack access to effective and affordable medicines. Often, those who walk long distances to the health center leave with only aspirin and malaria medicine even if not diagnosed with that disease. Also, many orphans and people living with HIV (PLWHIV) in Mangwele Village lack basic necessities such as nutritional food, clothes, school fees, etc.

There are many effective natural medicines that can be grown to treat the diseases and ailments that afflict Malawians. After a three day training seminar on the cultivation and uses of the natural medicines, the villagers will prepare the land, plant the seeds and cuttings. They will follow up with weeding, packaging and selling the plants such as Moringa Oleifera, Aloe Vera, Artemesia Annu Anamed, Neem, Hibiscus and other plants with medicinal compounds. The Village Committee will distribute the proceeds to support vulnerable individuals in the community, especially orphans and those living with HIV.

GRANTS REPORT CONTINUED

The following grants have been awarded, but end result reports have not been received.

Mwazisi Beekeepers Association Subsidized Beehives (\$1720)

The Mwazisi Beekeeper's Association (MBA) was established in August 2007 to bring various beekeepers in the area together for bulking honey sale and to share knowledge. Currently, MBA has over 80 members with varying levels of production.

To be profitable, each enterprise needs up to ten hives. However, plank top bar hives are too expensive for most farmers. As a result they tend to hollow out a tree trunk. This leads to major deforestation in the area.

The purpose of this grant is to purchase pine planks in bulk from the Nyika National Park along with nails, black plastic sheets and hanging wire. (Pine is an invasive tree in Malawi.) Hives can then be sold at one fourth the usual price. Local carpenters will construct 800 hives and MBA will ensure that all hives are properly installed and baited.

Community Mobilization to Fight HIV/AIDS (\$536)

The goal and overall purpose of this initiative is to eliminate stigma and discrimination that is usually associated with HIV/AIDS especially in the Northern Youth Networking organization (NYNO) based in the Northern Region of Malawi.

Specific objectives:

*Train 120 youth on puppetry and drama

*Train 20 members of staff and Volunteers on Advocacy & Lobbying and public speaking

*Purchase a Public Address System (PAS)

*Establish and run 3 Drop-in Centers in Ekwendeni, Malivenji and Mzuzu City

*Produce Information, Education and Communication materials

*Conduct 4 monthly advocacy forums in the community to create awareness and provide information on HIV/AIDS.

CONSTRUCTION OF SAYO VOLUNTARY COUNSELING & TESTING CENTER (\$3,200)

SAYO is a community based youth organization focusing on youth development within four areas: HIV Positive Living Club; 10 Forest Committees; 1 Interfaith Committee; five School Children Support projects.

SAYO is a registered and monitored organization that covers a catchment area of 24,000 people living in 36 villages.

Revitalize People, Revitalize Land (\$1141)

Much fertile land on the outskirts of Bolero in the Rumpu District is not utilized because of flooding during the rainy season. If a trench were dug and a small bridge were built, there would be more farm land available for families and transportation would be easier for all including the Kwanza Traveling Theatre Group in need of bicycles to increase their education outreach.

FOM is granting funds for 8 bicycles and labor to dig the trench to control the flow of rain water.

READING MATERIAL

Those who have traveled to Chileka Airport in the past few years may have noticed a couple of odd looking windmills along the road. With the use of a library book, they were built from scrap by William Kamkwamba. When he was 14 years old he erected the first one in order to power a light bulb and radio in his home. Adding other windmills allowed him to power a generator and to pump water for irrigation of crops.

Read the entire fascinating and true story in the book *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*.

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Chamoso Dolls

Several individuals have inquired about purchasing the Chamoso Dolls. The women's group has sent 30 dolls for RPCV Melva Steen to sell in the USA. Dolls are \$25.00 each (Includes mailing).

Girl dolls no longer have the pinafore apron. Some have braids with beads on their bangs, others have short, nappy hair. Boy dolls wear a tunic with pockets on it and shorts.

To order, send a check and request for the type of doll(s) to:

Melva Steen RPCV
43 M Glenroyal Drive
Pueblo, CO 81005



NEW BOARD MEMBERS

FOM welcomes Jack Allison as the new president! Michael Buckler and Jeannie McCormack have been invited to join the Board.

FOM has lost the valuable input from long time Board member Katie Reidy. We thank Katie for her work on the Grants Committee as well as for the many other roles she has played in the organization and we wish her well!

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NEW FLAG, JULY 29, 2010

President Bingu wa Mutharika has changed the flag of Malawi despite a lack of support from the public and a court challenge from his opposition party. The flag from Independence in 1964 until this time, showed a rising sun on a black background over a red stripe over a green stripe. The rising sun represented the dawn of hope and freedom at a time when African countries were just beginning to be granted freedom.

The new flag shows the red on top to match the original Pan-African Flag layout with black in the center and green on the bottom. There is a full white sun in the center of the black area to represent Malawi's economic progress since becoming independent. The president warned that anyone displaying the old flag would face arrest and prosecution.



!ZIKOMO, THANKS, YEWO!

Friends Of Malawi wishes to thank members and donors for their support. Membership funds go to support the small grant programs and the Friends Of Malawi Newsletter.

To donate & become a member contact FOM Treasurer, Lance Cole 7940 SW 11th Ave, Portland OR 97219.

PLEASE SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO:

kegeorge@gmail.com

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members of Friends of Malawi,

I am so honored to be your new President of FOM-Malawi, The Warm Heart of Africa, that holds a very special place in our collective heart.

So what do I hope to accomplish? *Good* question!

After interviewing each member of our Board of Directors individually, we recently had our first telephonic meeting of the Board. What an incredibly talented, energetic and dedicated group!

For many years we have raised funds and distributed them through a fair-minded, even-handed process of awarding grants to help PCVs, Malawians, and other colleagues in Malawi for various projects. FOM will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Additionally, the Board is working on reframing our grants processes; revisiting our bylaws; and inviting two new members to join us.

Yet our Board is open to other creative ways of helping to build the country of Malawi—to make things better there the best we can. My basic goal is to make FOM as efficient and effective as possible.

I am inviting you to please share your ideas about how best to proceed: What are we doing well? What can we do better, given our modest resources? ***And our Board has a special request!*** We are in dire need of a volunteer to help us with our web site. If you are interested, please contact me ASAP.

Again, I am incredibly honored to serve as your President. Please join our Board in making the organization that better serves Peace Corps Volunteers and Malawians in their efforts to improve that wonderful country.

Sincerely,

Jack Allison, MD

Malawi 1967-68-69

WANT TO GO PAPERLESS???

Would you rather receive the Newsletter in your email or on Twitter? Let us know if you want to go paperless. Email: FOMmembership@gmail.com

NEWS!

FOM has a facegroup now! We encourage all supporters to join our group and invite your friends to join as well.

You can locate the group by searching for "Friends of Malawi (FOM)" on www.facebook.com.

Friends of Malawi: The First Decade

by Galen Hull, Linda Millette,
Susan Davis & Damon Kletzien

The Spark

Early 1985 seemed an opportune time to think about a Malawi RPCV reunion, roughly 20 years after arrival of the first Nyasaland/Malawi PCVs. So, Susan Urbonas Davis ('64-'66) gathered together mailing lists of early Malawi PCV groups and requested Peace Corps' help with current addresses. In response PC/Washington did a mailing to the first five groups under Susan's signature. And, Paul Blair ('64-'66) sleuthed out many elusive "lost" RPCVs – no easy feat in the pre-internet age. Thus a critical RPCV mass was forming!

Smoky Mountains Reunion, June 1985

Some individual RPCV groups had had small reunions in earlier years, but this larger reunion for many groups, at a mountain resort near Gatlinburg, Tennessee, was a smashing success. About 130 enthusiastic folks attended, providing the momentum and the catalyst for the next step, next year.

Peace Corps' 25th Anniversary Celebration

August 1986's emotional gathering and gala event on the Washington Mall brought together RPCVs by the thousands from all countries, the RPCV Diaspora! Many country-of-service groups met at assigned venues around Washington, and about 50 Malawi RPCVs gathered at George Washington University. It was here a "Friends of Malawi" vision emerged.

Putting Organizational Pieces Together

Soon after the 25th Anniversary Reunion, a clutch of mostly DC-based Malawi RPCVs, Galen Hull ('64-'66), Susan Davis, Tim Davis (Susan's spouse and honorary RPCV), Doug MacDonald ('67-'69) and Jim Friedlander ('66-'68) met and pulled together Articles of Incorporation, By-laws and documentation to seek nonprofit status from IRS. Jim's law firm agreed to serve as FOM's "registered agent" and Jim reviewed plans with Malawi's then ambassador to the U.S., Hon. T.S. Mangwazu.

Forming a Board of Directors

In late April 1987 a Steering Committee developed a plan for reaching out to prospective members, especially with a newsletter. The new by-laws had established a governing board, and FOM's first officers were elected: Galen Hull, president; Jeff James ('64-'66), treasurer; and Susan Davis, secretary. At the Board's first official meeting on May 20, 1987 FOM's objectives and purposes were laid out: (1) Assist Malawians in economic, social and educational development, (2) Promote the education of Americans about Malawi and its people, and (3) Serve as a unifying organization for Malawians and "friends" of Malawians. Among the activities anticipated were economic aid for small business development initiatives; various fundraising projects, even charter flights to Malawi, among others. Membership dues were set at \$15.

Four board committees were created: Membership, Newsletter, Public Relations, and Social Events. Several new board members joined: Paul Blair took on Membership/Travel, Terry Liercke ('64-'66) worked on Projects, and Dale McFeatters ('64-'67) handled Public Relations. Also joining the first board were Mary Roarty ('81-'82), Jamie Raile ('81-'83), and Chuck Tampio ('63-'65) who worked on Special Events.

Among that summer's FOM events were the July 6th Malawi Independence Day celebration at the Malawi ambassador's residence, and a pool party hosted by Steve Heyneman ('66-'68) at his Virginia home.

The Newsletter

Susan Davis accepted the challenge of designing and editing the *Friends of Malawi Newsletter* which became the "glue" in building membership and building the FOM community. Newsletters carried updates on FOM members and projects, travel notes, book reviews, letters to the editor, news from current PCVs, reports on NPCA (National Peace Corps Association) conferences and workshops, and occasional articles on weighty Malawi issues like the environment,

energy, and development. Several years later Susan's creative and graphic excellence was recognized by NPCA, gaining top awards for editorial content and design.

FOM Gains a Coordinator and "Headquarters"

Somewhere along the way in 1988, Linda Millette ('62-'65, one of the pioneering Nyasaland I volunteers) joined the Board and tirelessly began building FOM. With her home in suburban Washington as FOM's "Headquarters" she took on this full-time/part-time job, handling most of FOM's mail or messages and entering info into the database or passing it along to the relevant board or FOM member. Continually she searched for "lost" RPCVs, courted others with newsletter copies, wrote streams of personal correspondence, and made countless telephone calls. In close collaboration with Susan Davis, *The Word About FOM* spread widely. Their energy and enthusiasm for FOM spilled in all directions!

Single-handedly Linda organized the "FOM Bazaar" with a variety of Malawian craft items: aprons, calendars, cookbooks, cloth wall maps of Africa, t-shirts, note cards, books from or about Malawi, CDs of the famous "Nyimba za Edzi" song by Jack Allison ('66-'69), license plate frames highlighting Peace Corps/Malawi service, among others. Thanks to artist Ray Collier ('82-'86) a handsome FOM logo was created, giving FOM Bazaar items and the Newsletter a distinctive branding. Linda traveled to many NPCA conferences around the country, setting up a booth to sell items and beat the drum for FOM, to recruit new members, and inform people about Malawi.

Linda relates that activities she particularly enjoyed were: attending new PCV stagings as a way of maintaining contact with parents and PCVs when they returned home and eligible for membership; finding and reconnecting Malawi students or colleagues with their past PCV teachers or colleagues; finding a "lost-to-us" RPCV to unite him with a daughter—a special highlight; hosting gatherings when RPCVs were in D.C. for Peace Corps anniversary celebrations; reading all the wonderful notes members sent with

their dues commenting on FOM's good works; working intensively with Damon on the membership directories; coordinating with Susan in feeding members' news for the newsletter; attending our board meetings where ideas were born and accomplishments celebrated, often accompanied by laughter and good food; and enjoying the satisfaction that came from having one of the top-notch Friends-of groups. FOM in those years had the largest paid membership of any country-of-service group! FOM was a whirlwind of activity.

While membership was overwhelmingly RPCVs, the newsletter attracted U.S.-based Malawians and others having a Malawi "connection:" United Nations and U.S. Government personnel, VSOs, CUSOs, among others. Eventually parents of many current PCVs also joined. Linda was aiming for a membership of 1,000 but it finally topped out at 900+ members, and exceptional record.

An Initial Project Grant

FOM's first project grant, in 1988, was \$2,000 for a revolving loan fund to the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), championed by Galen Hull and Ernest Yancey (PC/Malawi director, '84-'87). This initiative to train disabled Malawians having an interest in and aptitude in becoming business owners and managers of small-scale enterprises. Loans ranging from K400 to K790 were disbursed by MACOHA for individuals pursuing a business in tailoring, knitting, groceries, tinsmithing, and carpentry. Unfortunately, within two years few of the borrowers had repaid their loans, and indications that it was a "revolving" fund were scant. This was a learning experience put to good use in awarding future grants.

Growing an Active Organization

The Board met three or four times a year, and by 1991 FOM's membership had grown to over 550. Income exceeding \$20,000 was raised from dues, donations and fundraisers and two-thirds was spent on projects in Malawi, some coordinated through Peace Corps Partnership, including medical books for Ncheu, Machinga and Lilongwe

districts.

The FOM Membership Directory, 1st Edition, published in 1991, provided key information for networking among Malawi RPCVs. It was designed, researched, compiled and edited by Linda and Damon Kletzien (APCD '67-'70, a publisher of funding directories). Finally, everyone could find out where everyone else was (except those that were still "lost") and restore friendships. NPCA praised its comprehensiveness and professional look.[Over the next nine years, Linda and Damon collaborated on three more updated and ever-expanding editions of the membership directory.]

The Fall 1991 issue of the FOM Newsletter, now having grown into a sleek, professional-looking publication, provided a breakdown on FOM members who lived all over the country—and world; California claimed the largest number (128), New York (56), Massachusetts (38), Virginia (35), District of Columbia (31), and Florida and Maryland (29 each). As befitting peripatetic RPCVs, members seemed to live everywhere!

Nancy English Bleil ('65-'67) joined the Board and became Recording Secretary, freeing up Susan to concentrate on the Newsletter.

More Project Development Grants

From the outset, FOM received many more grant requests than could be funded. In 1993, Tim Davis, assisted by John Barbee (APCD, '87-'92) became projects coordinator. Tim and Linda codified the project-funding application criteria, and communicated with Peace Corps/Lilongwe, Habitat for Humanity/Malawi, Bunda College, and many other organizations regarding grant requests. Because of FOM's continuing involvement in the medical books project, Christine Jost ('89-'92) became project coordinator.

Subsequently, Terry Liercke and Damon teamed up to develop specific instructions and an application form for FOM's Small Grants Program. These focused on village level projects costing \$150 to \$500 and implemented by local communities. Funding interests

– in order of priority – were Health, HIV/AIDS, Education, Environment, Human Services, Agriculture, and Small Business Development. Terry took over as Small Grants Coordinator.

Persons on the ground in Malawi were always needed for liaison with grant applicants or on funded projects. Ted Sneed ('65-'67), who returned to live in Malawi as a consultant, played this role for a time. Ted consulted with NGOs and PCVs to recommend projects for support and helped track the progress of those funded. He was especially passionate about AIDS education and the need for reforestation in Malawi because of the profound environmental degradation.

During FOM's first decade, a total of \$60,000 was allocated for development projects in Malawi. The largest grant, \$7,500, was to Malawi Children's Village: AIDS Orphans Outreach Project. Many projects \$2,000 to \$2,500 each were supported: the MACOHA project previously mentioned; book projects at five MCDEs in Chiringa, Mvera, Phwadzi, Ekwendeni, and Muhasuwa; Ted Sneed's AIDS Education/Project Hope and the Blantyre District Voter Education Project; Abwenzi Park Internships (for Malawian wildlife specialists) in Aspen, Colorado and the Abwenzi Video Study Guide for its Pen Pals initiative, and others. Many smaller grants, mostly \$250 to \$500 each were allocated to activities like drought relief, enterprise zone agricultural development, woodlot and soil reclamation, AIDS counseling and treatment, rabbit and chicken husbandry, and math and science education. Peace Corps Volunteers generated a great number of project grant applications.

Historic Change in 1993

Malawians made history on June 14, 1993, when they voted in a referendum to either maintain a single-party political system or adopt a multi-party system. The latter won by a wide majority, and was in effect a vote of no confidence in President Banda. It was a new era with the United Democratic Front, a new party headed by Bakili Muluzi who would become Malawi's second president.

President Muluzi appointed Willie Chokani as Malawi Ambassador to Washington, who immediately faced a U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) decision to abolish Malawi's tobacco quota. The U.S. ban would cost Malawi over \$20 million in foreign exchange

annually, the equivalent of 10% of all export earnings. Ambassador Chokani asked FOM to help persuade U. S. decision makers to reconsider. Tim Johnson ('88-'90) spearheaded the effort with letters and phone calls to members of Congress and the USTR. Within a few weeks the USTR reversed its decision and agreed to maintain Malawi's tobacco imports at current levels. Of course, those who participated in this lobbying effort had to live with their consciences for sustaining the tobacco habit!

In October 1995 Ambassador Chokani hosted a gala reception at his residence for President Muluzi on his first official visit to the U. S. More than 200 Malawians and Friends Of Malawi members attended the festive event. President Muluzi continued the rounds of the capital, meeting with Vice President Gore, the Congressional Black Caucus, and several senators. It appeared a new day for Malawi had arrived.

In 1996, Galen Hull resigned as FOM president, eventually moving to Nashville for a new career in academia. Succeeding him as president was Tim Johnson, bringing to a close and exciting, vibrant and productive First Decade benefitting the Peace Corps Spirit!

Editor's note: The following article on the beginnings of Friends of Malawi may have some omissions. There was a period of years when the organization was inactive. It was revived in the summer of 2003 by Dawn Citrin, Mike Waldmiller, Frank Warnock, John Staub, Katie Reidy Terry Liercke, Kate O'Brien, Shannon Brown, Sondra Lauffer and Beth Evans with input from Ted Sneed. It continues to be a hard-working, vibrant Board of RPCVs continuing the vision of its founders.



L-R: Damon Kletzien, Tim Davis, Susan Davis, Linda Millette, Galen Hull. 1993

1994 with Malawi Ambassador Chokani



Linda Millette at FOM's World Fest exhibit

MALAWI 2010 BY Ward S. Lamon

Little did I expect to ever make it back to Malawi after finishing my tour in 1965-66, Malawi V, as a Secondary School Mathematics teacher at Henry Henderson Institute (HHI) in Blantyre. Some months before I thought about returning to Malawi, through friends in Davis, CA, I ran into Will Lotter, the Malawi Peace Corps Director during my stay. That visit led to an invitation to join an interesting two week project building school desks in a small village in southern Mauritania, West Africa.

Since I had committed to travel so far from San Francisco to Dakar via Paris, what more could it cost to spend time in Malawi? Not that much. So, off I went for an additional three weeks flying by way of Nairobi and Johannesburg. I briefly visited Soweto, where Nelson Mandela successfully averted what we expected to be a blood bath in converting South Africa to majority rule.

I set up house at Grace Bandawi Conference Center, situated directly across the street from the teachers' housing in which I had stayed during my tenure at HHI. Keeping with tradition, my old house now houses a Mathematics teacher at HHI. A few hundred yards down the path was HHI. The school was nearly new 45 years ago. Now it showed its lack of repair complete with graffiti.

About 300 yards beyond the school, my roommate Thomas Boyland (deceased in 1982), and I had devised a 220 yard track and field set-up. It doubled as a football field. We found that we could not create a full 440 yard track because the dug out side slope would have to be 25 feet instead of seven feet.

On March 27, 2010, I was ecstatic to find that local officials were pleased with our project and had brought in tons of dirt needed to expand the 220 track into a full blown football field! And it is well used. I met one of the teams that arrived early for a playoff match that afternoon.

I turned back up the road to the famous church, hand built by the original non-architect missionaries from drawings of four different styles of architecture. Nearby, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Synod of Blantyre, has built a modern style church frequented by the best and brightest of Blantyre. On Sunday the lot was full of BMWs, Land Rovers, etc. It seems the expats have changed from White to Black.

Following a visit with the school Principal, I was able to track down likely the only student of mine still living, Kasambiza. For the first time I learned his first name is Bernard. He had been my best student with plans to become a doctor. Instead, he became the Mathematics Professor at the Polytechnic Institute in Blantyre, teaching mostly Statistics for multiple disciplines, Medicine, Engineering, etc. Because of diabetes he had to retire.

The day before I left for Lilongwe, we (myself and a young artist named Eric Chiwera), picked up Kasambiza and his wife and took them over to HHI. The Principal shepherded us into the classroom of the upper Form Mathematics instructor and we observed his presentation of polynomial division! Thus we had three generations of Maths teachers come to meet.

By the time I drove to the capital to meet more friends from the past, (yes, on the left side of the road, again), I decided to call Ngwazi Doctor Kamuzu Banda the **Eisenhower of Malawi**. Under his vision, to hasten product delivery, all the primary roads that before were only red dirt, were fully paved, 80-100 kph highways.

I drove north to Mzuzu and Nkhata Bay. Unfortunately, I came across shameless exploitation, with huge sections of clearcut devastation of forests. Runoff has damaged the streams and the capacity of fish to exist, all the way to Lake Malawi. Similar exploitation is occurring further north in Karonga where Uranium is being extracted by Australian interests. They even have their own airport to remove the resources and to avoid sharing transportation revenue with our dear Malawi.

In addition to the paved roadways, the greatest changes in Malawi are the massive proliferation of cell towers and the explosion of population that has mushroomed from about one million to some 13 million souls. There has been major relocation to the cities, where the promise of jobs has mostly evaporated. The traditional farming family has been deeply uprooted. Increased crime was not obvious, but must present a growing difficulty.

I remember the journey from Blantyre to Lilongwe was a long, arduous, dusty trip, and if you blinked at the wrong time, you missed Lilongwe. Now, I understand it has some 650,000 living in two major sections: Old Town and the New Capital area. Too, the primary airport is there, not in Blantyre, about 20km from downtown. In heavy traffic it can take an hour to get there. The road is paved and wider, but still shared by motorists and people alike.

I make it back to Mount Mulanje and Lake Malawi. Both are gorgeous. Near Monkey Bay I visited a fabulous place, Mua, aka **Kungoni Art Gallery**. A priest created a wood carving school there and the results are amazing. Such exquisite art has not reached the broader world due to prohibitively expensive shipping rates out of Malawi. I obtained a wonderful wood piece, Standing Man with Child, I call it. Do go!

What was most exciting for me was that going back, I instantly felt at home. In spite of all the structural changes and extremely limited trickle down economic changes, whenever I stopped to say "Moni, muli bwanji?", grace and kindness overwhelmed me.

FROM MICROSOFT TO MALAWI: Learning on the Front Lines as a Peace Corps Volunteer

Peace Corps Volunteer narratives frequently are built on individual personal discoveries as participants struggle to come to terms with the existence of economic deprivation in the developing countries where they serve. In the end, the question seems always to be: who learned more: the volunteer? or those served? And how does the PCV integrate his/her experience into life at home?

Michael Buckler, a former attorney for Microsoft, a man who “has everything,” including degrees from prestigious schools, as well as the perfect wife, has the courage to raise these and other essential questions in this book. Does the presence of American PCVs in particular and western NGOs in general truly empower those living in poverty? Or are we, in fact, perpetuating a dependency on more economically stable countries, allowing them to grow a volunteer industry, keeping poor nations in their place?

Taken from the journals Buckler kept in Malawi, *From Microsoft to Malawi* reads like a series of lengthy conversations with a bright, determined, sometimes uncertain and helpless, occasionally arrogant, always curious, and generally compassionate young man. He is at his best—humble and vulnerable—when recording his tender exchanges with the three boys, the “sons” he takes into his living quarters, as well as when he allows the school principal in the village to mentor him.

His candor throughout the book is appealing. At the outset he asks, “What do poor people in Malawi have to offer us? Most people think nothing.” He answers by describing the ways in which “Malawi gets in your blood.” In my view both question and answer are tangential. Buckler means to say, “What do Americans have to offer the poor in Malawi?” It is the central question of the book. And, he later states, it is this question that no one asks the recipients.

A larger question for readers and for Buckler himself, whose background, after all, includes Jesuit education, is what he intends to do in the long term. How can we educate Americans about the taste, feel, and smell of poverty in our own country, as well as in those we call ‘third world?’ How is it that a young man who has such outstanding credentials combined with a religious education that stresses care of the downtrodden—how is it that this man could ask what poor people have to offer?

Clearly it is not enough for Buckler to say he was brainwashed by the American dream. His keen analytical mind offers him the opportunity to be a policy maker, but he’s also a problem solver, a doer, a hands-on man. Despite the frustrations of his PCV experience, his achievements are remarkable.

The proceeds of this book will support Malawian projects, particularly the education of Buckler’s “sons.” Recently he has been elected to the Friends of Malawi Board.

Jean Colgan Gould’s most recent venture in Africa was in Tanzania where she assisted the Women’s Economic and Education Centre in Moshi with the development of microfinance groups in rural villages.

K21 BILLION FOR EDUCATION IN MALAWI

World Bank and the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) have signed financial agreements with the Malawi government to improve the quality of education over the next four years. The World Bank, through its International Development Agency, will provide a \$50 million loan for the implementation of the project. FTI, a multi donor trust fund for low income countries, will provide a grant of \$90 million.

According to the World Bank, within Africa, Malawi has the lowest score of nine percent on English reading and two percent score on minimum mathematics. World Bank country manager, Sandra Bloememkamp, said that the bank is committed to improving standards of education in the country. Over 5,000 classrooms are expected to be built and concerns of low teacher-pupil ratios (1:88) and low primary school completion rate (currently 35 percent) will be addressed.

German Ambassador to Malawi, Reine Muller asked the government to accelerate the construction of infrastructure, especially classrooms for the primary schools, toilets and housing for teachers. Recently, donors threatened to withhold assistance in the education sector if Malawi does not improve meeting set targets to improve education standards. Finance Minister Ken Kandodo noted that development in education is a key ingredient of the country's economic development with 24 percent of the national budget allocated to education and he hailed the donors for providing funding. .

F.O.M. ENCOURAGES CURRENT PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS TO APPLY FOR GRANTS. Application forms are available at FOMgrants@yahoo.com

IN MEMORIAM

Heidi E. Galvin, '90.

Sally Heyneman, 67-68. Secondary school teacher in Mulanje.

Gail Oerke, former wife of Malawi Peace Corps Director Andrew Oerke.

Art Rutkin. Art died October 17, 2010, after a battle with mantle cell lymphoma. He was 69. As a member of PC Malawi 05, he taught history and science at Nsanje Secondary School. It was in Malawi, that he met his wife, Lois Vankolaar, also a PCV teacher.

Art had intended to go to law school, but his Malawi teaching experience changed his path in life and started a lifelong passion for education. He taught at schools in Maryland, Michigan and Peru before going to Tigard-Tualatin (Oregon) School District in 1984. He was principal at several schools in the district, before retiring in 2001. He won numerous local and national awards including a National Blue Ribbon School Award while he was principal at Byron elementary School.

After his retirement, Art directed and coordinated the shipment of two shipping containers of books to Malawi school children. He also served on the Tigard-Tualatin School Board from 2003-2009 where he was known as the "heart" of the board. He was always the one to ask, "What is the best thing for the children?" The

Tigard-Tualatin School Board has plans to name the next new school in the area after Art, to honor his life commitment to children and education.

Art is survived by his wife Lois, three daughters and six grandchildren.

R. Sargent Shriver, first Director of the Peace Corps

John Strain, 67-68. Public Health volunteer in Kaphuka.



Friends of Malawi

Comparative Income Statement

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Revenues:					
Retricted Donations					
Sewing Project	2,400.00	10,150.00	6,975.00	555.00	100.00
FOM Book Project	6,854.77	10,070.50	1,818.00	3,836.00	1,480.00
Storybook Project	15,877.98	1,941.70			
Ludzi Building Fund			39,520.00		
Camp Glow/Camp Sky	6,100.48	7,986.51	14,832.06	15,586.43	3,870.35
Mzoma Project					975.00
Misc	225.00	7,768.88	2,995.00	1,082.30	
Total Restricted	31,458.23	37,917.59	66,140.06	21,059.73	6,425.35
Unrestricted Donations	12,191.64	8,984.02	9,778.79	11,088.87	6,733.43
NPCA Rebates	1,200.00	855.00	335.00	577.50	615.00
Interest Income	408.29	804.63	523.48	251.01	101.12
Total Revenues	45,258.16	48,561.24	76,777.33	32,977.11	13,874.90
Expenses:					
Grants - Sewing & books	8,433.28	15,470.91	13,958.86	10,099.07	540.05
Grants - AIDS		625.00	4,567.00	1,851.00	1,084.00
Grants - Ludzi Building Fund			39,520.00		
Grants - Storybook Project	15,452.98	2,366.70			
Grants - Camp Sky/Camp Glow	4,904.43	10,014.24	14,599.86	14,385.19	5,090.00
Grants - Small	6,338.00	4,243.00	2,146.00	8,388.00	9,475.25
Grants - Misc Restricted		7,318.88	2,995.00	1,011.50	
Dues	360.00	400.00		400.00	500.00
Office Supplies	61.00	0.00			
Telephone	129.60	97.55	76.45	120.84	321.10
Web site/Internet	186.75				59.95
Special Appeal - Food Aid	491.40				
Newsletter	2,199.27	1,593.81	1,594.61	1,282.12	1,097.14
Other	116.90			16.00	
Legal	115.00				
Total Expenses	38,788.61	42,130.09	79,457.78	37,553.72	18,167.49
Net Gain (Loss)	6,469.55	6,431.15	(2,680.45)	(4,576.61)	(4,292.59)

Comparative Balance Sheet

	Dec 31, 2006	Dec 31, 2007	Dec 31, 2008	Dec 31, 2009	Dec 31, 2010
Total Cash	37,124.36	43,555.51	40,875.06	36,298.45	32,005.86
Equity	37,124.36	43,555.51	40,875.06	36,298.45	32,005.86
Restricted Cash					
	12/31/09 Balance	2010 Revenues	2010 Expenses	12/31/10 Balance	
Book Project	1,802.82	1,480.00	440.05	2,842.77	
Sewing Project	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	
Camp Sky	1,601.76	507.37	2,045.00	64.13	
Camp Glow	0.00	3,362.98	3,045.00	317.98	
Robert Blake Secondary School	1,500.00			1,500.00	
Mzoma Project	70.80	975.00		1,045.80	
Total Restricted	4,975.38	6,425.35	5,630.05	5,770.68	

FRIENDS OF MALAWI MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please fill out one form for EACH person who would like membership. Information is optional. However, missing information makes it difficult for FOM to keep you updated.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

PCV Location(s): _____ years: _____ - _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Home Phone: (____) _____

Zip Code _____ Work Phone: (____) _____

International Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Please complete more information

If you are not an RPCV, what is your relationship to Malawi? (Please check)

_____ A family member was is/was a PCV (name? _____)

_____ Have lived in Malawi

_____ Want to help Malawi

Donations should be made payable to "Friends Of Malawi".

Note: The suggested donation level is \$15.00 per individual. This money is used to send out Newsletters, to run the organization, and to provide grants in Malawi. To view recent reports, view the FOM website, www.FriendsOfMalawi.org.

Please mail membership form and donations to:

Lance Cole (FOM Treasurer)

7940 SW 11th

Portland, OR 97219

Amount of donation: _____

If you would like to be a member of, and financially support, the National Peace Corps Association, then go to <https://secure.peacecorpsconnect.org/membership/application> and join. Annual membership in NPCA is \$35. You will also be given the option to donate \$15 to FOM. FOM does not require paid membership

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