



Newsletter of the Friends of Ghana

The Talking Drum

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Friends of Ghana Hosts Anniversary Celebration at the Embassy of Ghana

Submitted by Scott McDonald

Friday, September 23rd saw the Friends of Ghana (FoG) host a reception and dinner at the Embassy of Ghana in celebration of the Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary. 150 guests enjoyed Ghanaian food and toasted the work Peace Corps has done in

Ghana. Most of the attendees were Ghana RPCVs, along with their families and friends. In attendance were Ghanaians who knew, were taught by, or worked with PCVs, as well as the Embassy staff and several members of the Ghanaian community in Washington, DC. Good food, ample drinks, smiling faces, and lots of long, hard hugs testify to the success of the event.

True to Ghana, the bar opened late. Contributing to the feel of the evening, many guests arrived late because the Metro Red Line got spoiled for about an hour. Nonetheless, spirits were high as guests re-united with old friends and told stories about other old friends who were not in attendance. The event gave many a chance to wear their favorite Ghanaian attire and once again speak their best Ghanaian English. This reporter, who served as a greeter for much of the event, befriended an Embassy official who shared some of his special akpeteshi.

The evening program featured three speakers. Mrs. Matilda Osei-Agyeman, Head of Chancery at the Embassy of Ghana, opened the program with remarks about the good relations Ghana and the



RPCVs from Ghana I were well represented.

United States have had throughout Peace Corps' tenure. Mr. Adolf Afful, President of the Council of Ghanaian Associations, spoke of his experiences as a student of several Peace Corps teachers. FOG Treasurer Debby Prigal recalled her experiences in Ghana and encouraged people to join RPCV groups.

The program ended with PCVs standing to be recognized by decade of service, region of service, job category and other groupings suggested by audience members, such as RPCVs who had married during service. Many were surprised to learn of Ghana PC's robust geologist program in the early years.

Ghana I, the first group of PCVs to serve anywhere in the world, was well represented. The audience was introduced to Bob Klein, the "First PCV", so designated because he was the first member of Ghana I to reach his site after his anxious host whisked him away from a reception at the Ambassador's Residence before the end of training. Bob reflected on his PC experience, as did the first married couple who were accepted into Peace Corps. Many "Kodak moments" followed.

The dinner buffet, catered by Ghana Café, included



Attendees get (re)acquainted at the reception.

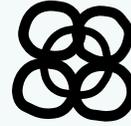
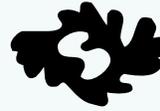




President, Frank Yates, Treasurer, Debby Prigal, and Vice President, Craig Vickstrom represented Friends of Ghana as hosts of the event.

fufu with groundnut soup and banku with fish stew. Volunteers from the 1970s and 1980s were not surprised that the food came late and much of it ran out. Star Beer was a hit and ran out too; fortunately, Club Beer was in sufficient supply.

FOG expresses its appreciation to Debby Prigal for organizing this event, which was moderately priced so as many as possible could attend. Donations and profits totaled \$500; the funds will be used to support a Peace Corps Partnership project in Ghana. ★



50th Anniversary Celebration: A Personal Account

Submitted by Frank Yates, Friends of Ghana President

I arrived in Washington, DC on the evening of Wednesday, September 21. I stayed at the Fairfield Inn at 5th and H Streets, NW, in Chinatown. Several of the Sierra Leone I group were also staying at the hotel, along with many other RPCVs that I did not meet. Gary Schulze, an NPCA Board member representing West, Central, and Southern Africa, was having a discussion with others in his group about their planned event for Thursday evening. They were having problems playing several video files that they wanted to show to their reunion group. I overheard the conversation and volunteered to test the video files on my computer. I was able to play all of the video files, so I got an invitation to the Sierra Leone I Reunion on Thursday evening at the University Club.

I attended the Advocacy Day event on Capitol Hill on Thursday, September 22. That day was the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Peace Corps Act (as opposed to the Presidential Proclamation signed by President Kennedy on March 1). I helped Jonathan Pearson, the NPCA Advocacy Coordinator, by videotaping 30 interviews of RPCVs who had visited their home state Senators and/or Representatives earlier that day and capturing a brief summary of their Peace Corps experience, and their impressions of the meetings. The Advocacy Event was run from a fifth floor room in the Hart Senate Office Building. I was there the whole morning and afternoon. For lunch, several of us went to the cafeteria in the adjacent Dirksen Senate Office Building, accessible by tunnel. About 800 RPCVs attended the Advocacy Day event.

I rode with Gary Shulze in a cab to the University Club to the Sierra Leone I Reunion. They had a reception, dinner, and several toasts. I showed the videos and a slide show of photos Gary had on a disc that he gave me at the last minute. It was a very nice event. The Country Director for the Sierra Leone I program was also there. He said that that group is the only Peace Corps group to be sent overseas and have everyone complete their two-year service, with no early terminations, and no extensions. About 45 people attended.

Friday was the day for volunteer projects around the City. I chose to not participate in that activity, and accepted an invitation to attend a special event at the National Museum of the American Indian. This event included breakfast with the Museum Director, Kevin Gover, a tour of an upcoming exhibit, A Song for the Horse Nation, and a tour of the Museum's Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland, where the Museum's collections are housed.

On Friday evening, I attended the Friends of Ghana party at the Ghana Embassy. I took the Metro from my hotel to the stop near the Embassy in NW Washington, DC. We had a reception, followed by welcoming remarks from the #2 person from the Ghana Embassy and the President of the National Council of Ghanaian Associations, and by the Friends of Ghana Treasurer, Debby Prigal, who lives in Washington, DC, and organized the event. We then enjoyed Ghanaian food catered by Ghana Café, a restaurant in Washington, DC. About 145 people attended. Pictures were taken of the Ghana I group members who attended. (Please read the article about this event elsewhere in this newsletter for more details.)

On Saturday, I went to the Peace Corps Office and attended the NPCA Board Meeting, the Group Leader's Forum (representing Friends of Ghana and Central MO RPCVS), and the Annual General Meeting, Each meeting took about an hour. I will look for minutes of the meetings that were taken by NPCA staff and provide them at a later time.

In the afternoon, I attended an International Panel on Future of the Peace Corps, moderated by Bill Moyers. The event, in the National Theater, started with presentations by two groups vying for a \$25,000 grant from NPCA. One was a project in Senegal, and the other was a project in Nepal. It was decided that with more active fund raising, both projects should be funded. With Bill Moyers were Alejandro Toledo, former President of Perú, Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai of Afghanistan, and Atiku Abubakar, former Vice President of Nigeria (live by satellite feed).

On Saturday evening, I attended The Promise of the Peace Corps Gala, held at the Ronald Reagan Building, across the street from the National Theater. This event was MC'ed by Chris Matthews. Dr. Timothy Shriver, CEO of the Special Olympics, presented the Shriver

(continued on next page)





Award to Sam Goldman, founder of d.Light, and RPCV Benin 2000-2002. d.Light manufactures a solar-powered light which eliminates the need for kerosene-fueled lamps and provides a bright, white light source for evening activities and homework in remote villages around the world. The son of Atiku Abubakar attended to receive the Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award on behalf of his father. Crystal Bowersox, who appeared on American Idol, provided musical entertainment.

On Sunday morning, I visited Arlington National Cemetery to commemorate the 50 Years of the Peace Corps, held in the Memorial Amphitheater. There were speeches by Al Guskin, who was at the University of Michigan event in 1960 when John F. Kennedy challenged the crowd to serve their country in developing countries; Maeve Kennedy McKean, granddaughter of Robert F. Kennedy, and Joe Kennedy, who served in the Peace Corps in Mozambique and the Dominican Republic, respectively; Joseph N. Boakai Sr., Vice President of Liberia; former Senator Christopher Dodd; and Aaron Williams, the Peace Corps Director. Musical performances were given by the Duke Ellington School of the Arts and by Halley Shoenberg, saxophonist.

Following the ceremony, the crowd of around 3,000-4,000 made their way down the hill to the entrance to Arlington, where each country of service group lined up behind their country flags. We then marched out of Arlington, across the bridge to the Lincoln Memorial. There was a fireboat on the river with its water cannons spaying like a large fountain.

I spent the remainder of the afternoon visiting the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, the Martin Luther King Jr Memorial, and the World War II Memorial.

I have added some of my photos to the NPCA flickr page for Peace Corps 50th Celebrations September 2011 <http://www.flickr.com/groups/peacecorpsseptember2011/>. ★

50 Years of Peace Corps Celebrated in Ghana

Submitted by Craig Vickstrom

On 30 August 2011, the 50th annual swearing-in of Peace Corps Volunteers (anywhere) took place at the U.S. Ambassador's Residence in Accra. Ambassador Donald Teitlebaum hosted 69 new Peace Corps Volunteers as they were sworn in a most festive and solemn occasion. They sang and danced their way into their service. In this, they were accompanied by traditional drumming, the drums being played by their fellow volunteers. Votes of thanks were given in Twi, Ewe, Nzema, Dagbani (I believe) and Sign. The new volunteers had completed three months of training at the Peace Corps training site at Kukurantumi in the Eastern Region. They will work in sectors of education, public health, and environmental protection.

Other dignitaries present were Peace Corps Country Director Michael Koffman, Africa Regional Director Dick Day, and Ghana Minister of Foreign Affairs Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni. The Minister gave a most heart-warming speech on his personal experience with Peace Corps. As a young man going to school in Tamale, he was himself taught by Ms. Dorothy Brown, RPCV Ghana 63-65. A grand reception was held after the ceremony, in which new and old Volunteers, Peace Corps Staff, diplomats and government officials mingled and conversed. A good time was had by all.

In attendance at the swearing-in ceremony were many old boys and girls of Peace Corps Ghana. All 5 decades and all sectors were represented. The RPCV's numbered approximately 40, in addition to friends and family who accompanied them. Of particular interest was Arnold Zeitlin, a member of Ghana 1 who was able to make it back for the ceremony. Also represented was the Geology Sector, which I did not know had even existed.

The night before swearing-in, a party was held at Ryan's Irish Pub, hosted by innkeeper Ian Breen. There, current and past Volunteers socialized and drank to the satisfaction of all. The night of swearing-in, a reception was held at the home of Admin APCD Bob Gingrich for all the old PCV's who had made the journey back to Ghana. This lasted for several hours and was quite enjoyable. We thank the Gingriches and Peace Corps Ghana for their hospitality and fine party. That so many people bought airplane tickets, got visas, took vacation time, brought their children, got vaccinations and made their way back to their old country of service was truly a demonstration of their love for Ghana, and the Peace Corps that brought them there in the first place. ★

Appeal for Help from Open Learning Exchange

Submitted by Elizabeth Gartley, RPCV - Samoa (2008-2010)

I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Western Samoa from 2008 - 2010, and I'm now working with an amazing organization based in Cambridge, MA called Open Learning Exchange (www.ole.org). There is currently an OLE Site in Ghana (www.ole.org.gh), where we're working on establishing a School Basic e-Learning Library (School BeLL). I'm hoping that Peace Corps Ghana can help us procure Open Education Resources for the digital library. While I was in Samoa, many volunteers - out of necessity - created educational materials specific to Samoa. For example, I created a Dewey Decimal system in the Samoan language, other volunteers created environmental education lessons and curricula, water sanitation pamphlets, and much more.

Please feel free to distribute this message widely among current and returned Peace Corps Ghana volunteers. Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions, potential content or other suggestions.

Also, our Programs Director of OLE Ghana is Mr. Kofi Essien (tel: 0208138099 email: kofi.essien@ole.org).

Thank you and ma da se! I look forward to working with Peace Corps Ghana. ★



Appeal for Help from an Immigration Counselor

Submitted by Andrew J. Haile, RPCV – Guinea (2007-2009)

Dear Mr. Yates,

I found your contact information on the Friends of Ghana website and wanted to approach you and Friends of Ghana with an unusual request. An RPCV from Guinea, I currently work as an immigration legal advocate for asylum-seekers from countries all over the world. I am currently handling a case for a deaf woman from Ashiaman, Ghana, who arrived in the U.S. a few months ago and is fleeing severe persecution at the hands of her ex-husband and ex-husband's family. As a deaf person, it appears that she has been seriously marginalized throughout her life, both in school, work settings, and by society in general. She also happens to have been persecuted on account of her religion, as she is a Christian convert from a Muslim-background family and tribe (she's an ethnic Kusasi). As part of her case, we are looking to find a country expert or two who might be able to write a written statement testifying to country conditions in Ghana surrounding deaf people and/or Christian converts from Islam, and I was wondering if you or anyone in Friends of Ghana might have had significant experience with these issues or know somebody who does.

Generally, the Department of Homeland Security, which handles asylum claims like this one, heavily values testimony from country "experts" who can further explain the conditions in a country surrounding an issue, be it political, religious, social, etc. If, for instance, you or someone you know through the Peace Corps- Ghana network happens to have worked closely with deaf or disabled people in Ghana, I would love to be able to get in contact with them. The same goes for someone who may have worked closely with Christian converts from Muslim-background families or tribes. Getting this supplemental testimony, on top of the client's own affidavit detailing her past abuse, can be very persuasive in moving DHS to grant asylum and give the applicant a new life in the U.S.

In sum, if you or anyone you know through the PC-Ghana network could provide any guidance or assistance in locating someone who might fit the above description, would you mind putting me in touch with them?

Thank you very much for your assistance with this in advance and for entertaining my request on behalf of a truly heroic woman and an extremely compelling case.

Kind regards,

Andrew J. Haile
BIA-Accredited Immigration Counselor
Elon University School of Law
Humanitarian Immigration Clinic
P.O. Box 5848
Greensboro, NC 27435
Tel: (336) 279-9369
Fax: (336) 272-9667 ★

FOG Treasurer's Report: 1/1/11 - 9/30/11

Submitted by Debby Prigal, Treasurer

Beginning Balance on 1/1/11		\$5,200.85
INCOME		
Membership Dues and Donations	\$720.00	
50th Anniversary Dinner*	\$3,987.20	
Total Credits		\$4,707.20
OPERATING EXPENSES		
NPCA Affiliation Fee	(\$100.00)	
Website	(\$135.00)	
Anniversary Dinner*	(\$3,511.88)	
Total Expenses		(\$3,746.88)
Closing Balance as of 9/30/11		\$6,161.17

*Details on 50th Anniversary Dinner		
INCOME		
Checks	\$765.00	
Eventbrite	\$3,222.20	
Total Credits		\$3,987.20
EXPENSES		
Ghana Café	(\$3,300.00)	
Embassy Cleaning	(\$100.00)	
Supplies	(\$111.88)	
Total Expenses		(\$3,511.88)
Net Profit		\$475.32





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Message from FOG President Frank Yates

Greetings to fellow Friends of Ghana members. The 50th Anniversary activities and celebrations have come and gone.

Craig Vickstrom led the 50th Anniversary of Peace Corps activities in Accra, Ghana, around August 30, 2011. According to Craig, about 40 people went to Accra, and the Peace Corps Ghana office was overwhelmed by our showing.

Debby Prigal also worked hard to organize the reception in Washington, DC on Friday evening, September 23. About 145 people showed up at the Ghana Embassy, who so graciously hosted us. The food was catered by Ghana Café, and we enjoyed Star and Club beer from Ghana. This event was a great success. The Ghana I volunteers present told the rest of us about Bob Klein, who has the distinction of being the first Peace Corps Volunteer. As the trainees were wrapping up their time in Accra, the headmaster at his school arrived early, so Bob was sworn in and departed for his site a day ahead of the rest of the group. Bob later became Ghana Country Director, and he recently published *Being First*, an account of his Peace Corps experiences. See Spring 2011 issue of *Talking Drum* for a review of the book: http://friendsofghana.org/talking_drum/2011_spring.htm.

The Ghana RPCVs got together again at the March of Flags on Sunday, September 25, going from Arlington National Cemetery to the Lincoln Memorial. A large number of membership applications were handed out at both events in Washington, DC. Many who attended the weekend's events made a point to tell me how well we were doing in leading the Friends of Ghana and how much they enjoyed the events.

Mary Jayne Cassidy has launched the redesign of the Friends of Ghana website. The website address is the same.

The Friends of Ghana group on the Connected Peace Corps site (<http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/>) now has 105 members, up from 97 last quarter. To join the Friends of Ghana group on the Connected Peace Corps site, click on the blue link "Join Friends of Ghana" on the right side above the array of Members photos. If you haven't yet joined, you can show brief information about yourself in your profile, post text messages, photos, videos, blogs, and comments to other members. As more of our members join this site, we can provide lists by year of service to facilitate the organization of reunions.

Friends of Ghana Privacy Policy

Submitted by President Frank Yates

Anually, the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) provides Friends of Ghana (FoGh) access to the NPCA Database for the purpose of sharing the names and contact information of FoGh members. This exchange of data is essential for maintaining a complete, up-to-date database. The information shared include, but is not limited to: full name; country of service; dates of service; home mailing address; email address; phone number; and spouse/partner name. This information is not sold or transferred to any third party by FoGh and has been and will be used strictly for communication purposes with our members.

FoGh will use the shared information received from NPCA and our members for 1) Recruitment and retention of members to FoGh and NPCA; 2) Helping Ghana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to organize reunions of their Peace Corps groups; and 3) Assisting requestors to find Ghana RPCVs by sharing the requestor contact information with the Ghana RPCV (allowing the Ghana RPCV to decide whether to make contact with the requestor).

FoGh may be asked to provide the information in our database to NPCA. The use, by NPCA, of the information contained in our database will be governed by the same policy as FoGh. Members of FoGh have the opportunity to decline to have their data shared with NPCA. If you do not wish to have your data shared with NPCA, please email Ron Yamamoto at rkyamamoto@aol.com, or write Ron at 742 Arce Street, Watsonville, CA 95076 to opt out. ★

