

# F.O.M. NEWSLETTER

Volume 17, No. 2

Fall 2005

## ASSISTING MALAWIANS

The Friends of Malawi editors of the Newsletter have been receiving requests for assistance--specifically, letters asking for funds to help with education. At this time, FOM does not have scholarship funds available, nor does it have guidelines for distributing financial assistance for individuals. The Grants Program is designed to help communities within Malawi.

A number of groups and former Peace Corps Volunteers are providing help to Malawians who are studying in a variety of areas and at institutions inside and outside of Malawi. In addition to assistance by paying out-of-pocket expenses RPCVs have found creative ways to raise funds. The following information may be helpful.

### **Assisting Malawians**

By Katrina Grantz

Friends of Malawi cannot publish individual requests for assistance in the bi-annual newsletter. There are so many worthy recipients, it is too difficult to choose which individual's story to publish. However, there are many people who want to help sponsor an individual or project—they just don't know how. Many Americans know very little about life in a third world country, and when they learn about it from someone they know, they tend to be quite generous. *The secret is to get the word out!*

### **Some ideas that others have tried for raising funds and/or assisting Malawians:**

- \* Send out an email (or newsletter) to friends or family telling them the personal story of your student, friend, family, project, etc.
- \* During the holidays, many families join together to support a charity. Why not ask your family if they would like to send a bright student to school for the year, or to help build a chicken coop, or start a sewing club for the women's group to which your Malawi friend belongs?
- \* Recycle! In states with cash deposits on bottles and cans, this can be a great source of funds. It is surprising how the nickels add up! Collecting from college campuses, neighbors, roadsides, and even bringing an empty bag to luncheon meetings can boost the collection as well as get the word out. If your state does not refund, squash your aluminum cans and take them to a metal recycling place for 6 cents per pound.
- \* Hold a garage/tag sale and publicize what it is for. People often will donate items to be included, or they will pay more for an item when they know what the proceeds are for. It is helpful to have a poster of photos and Malawi artifacts for people to see.
- \* Enlist the support of a church, school, or community service club. Often these groups are looking for new projects and ways to help sponsor an educational opportunity. Secondary School fees vary, but are only about \$20 for an entire year!

\*\*\*\*\*NOTE: *It is not safe to send money in the mail. Electronic transfer to a bank account costs \$30.00.* \*\*\*\*\*

### **Other ways to be supportive:**

- + Textbooks, particularly university texts, can be very expensive in Malawi. Purchasing used books on-line or collecting them from college students, and then posting them via US Postal Service m-bag is easy. Just box them (no more than 60 lbs) and mail them for \$1.00 per pound. If addressed to "Librarian" and mailed to the University of Malawi, Zomba, Malawi, East Africa, they will be sorted and sent to the appropriate departments.
- + Speaking in school classrooms often spurs the question "How can we help?" from teachers or students. This can turn into pen pal projects, book drives, Key Club fundraisers, etc.

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Sandra Lauffer also serves as a delegate to the NPCA  
and was elected as the Central and Southern Africa  
representative.

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**HOW TO CONTACT F.O.M.**

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available on request from this address)

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**IN MEMORIAM**

We are sad to report the passing of the following  
Malawi RPCVs:

- Elda Ginevri** - Soche Hill College, Blantyre.  
(Malawi I),
- John Case** - Chaminade Secondary School, near  
Karonga. (Malawi I)
- Fred Burke** (Staff, Malawi III)

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**PERSPECTIVES ON MALAWI**

This column will try to provide a variety of perspectives on Malawi from past and current PCVs, Malawians, and NGO studies. Our goal is to provide a balanced mix of reflections, facts and figures, experiences, etc., to enhance our understanding of what is and is not working to improve the lives of all Malawians. Ideas for issues you would like to read about, as well as article submissions are encouraged. Views do not necessarily represent the board of FOM. We hope you enjoy this column.

**MARRIAGE CAN BE DEADLY**

Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* has written that particularly in Africa, sex kills and prudishness can be just as lethal. He writes: "President Bush is focusing his program against AIDS in Africa on sexual abstinence and marital fidelity, relegating condoms to a distant third."

Promiscuity is not what kills young women, instead it is marriage. Often men find jobs away from home and take up with girlfriends. Months later they return home bringing viruses with them. Most refuse to use condoms. There is an African saying, "Who wants a sweet with the wrapper still on?" In other parts of the world, condoms have played a critical role in campaigns against AIDS. Successful examples include Thailand, Uganda, Cambodia, and Senegal. Experts agree that the **ABC theory** can prevent AIDS. **A** stands for *abstinence*, **B** for *being faithful*, and **C** for *condoms*.

The Bush administration guidelines stipulate that U.S. government financed AIDS programs for young people must focus on abstinence. For those already sexually active, the focus is on "returning to abstinence." The U.S. Center for Health and Gender Equity has reported that in several countries, the U.S. is backing away from effective programs that involve condoms.

Kristof visited a U.S.-financed center in Zimbabwe that has been effective in reducing HIV among prostitutes and long-distance truck drivers. The truck drivers will pay \$1.00 for sex with a condom and \$4.00 for sex without a condom. When food and rent are needed, prostitutes often agree to not using a condom. At the center, the Bush administration has allowed condoms to be given to the prostitutes, but not to the rest of the population.

Kristof maintains that the Bush anti-condom policy can be fatal. At the current rate of infection, 85 percent of Zimbabwe's 15 year olds will die of AIDS. In addition, women who have husbands who work away from home and return occasionally to sleep with their wives without using condoms are dooming millions of women and their children to die from AIDS.

## PEACE CORPS ARCHIVAL PROJECT (PCAP)

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection of the John F. Kennedy Library is the repository for personal materials that relate to the experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers who served from 1961 to the present. It consists of papers (such as letters, diaries, and journals), representative sets of photographs, oral history interviews, and other items of unique archival value. The Collection is part of the National Archives and Records Administration.

The PCAP works with the Kennedy Library to afford the greatest number of RPCVs the opportunity to include their stories in the Collection and to assure that these materials are preserved as part of the public record. These files are available to researchers, RPCV families and others. The Project organizes the taping of oral history interviews and the screening for donation of RPCV's personal papers.

The Archival Project functions through RPCV groups affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association---Geographic Area, Country of Service, and Special Interest groups. *The goal of "telling my story" applies to everyone who has ever been a Peace Corps Volunteer and those stories belong in the RPCV Collection.*

The Nyasaland/Malawi I group has started to work on telling and collecting their stories. Some have found that working in a geographical area is more efficient than to try to interview members of a specific project. Working in pairs is the easiest way to record the oral histories.

Historian Robert Klein (Ghana '61-'63) ([ayzee@worldnet.att.net](mailto:ayzee@worldnet.att.net)) is the Project Organizer. Barbara Hodgdon (Malawi I) has written an excellent, easy to follow, revision of his outline. It has specific ideas about how to get involved and started. It is particularly useful for gathering oral histories. Contact Beth Evans (Newsletter editor) for a copy.

To determine if items such as training materials, letters, diaries, artifacts, etc., are appropriate for inclusion in the Archives, individuals should contact James Roth, Archivist, RPCV Collection, Kennedy Library (617) 514-1633 or [james.roth@nara.gov](mailto:james.roth@nara.gov).

At any point in the process, the Organizer and the Archivist are available to provide further information, answer questions, and where possible, meet with potential participants.

## FOM GRANTS TEAM REPORT

(See photo page)

Moni Nonse,

Leslie Stroud and her Matenje community received a grant from Friends of Malawi in order to begin a sustainable youth vocational skills program. Leslie's community had started a local training school for orphans that opened in May of 2004 with ten students. After months of operating, it was decided that the building was not conducive for learning and that course work needed to be expanded.

After notification of the FOM grant in June 2005, community members began molding bricks and members of the committee spent three days buying supplies to renovate the classroom and workshop, strengthen the carpentry section, and begin a tailoring section. Purchases were made with careful consideration of how the school would run without outside assistance—for example, the roll of fabric used to teach tailoring is the color of local school uniforms and items made can be sold. All of the materials needed for a sofa and a display cabinet were purchased so that they can be made and sold as well.

The new term was scheduled to start on July 5, 2005. There was a ceremony at the end of June with all of the area village headmen in order to spread awareness, begin registering students, and display the purchased items. All of the enrollees are orphaned youth who are not attending secondary school because of financial obstacles.

The Matenje Youth Vocational Skills for Orphans Program allows students the opportunity to build a better future for themselves through the learning of a new skill as well as receiving business training and behavior change lessons. According to Leslie, "because of the strong support from the Senior Chief, the dedication of the committee, and the enthusiasm of the students wanting improved opportunities in life, there is hope that the Matenje Youth Vocational Skills for Orphans School will become an established part of the local community and continue in its goal to assist youth who are orphaned by HIV/AIDS." Congratulations to newly returned PCV Leslie and the wonderful Matenje School for their sustainable training program! PCVs, keep your requests coming!

*Grants Committee: Katie Reidy, Katrina Grantz and Matt Grantz*



**This column will present views from either a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Malawi or a Peace Corps Volunteer currently serving in Malawi. The intent is for RPCVs to reflect on the influence their PC experiences have had on their lives, and to keep Newsletter readers up-to-date on current Peace Corps involvement in Malawi.**

## **My Peace Corps Experience-A Journey Into The World**

By Vernon Oley Roningen – Malawi I

As a Minnesota farm boy, the Peace Corps experience opened up the world in many ways. Since Malawi is on the other side of the planet, the travel certainly was broadening. Training with and working with fellow volunteers from various parts of the U.S. and from different backgrounds was a good experience. Living and working in Malawi provided a different perspective on life.

Although Malawians appeared poor relative to Americans, they lived in a culture with admirable traits of mutual respect and politeness. Life was hard but rewarding on its own terms, something not always understood by looking at economic statistics. As a Peace Corps teacher I observed the gap between traditional and western modern technological life that students had to bridge. It was gratifying to teach students who for the most part, worked hard at their education. It was great fun to return to Malawi a few years after my Peace Corps experience to meet many former students who had jobs and responsibilities that followed from their education.

When we arrived in Malawi, it was still the British protectorate of Nyasaland; when I left after three years of teaching, it was the independent nation of Malawi with a British colonial heritage. Living in Malawi taught me much about the British view of the world and a way of life; so much so that when I completed my service, I felt more at home in London than in the U.S. So my Malawi experience indirectly provided me with a European one that I value greatly.

I also came to appreciate the work of missionaries who established many of the schools. During my first year in Malawi, we lived with the Marist Brothers who taught at the Mtendere Secondary School. Although none of us were Catholic, we were graciously included in the Brothers' family life, giving us a home away from home. My third year was spent teaching in Blantyre at a school run by the Church of Scotland. Again, we had a home there.

During my third year I fractured my skull in a bicycle accident. The resulting hospital recovery gave me a chance to read Samuelson's introductory economics book. Everyday life in Malawi raised lots

of questions of why and how economic development occurs. This interest later led to a Ph. D. in economics at Columbia University in New York. Subsequently, I have had a series of jobs dealing with trade and development with the U.S. government and the United Nations. I have been fortunate to be able to work on economic issues important to countries like Malawi. In recent years, my consultant business has taken me back to several African countries where one sees economic progress and improved standards of living for many, but also a frustrating lack of economic progress and accompanying social ills for others. While the Peace Corps experience led me to economics, it also educated me about the real people of Africa behind the economic and social statistics.

My Malawi Peace Corps experience enriched my life enormously and I have been fortunate to see some fruits of our Peace Corps efforts there. Globalization has brought Africa and Malawi closer to us in many ways – they are but a click away on the Internet today. Although Africa has many serious long-term problems, I know that Africans themselves will have to deal with them in their own way. I am grateful to have the chance to work with them in building their future.

## **JACK'S NEW CD**

You may remember the great CD that Jack Allison made for AIDS Education in Malawi. Now he has made another. It is a single-song CD called "American Heroes", a song to welcome our troops home from Afghanistan and Iraq. The chorus contains words that are familiar to those in the Veterans' Administration: *'To care for him who shall have borne the battle...'*

Tax deductible and post-paid contributions will flow through a section within the Education Foundation of Upstate Medical University. This special fund will go to help severely injured/wounded military personnel and their families. Jim Mayer has agreed to help set up a committee to make rules and regulations for dispersing funds. The goal is to raise \$1,000,000.

Copies of the song may be obtained by calling either 800-755-3675 or 315-464-4363, or by sending a check for \$25.00 to Ms. Angela Scalise, Department of Emergency Medicine, Upstate Medical University, 750 East Adams Street, Jacobsen Hall 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Syracuse, NY 13210.

## MALAWI NSIMA PARTY: AN EVENING OF CONNECTION

By Rich White-Smith

Some 40 folks – ½ American and ½ African, mostly from Malawi, gathered at my house in Schenectady, New York last February for a *Malawi Nsima & Dance Party*. The group aged from thirty-something to nearly 80. The Americans, mostly RPCVs from the '60s and '90s, also included spouses, a former AID worker and even a VSO. The gathering reminded me of a truth learned many years ago: Malawians and PCVs will travel great distances for a good party! Many traveled over 100 miles.

The robust sharing filled the house and our hearts with a sweet ecstasy of reconnecting with fellow travelers. For most Americans, this was the first time since returning that we had the opportunity to connect/reconnect with each other and Malawians as a group. It was wonderful to share our experience and love for this distant land and her people who so touched and shaped our lives. The evening rekindled lots of memories and feelings. The conversations continued well after midnight as the party morphed into an enthralling Q&A session with Malawians about the slippery slope of development in that struggling nation.

We actually began the party at 3 PM with food prep, then the African women took charge and kicked us well-meaning but clueless RPCVs out of the kitchen. Against the backdrop of African music and 'Jack Allison Live', we consumed volumes of Malawian "comfort food" washed down with cold Carlsberg. After nearly four decades, I was surprised how the taste and feel of nsima on my fingers brought me right back to the villages of Chikwawa. .

I encourage you to organize your own get-together. FOM shared its mailing list for my region and my one Malawian friend at the time connected me to others. Once the word is out, Malawians, RPCVs and others with a love for Malawi will find you! Individuals brought their own beverages and we passed the hat to cover food costs with the extra going to Malawi Children's Village. All agreed that the party would not be forgotten soon, with promises of an even larger gathering next year. You're invited!

(See photo page)

## NYASALAND/MALAWI I REUNION

By Steve Thomas

On January 15, 1963, 42 new U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers landed at Blantyre's Chileka airport in Nyasaland. These were the first PCVs to serve in a country that was not an independent state. It was the third PCV group to serve in Africa; only teachers in Ghana and nurses in Tanganyika had preceded Nyasaland I. During the next two years Nyasaland became self-governing and then independent Malawi under the forceful leadership of Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Most of the Malawi I group served as secondary school teachers.

In April 2005, 23 of these Malawi I veterans, a number of spouses, and Dr. and Mrs. Tom Davis (staff) attended a reunion at Alpine Lodge in Mill Valley near San Francisco. Many had not seen each other for more than 40 years. Time takes a toll – five members of Malawi I are deceased. Several of those who were married at the time no longer are married to each other. Still, after a few awkward moments to attach names to those present, an easy familiarity set in. The atmosphere seemed much the same as when they were in their twenties in training at Syracuse University and much absorbed with the politics of the Kennedy administration and the Cuban missile crisis.

What happened at the reunion? On the first evening, getting reacquainted and seeing a slide show of "How We Were" occurred. Friday morning we sat in a circle and each took a few minutes to speak about how our lives unfolded over the past 40 years. It was a moving and emotional time. One theme that emerged was how resilient and adaptable this group has been. In the evening we looked at more pictures and discussed how we might reconstruct our Malawi I History thematically. This discussion helped us recall events and situations not thought or spoken of in a very long time. On Saturday, some hiked in the John Muir Woods while others recorded Oral History Interviews for the Kennedy Library Archives.

Saturday evening we enjoyed an extended dinner and uninhibited social atmosphere. The laughter and atmosphere were more intoxicating than the wine! For a Malawi I Reunion Gift, the group pledged more than \$7000 for worthy projects in Malawi. Money was allocated to the Global Aids Interfaith Alliance for nurses training in Malawi, the Lion's International Eye Hospital to prevent blindness in the Shire valley, the Mzoma Village projects, the Malawi Children's Village for vocational training, and to Friends of Malawi. *(con't. p. 6)*



## NPCA GROUP LEADERS FORUM

By Sandra Lauffer

As a member of the board of the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), I represent not only Friends of Malawi, but also the other “Country of Service” (COS) groups in west, central, and southern Africa. NPCA is the national “alumni” membership organization whose purpose is to represent the interests of the Peace Corps community—primarily RPCVs and former staff. On July 29, NPCA held its annual general meeting, the Group Leaders Forum (for leaders of the groups affiliated with NPCA), and its quarterly board meeting.

Several issues seem particularly relevant to report back to FOM membership. (Minutes are available on the NPCA website, [www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org).) A large part of the Board Meeting was devoted to a discussion of the report of its Membership Work Group. Membership in NPCA is a fraction of its potential, given the number of RPCVs and the relevance of their collective voice to our national debate about U.S. engagement with the rest of the world. The discussion focused on the concern that NPCA has drifted away from its primary constituency – its affiliated groups. These include not only the COS groups, but also the geographic groups (e.g., Boston area RPCVs) and others such as the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual RPCVs. In coming months, NPCA and the Board will work to unblock the arteries of communication with its member groups and its individual members, to become more responsive to their concerns and provide services and resources that only a national organization can muster. I urge you to visit the report on the website and to comment on it to me ([slauffer@aed.org](mailto:slauffer@aed.org)) or directly to NPCA.

NPCA’s potential to be a focal point for advocacy on issues of concern to RPCVs of all ages was made clear in a far-ranging discussion of the legislation, *already passed by Congress*, that includes Peace Corps as one of the national service options that military personnel can elect to fulfill their military obligation. Although this legislation was passed in 2003, NPCA did not become aware of it until very recently, and immediately began to seek clarification of the policy from the Peace Corps and members of Congress. (NPCA’s letter to Peace Corps Director Gaddi Vazquez and his response are available on [www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org).) NPCA’s concern targets the independence of the Peace Corps and the potential of the link to the military (*con’t to next column*)

to affect the safety and effectiveness of Peace Corps volunteers. *The NPCA Board endorsed the efforts of the NPCA Chair and President to omit the Peace Corps from this military recruiting initiative.* Subsequently, there has been a vibrant discussion of the issue on the group leaders listserv, which highlights the complexity of the issue – NPCA is not in any way disparaging military service, but rather it opposes the linking of military service with Peace Corps service.

As FOM continues its important focus on Malawi and its challenges, I encourage FOM members to engage in the wider debate that is common to all who seek to bring their Peace Corps experience to bear on their life in the United States.

## MALAWI FACTS & FIGURES

Capital.....	Lilongwe
Population.....	11 million
Annual per capita income.....	\$160
Adult illiteracy rate.....	Male: 25%
.....	Female: 52%
Access to safewater .....	Urban: 95%
.....	Rural: 44%
GDP growth.....	-1.5%
Infant mortality rate.....	114 per 1,000 live births
Immunization rate.....	DPT: 90%
.....	Measles: 82%
HIV/AIDS prevalence.....	15%
Official Languages.....	Chichewa, English
Foreign direct investment.....	\$58 million
Prime Minister.....	Bingu wa Mutharika

**Current Malawi Peace Corps Volunteers as of 8/15/05:**  
**Secondary Education (36),**  
**Community Health (38),**  
**Natural Resources Management (30).**

*We encourage current PCVs and RPCVs who are traveling back to Malawi to keep applications coming!*

**Grant Application forms are located on the Website: [www.friendsofmalawi.org](http://www.friendsofmalawi.org) or by emailing with a request to [fomgrants@yahoo.com](mailto:fomgrants@yahoo.com)**

F.O.M. Newsletter  
C/O E. Evans or F. Ushe  
Friends Of Malawi  
Judd Gymnasia, Springfield College  
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**EDITORS' NOTE**

**???? CAN YOU HELP ????**

FOM Newsletters have been returned with no forwarding address for the following people. If readers have up-to-date new addresses for anyone on the list, **please e-mail John Staub** with the information at [membership@FriendsOfMalawi.org](mailto:membership@FriendsOfMalawi.org).  
Richard & Beatrice Ainsworth, Patricia Austin,  
Charity Banda, Shelly Lynn Bankston, Ann Bauer,  
Carol Baumert, Martha Bean, Julie Bonior, Jennie Bravinder, Phyllis Bravinder, Robert Bucher,  
Shannon Cali, Eleanor Carter, James Patrick Chihak,  
George "Joe" Combellack, Ralph Cowart,  
Christopher Cull, MacMillan & Laura Dalla, Sharon Doctor, Deidre Dowdie, Tom, Marion & Mari Ehmman, Heidi Ehrlich, Kurt Fenske, Jodie Fonseca,  
David Gainer, Garry Garnet, Amy Gemmer, Varsha Ghosh, Leigh Giurlando, Glen, Granzow, Charles David Harrod, Lisa Hayes, Christopher Hobbs,  
George Honadle, Sted & Anna Howard, Judith Hornaday, Pat James, Scott Jankowski,

Jesse Johnson, Ken Jones, Jennifer Kennedy, Laura Noel Kimball, Frank & Julia King, John Kirwan,  
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and Kim Yea.