



# Servas Monthly News 31



## February 2008

### Big fishes and small ponds

In Britain, when someone is strutting about thinking they have a lot of power because they have got to the top of a small organisation, they are referred to as 'a **big fish in a small pond**'. These people tend to think they have a lot of power and like to order people around. They are not keen to work with people but have the impression that they are the only people who can actually be in charge. The smaller their 'pond' the more important they seem to think they are. They are often ready to crowd out the small 'fishes', especially if those 'fishes' do not entirely agree with them and bow to their self considered superior opinion. As discussed with a friend the other day the 'small pond' can appear to be their entire world and they do not see it holistically as part of a much bigger world. They cannot comprehend their insignificance. So what do we do about these 'big fishes'? Do we confront them and try to make them see their real position in the world? Do we quietly back off and leave them basking in their own self assumed glory? I do not know. However recently I have been more and more aware of 'big fishes' in a range of 'small ponds' of which I am part. I have been in the position where I have had to make one of those decisions. It is difficult, especially as I prefer to be a 'background' fish, one who gets on with the job in hand without wanting power..

And so to Servas. Servas is a very 'small pond' when considered by the number of members even though it is to be found in many but by no means all countries around the world. Does Servas also have its share of 'big fishes'? If there were some, what would we do?

### AGM - Annual General Meeting

or in some countries - General Assembly.

That meeting that many dread as being a set of reports and then elections for different positions. Where nobody is willing to take responsibility unless they are looking for power.

Or it can be the meeting that is welcomed as a get together where it is possible to catch up on what is going on in the organisation and make plans for the future. Where lots of people are willing to take responsibility, not because of wanting power but because they want to develop the organisation.

Servas has its share of AGMs, India in February, Britain and Poland in March, and many more unsung that are getting on with the running in varying countries.

**WANTED/NEEDED  
AS OF GA 2009  
ONE EDITOR  
FOR  
SI NEWS  
AND SERVAS MONTHLY NEWS**

Contact  
[newsletter@servas.org](mailto:newsletter@servas.org)  
for details  
NOW

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### Contact

We welcome articles coming to SI Monthly News. We do not guarantee the article, or any part of it will be published. This depends on the theme for the month along with the number of other articles also available for publication.

Preferred method of contact is email at:  
[newsletter@servas.org](mailto:newsletter@servas.org) or [jgiffould@aol.com](mailto:jgiffould@aol.com)

Please make sure that Servas: Monthly News is part of the subject heading. Otherwise if the email address is not recognised it may get deleted before being read.

# An Invitation to a Servas Expedition

## 'Seoul to London' (the Asia-Europe Inter-Continent) Expedition

- \* *Period:* March 1, 2010 - August 31, 2010 (for 6 months)
  - \* *Route:* From Seoul through Asia and Europe to London
  - \* *Team:* 20 Servas members (10 Koreans and 10 multinationals)
  - \* *Invitation:* The international Servas members are now being invited to join this expedition.
  - \* *Contact:* Mr. Jong Soo Kim N.S. Servas Korea  
[servas@korea.com](mailto:servas@korea.com) skype: kingofasia2 Cell: 82-16-830-2623
  - \* *Means of Transport Across the Land;*
    - By four-wheel drive vehicle 8 hours a day,
    - 4 members in each vehicle
    - Each person driving 2 hours a day in turns.
- After passing over a national border, the team will be divided into small groups or individuals to be hosted by Servas members in the newly arrived country for a designated period. Members will experience the culture, return to the base camp, and share their experience with others in a debriefing session. To the debriefing session, the mass media such as local newspapers and broadcasting companies in the nation will be invited to promote our expedition and Servas. The expedition may be assisted by local branch offices of the sponsor companies. The expedition will promote the Servas spirit of peace and harmony and inspire Servas members and local citizens of the countries.
- \* *Departure Point:* Seoul, Korea
  - \* *Final Destination Point:* London, the United Kingdom
  - \* *Qualification of Participants:* Physically and mentally healthy Servas members
  - \* *Team Composition:* 20 multinational Servas members (10 Koreans and 10 others)
- Visa matter: The necessary visas must be acquired individually before departure.
- \* *Number of Teams:* 5 teams, 5 vehicles (4 people per vehicle)
  - \* *Transport Across Land:* 5 four-wheel drive vehicles or alternatively 2 vans.
    - 5 Four-wheel Drive Vehicles
- The plan is to acquire vehicles free of charge through negotiations with possible vehicle sponsors. If free acquisition of the vehicles is impossible, the expedition members will buy used vehicles and share expenses.
- \* *Expenses:* Any expenses not covered by the sponsors will be shared by the members of expedition.
  - \* *Expedition Route:* Korea - China - Silk Road - Central Asia - West Asia - Eastern Europe - Northern Europe - (Southern Europe) - Central Europe - the Great Britain
  - \* *Sponsors:*
    - Vehicle Sponsor*  
Negotiations with the Hyundai Motors, the Kia Motors, or other vehicle manufacturers for free support of 5 four-wheel drive vehicles or 2 big vans with a mechanic. If the negotiation is successful, we will be assisted by the company's overseas branch offices. In return, we will help the company in advertisement of the vehicle based on our expedition.
    - Mass-Media Sponsors*  
Reporters of the daily/weekly newspapers, magazine publishers, and/or broadcasting companies such as KBS, MBC and PSB can accompany us to record and report our expedition.
    - Other Cooperate Sponsors*  
Any other companies interested in recording our expedition to use the recording for their image and/or product promotion may become our sponsors.
    - Film Production of the Expedition for Sale*  
The expedition may be filmed by ourselves to be sold to a world-wide broadcast company such as the National Geographic or the Discovery.

\* *Specific Itinerary of the Expedition:*  
Seoul - Incheon (by car) - Chongdo (by ferry) - Kunming - Vietnam - Laos - Burma - the Silk Road  
After arriving at Chongdo, we will move to Kunming by car as soon as possible. We can spend the first 20 days of March at Kunming, the City of Flowers, to avoid the winter cold since it is still cold in northern part of China even in March. We will continue through warmer southern countries like Vietnam, Laos, and Burma. Then we'll move northwestward and join the silk road. The specifics of the rest of the itinerary will be decided later.

\* *Selection of Expedition Members:*  
In order to be evaluated whether the applicants are fit for the expedition, they will be examined and screened by designated authorities for physical and mental conditions.

### \* *Role Sharing*

1. Executive
2. Public Relations
3. Support
4. Finance
5. Immigration (Passport Control)
6. International Laws
7. Recording and Reporting
8. Filming, Photography
9. Cooking
10. Medical (a doctor)
11. Expedition Scheduling
12. Trainers (the participants' language and others)
13. Vehicle Maintenance and Operations

### \* *Training Plan:*

1. Physical Training
2. Language Training; Members should pass the English conversation test to communicate with the multinational members and others while traveling.

### \* *Recruitment Plan:*

1. Domestic: Promotion through the Servas Korea's home page.
  2. Overseas: Promotion through the home page of Servas International.
  3. Team Composition: It will be decided March, 2008, 2 years prior to the departure.
- \* *Applicants (who have already applied for the expedition):*
1. Korean: 19 so far
  2. Others: 7 so far  
Harley (Sweden), Hadashi (Japan), Fred (USA), Ramesh and two others (India), Naseem (Pakistan)

The invitation announcement will appear in the International Servas home page and its newsletters. If you are interested in joining this expedition, which will be very tough to complete, please think it over carefully before applying. Therefore, the screening process will also be a tough one. The primary exam will be done at designated medical agencies and the secondary exam at other designated examination agencies.

### \* *Members (who wish to join the Africa land cruise):*

The members who wish to join the Africa land cruise right after the dispersion in London may do so. The new team for the Africa land cruise will depart from London, pass through the back-lands of Africa, and disperse upon their arrival at Cape Town of South Africa 6 months later.

It will be a 6 month journey with a relatively low cost as the team members will cook, set up their own tents and do nearly everything by themselves while traveling. The necessary visas must be acquired individually before departure - you can get most of them in London. You must set up your own means of departure from Cape Town, and we suggest air departure from Cape Town

The Servas International has already promised to support this expedition.

## Meetings, Get together, Seeing each other

### Get together in London

The venue is **Pontefract Castle.**

This is in Wigmore Street, London W1.

The nearest Underground Station is

Bond Street.

Date: First Monday in every month.

Time: 6.30 onwards.

Look forward to seeing you all there.

### JAPAN

National meeting, end of March  
In Kyoto - the ancient capital of Japan

### FEA (Far East Asia) AREA MEETING

Hong Kong, September

### Monthly Servas Gathering in Rio

in Rio de Janeiro - RJ (Brazil) Apr 05, 2008

### 2009 - Youth in Oz

MORE INFO: [www.servasyouth.org](http://www.servasyouth.org)

CONTACT: [pablochufeni@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:pablochufeni@yahoo.com.ar)

### Germany - European meeting,

For full details of the European meeting see Servas  
Monthly News October 2007.

### International Education Centre Jugendhof Scheersberg in Quern, near Baltic Sea

4 th to 9th July 2008

[servas-summer@gmx.net](mailto:servas-summer@gmx.net)

Margret Kläser, Erika und Richard Cabassut

For further information check

[www.servas-summer.eu](http://www.servas-summer.eu)

### Join with others in Lyon, France

The venue is: Grand Café de la Soierie

This is in: 1 place des Tapis, Lyon

Date: First Thursday of the month

Time: 8 pm

### Meeting place in Paris, France

The venue is: **Le Vieux Châtelet**

This is in: 1 place du Châtelet, 75001 Paris

The nearest metro is: Châtelet

Date: Second Tuesday of month

Time: 7 pm to 9 pm

## Servas International Youth Meeting

### " Istanbul '08 "

Servas Turkey and Servas Youth are inviting you to the next International Youth Meeting event in Istanbul - Turkey. Following the Youth meetings in Patagonia'06 and Yorkshire'07, you are all welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Youth Meeting in Istanbul and the first in Asia!

- The meeting will take place on 19-26<sup>th</sup> July 2008 at the Sabanci University: [www.sabanciuniv.edu/eng](http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/eng)
- An opportunity for all young travelers and hosts (18-30) to get together and to share their Servas experiences.
- Also open to other Servas members of whatever age.
- Discounted prices available
- Please visit the web site on [www.servasturkiye.org/youth2008](http://www.servasturkiye.org/youth2008) for the details of the event.
- You can also apply online via the same page
- **Help us inviting!** Join us at Istanbul'08
- For any inquiries, please contact [youth@servasturkiye.org](mailto:youth@servasturkiye.org)

## Sentierinsieme - Pathway Together - Route de l'Amitié - Miteinander unterwegs

Servas members from the Alps area have been meeting each year at the beginning of summer for more than twenty years.

The next meeting will take place on July 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 2008 in France at Aussois, which is situated in the Maurienne Valley. It will be followed by two treks (4 days).

If you want to get an invitation in the course of next winter, please contact:

François Marseille

26, rue Pierre Curie 26000 Valence - France

Or an e-mail to [francoismarseille@free.fr](mailto:francoismarseille@free.fr)

For Information You can phone :

In German : Sabine Joertz 33 3 88 60 32 66

In Italian : Joëlle Chappuis 33 4 50 22 13 82

In French : François Marseille 33 4 75 56 13 67

In English : By email :

Myriam Michel [myriam.michel3@hotmail.fr](mailto:myriam.michel3@hotmail.fr)

### New Venezuelan National Secretary who lives in Amazonas

VICTOR MANUEL GUTIERREZ

#### SUMMARY

I knew about Servas in 1981 in USA. Since joining Servas - Venezuela in 1983 Adilia, Victor Junior, Maria and I have hosted more than 40 Servas travelers from England, Netherlands, France, Sweden, Spain, Germany, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Italy, USA and Canada; we learned a lot about culture, history, cooking and people of this countries. We have made many friends.

Adilia and I have also been Servas travelers, just one time, it was during August and September of 1998, when we visited Portugal, Spain, France, England, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Germany and Netherlands. This was a marvelous experience, we stayed in 8 Servas homes and with 2 day hosts, Servas people were so wonderful to us. Being our first experience as Servas travelers, it was a perfect start to this world of traveling and meeting people, our hosts gave to us the feeling of being a real part of the Servas world, it was more than we expected.

Being host and travelers gave us a complete perception of the Servas organization. Most of the countries we visited in Europe have a superb Servas system, well organized, the host families are conscious of their role, they opened completely the door of their homes, we felt like as if we stayed in our home

On the other hand I lived 11 years outside my country as a student, 7 years in Brazil and 4 years in USA. Then I also speak Portuguese and English. In USA I got my M Sc degree in Agricultural Economics at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

My professional career has been in the Venezuelan government doing agricultural planning, agricultural and agrarian development, environmental planning, management of agricultural development and environmental projects; international affairs Colombian – Venezuelan. Fortunately, I was Commissioner of the Presidency of Venezuela for the Colombian – Venezuelan international affairs and at the senior level with some Venezuelan institutions, including as General Director of the Ministry of Agriculture, Director of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, National Co director of environmental project financed by the Venezuelan Government and the European Union.

This year, by June Adilia and I are scheduled to visit our daughter Maria who lives in Oslo, she married a young Norwegian man. We plan to take advantage of our three months stay in Europe and visit some countries as Servas travelers and visit our friends we have made during more than 20 years with Servas.

I was born in the Amazons State of Venezuela in 1949.

*Victor Manuel Gutierrez  
Puerto Ayacucho, Venezuela , February 10, 2008*

### New travellers - first Servas trip, USA, New Zealand

Our first ever experience of Servas proved even more exciting and enjoyable than anticipated! Hosts offered such a variety of interests and areas of expertise to share with us – art ,music, photography, the natural world, local history, politics plus general worldly wisdom and knowledge (or not!!)

Staying in such diverse households allowed us to attend a Hannukah party, walk the host's dog, bird watch with naturalists, meet various pets, family members and employees, sleep amidst the debris on a tiny office floor – and more – all proving rich experiences and a wonderful way to learn about other countries in all their diversity.

On odd occasions though, when a host seemed excessively busy or preoccupied –(perhaps with circumstances having changed since joining Servas) – we did wonder why some hosts had invited us to stay when they might have declined. Nevertheless, there wasn't a single unpleasant or unwelcoming experience.

Many thanks indeed to the fantastic Servas network.

*by Eileen and Ian Gray, Doncaster, England*

### Servas India Annual Meeting

Its with tremendous pleasure that I hereby inform you about the succesful completion and further ensuing of a new year of Servas-India International.

The meeting took place at Mitra Niketan-Kerala from 9th Feb' 2008 to 11th Feb' 2008. Almost 80 existing Servas-India host and some 10 new hosts were registered in the event. The overwhelming participation of the members and hosts made the event joyous. Several new chapters of interest and togetherness were initiated in the meet.

The day one 9th Feb' 2008- began with the inaugural and registration session, the progress report of the last three years with relevant discussions. The major presentations were made by Dr. Ramesh Sharma, National Secretary-Servas-India and the respective State Coordinators.

The second day began with the declaration of the Servas-India Executive Board for 2008-2009 and nominations and election process for the new posts of National Secretary, Deputy National Secretary, Peace Secretary, Cultural Secretary, Host Coordinator, Newsletter Editor and Treasurer. The election process was coordinated by Dr. Bina Sengar as Chief Election Officer:

After the harmonious accomplishment of the election process; initiations for the Servas-India Youth Chapter were made. The regional youth coordinators and an advisory panel were coordinated.

The conference finished with the spiritual chantings and national anthem of India.

The detailed report for the same will be uploaded soon on the Servas-India website,

with love, peace and friendship, Servas-India

*Dr. Bina Sengar, Servas-India International*

## Countries - Belgium, Sierra Leone

### Goodbye Belgium...

Hello dear Servas Friends,

I am sad to say goodbye to Europe, and especially to Belgium. There is so much I will sorrily miss.

Today it is cold, gray and tossing down buckets of rain. August, but summer has yet to arrive. New Zealand is known as the land of the long white cloud. Some similar if slightly grimmer monnicher should be coined for la Belgique. Land of the low grey sky?

Belgium's musical troubadour, Jacques Brel, voiced such thoughts in his evocative song "Le Plat Pays". In rough translation: "...with a sky so low that a canal disappears; with a sky so low it must be forgiven; with a sky so gray that it provokes humility; this flat country of mine....."

In an intrepid gesture of faith and good will, I launched out on a week-long farewell cycle tour of southern Belgium and northern France. It rained. In fact, it poured. There were floods in Switzerland, Italy and closer to home. The tent never got dry...

No, the weather I will not miss. But the flat country is only flat in the north. The south, with its hills and valley, cliffs and gorges, chateaus and fortified farms....with its patchwork countryside and the single-lane roads that wind their way up and around and down again.....will be enshrined in my memory to be savoured from afar. As in recent years, I have savoured images of Ottawa's Gatineau Park under a blanket of fresh snow.

I will miss the Grand Place, the chocolate, the cobblestones, the architecture, the seriousness with which Belgium embraces food, the babel of languages in the streets, the canals, being in the heart of Europe, the chocolate, the museums, dinners with friends where three or four languages ebb and flow around the table, the waffles, the human scale of the city and the countryside, the chateaus... did I mention the chocolate?

All this, of course, pales next to the people I have come to know. In Belgium, and elsewhere in Europe. Six years is a piece of a life. A part of me stays rooted here. It is another place I will never really leave, but will orbit from a variable distance.

I never realized, when I started wandering, that one could become homesick for so many difference places. That little pieces of the soul root themselves so deeply that when you try to move on, they break off and stay behind. While kissing the ground is not a very western habit, I relate to the idea. One stoops low to reclaim that little piece of self that has been waiting, buried, in the earth you once called home.

Voila, Canada awaits. On the work front, there will be new challenges. I'll be working with the Dept of Foreign Affairs in Ottawa starting in September, as Director of a Division that does something related to investment.....

I hope this email finds you well. And I await your visit to Canada. I have the SERVAS host list for Canada in hand, and will be in that book next year.

Thinking of you all.....cheers, Paola

*Note: All the best Paola in your home country, Servas Belgium will miss you...Rita*

### Invitation to Visit Servas Sierra Leone

Dear Servas Travellers,

Servas Sierra Leone is currently exploring the possibility to receive and host Servas Travellers from all over the world. Many of our hosts are working in community-based projects and a variety of volunteer programs. These projects enable travellers to see and gain a basic understanding of how successful groups, projects and communities can work. Through the medium of international Servas visits, travellers can learn from local examples of successful leadership and development.

Opportunities for placement in residential voluntary service projects, occasionally with host families are available on request.

Projects include working with NGO's at day care centers; help to strengthen rural women's self-help groups; community agricultural projects; projects in communities providing leadership and skills training in nutrition/education, literacy and basic education; small business initiatives and small-scale agricultural, income generating schemes; empowering women and girls through income generating opportunities.

Our hosts will also arrange visits to schools; medical centers; health education projects; etc. Many of our hosts are experienced in community development work, health promotion, micro-enterprise development work in dynamic projects carried out by teams of volunteers.

Other activities will include visits to surrounding villages, a trip to Kenema and Tongo field (diamond rich towns), cultural presentations and indoor and outdoor games, etc.

For further information contact:

*Shed Jah, National Secretary. Servas Sierra Leone*

### About Servas Sierra Leone:

Sierra Leone is a beautiful, small country on the West Coast of Africa. Nature is varied, has the most beautiful beaches, which one can introduce oneself. The people are thoroughly cordial, hospitable and helpful. But after ten years the stopped civil war did not leave these people without a trace. The wounds are deep, painful and for visitors inconceivable. A small country, with over seven different languages and ethnic groups, strives to survive.

Top Things to see:

Beaches, old colonial Krio houses, various birds, varied nature....

Bunce Island, established as a major slave trading fortress in 1670, is located about twenty miles upriver in the Freetown Harbour on the Sierra Leone river. Bunce Island is a small piece of land measuring just 1700 feet long and 300 feet wide. Built in the 17th century, Bunce Island's old structures capture the past in the present. Walk along the old fort wall or through the slave quarters. Canoes from a variety of ages still grace the walls.

*More next month.*

## Travel Reports - Congo Brazzaville to Zambia

### The Africa meeting - Congo Brazzaville

With the name of all Servas Congo Brazzaville members I would like to say thank you to Servas Belgium and Luxembourg members for their kindness and support towards my trip to attend, as Congo Brazzaville delegate, from 6th to 10th December 2007, the Servas Africa Area Meeting in Livingstone, Zambia.

The meeting was interesting, with a wonderful exchange of experiences. We discussed many subjects and had times for games and fun activities. It was a pleasure for me spending time with different people and culture backgrounds, also exploring new different ways of the functioning of a Servas group from other Servas group delegates who came to participate.

I started my trip by plane departing from Kinshasa in D.R.C to Lusaka via Harare in Zimbabwe. From Lusaka I took a bus for Livingstone where the meeting was held. Before leaving Kinshasa Airport I had some harassment with the immigration agents who demanded I pay them some tax for a complicated reason I did not understand, but I was obliged to pay. So I had spent more money than my provision so when I arrived in Lusaka I had not enough money to cover my transport to Livingstone

Here I need to thank the co-National Secretary of Servas Zambia Mr Mateke whom I called from the Lusaka airport about the situation. He helped me and negotiated, on the phone, with a kind taxi driver who accepted driving me from Lusaka airport to the bus station in the town. Mr Mateke promised to transfer the money to him the next day. I left Lusaka at the evening and I arrived the same night in Livingstone. Mr Mateke was again there to pick up me at the Livingstone bus station to his home where I was hosted during the meeting.

I had come two days after the beginning of the meeting so my first day into the meeting started exceptionally with learning each others names. After I had words to present my country's annual report and respond to some questions from some delegates about the functioning of our group and our Country. After we discussed about national meetings processes and expectations, difficulties and realities, Servas history, background, communication issues....

After lunch we went to excursion to Victoria Falls and Mushi-o-Tunya Game Park, It was very amazing for my first time to see the Victoria Falls and in the park the white Rhino. Returning from excursion, as a National Secretary, I participated in the election of the new Area Coordination Committee. After the election all the delegates joined us to watch the EGA Latina video.

Next day the morning was free time for church or sight seeing. I used it to visit a farm and the Livingstone Museum and Maramba market. In afternoon was the time for the meeting. We discussed about the finances expectation and realities, planning for the next meeting, evaluation of the meeting and we made group photo, farewell closing session, vote and thanks.

Next day Monday 10th December was the end of programme and delegates departed. For the reason of my flight programme I stayed ten days again in Zambia. I spent 7 days in Livingstone and 3 days in Lusaka. I'm very grateful to all my hosts, after the meeting in Livingstone, to VIMBI and CLARE and all their three children for the wonderful time we spent and in Lusaka to AGGREY and his wife and all their children.

The AMM was an occasion for me to learn more about Servas: The Servas International Committee people; The role and importance of the Area coordination committee; I experienced one of the goals of Servas "Friendship" that was reigning during the meeting; some Servas events and cycles significant to Servas. I also learned about, for example, the Letter of Introduction given to travellers; the General Assembly meeting; Servas communication through The Servas International News where articles could be published about each national group; and so on.

As a national Secretary the AMM was of value, necessary and of great benefit to me and our group because it allowed me to meet other Servas groups and to learn from them some ways of working— for example: some important elements to put on the Host Lists: The country history's, geography and the currency, how to produce a Letter of Introduction and what to put inside and how to use it, [here I would like to thank SHELDON for he produced for me my very first Letter of Introduction which was used me as model for the other members in the country].

It should be noted that one of the objective of this meeting was: to strengthen and to further Servas and guide its growth; as a new group our representation by me was necessary within the framework of discussion amongst other things and the light shown on the role of each officer in a group that allows the effectiveness to work things that we need to instigate in the group. The AMM was also an occasion to present our group and our different projects and explain the difficulties we have through our annual report.

I think the cost to Servas were not high because of the lack of direct flight to Zambia from my country.

I found the meeting and my staying after the meeting a very wonderful experience.

Thanks to the organisers, all the delegates and especially to VIMBI and CLARE, and Mr AGGREY.



ONDON, Titan  
Serge,  
National Secretary,  
Delegate of Servas  
Congo Brazzaville

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February 2008

## Travellers' tales

I was given a whole pile of travel reports from last year. Not everybody is willing to have their reports shared in a newsletter. Here are some from those who are willing to share.

### 'Shit shovelling' etc .....

Wonderful contact with Servas couple in Proctor, BC (Canada). Was asked to help out 'shit shovelling' on first day. Soaked in en-caved hot springs on second day. Served as removals 'labourer' for sofa/suite on third day. Left as bosom friends on fourth day.

In the States revisited Servas contact from 5 years ago, at which time L had just met new boyfriend. Upon return this time discovered she is marrying him. Great example of Servas contact becoming a good friend.

*C G Allen, England*

### Bad luck ...

I guess I had bad luck - I didn't manage to stay with a single host through Servas. Altogether I contacted about 15 hosts and only about half of them replied, and the answer was 'no' in every case.

*R Martin, England*

### U.S. Trip 2007 - many hosts

In the three months from March to June we visited ten States in the western U.S. and covered 8 700 miles in our hired Ford Focus. During that time we divided our stays between old friends, motels and new friends in Servas. In the case of the latter we stayed with twenty different hosts from widely different economic backgrounds. Not one of them was unpleasant or boring. All added immeasurably to the success of our journey.

We emailed ahead in the case of the first three Servas hosts. After that we telephoned a few days ahead. There were, of course, occasions when we could not make contact or they were about to leave town, but in most cases they were able to accommodate us. The great range of their ages, professions and interest was another bonus. We stayed with teachers, nurses, accountants, architects, lawyers, an organic market gardener, an apalca farmer and a retired oyster farmer, to name only some.

In the case of younger hosts who were both working or had children, we would go touring on our own for the day, then meet up for socialising in the evening. Some of the older ones were pleased to join us during the day. We made a point of always inviting our hosts out for at least one meal, which was usually accepted. We always sent them a postcard soon after leaving them and, since our return, are keeping in touch with them by email.

There is no doubt that Servas offers a huge potential for a widening ripple of better understanding. It has certainly increase our knowledge (and given us cause for greater optimism) with regard to preset-day America. The only drawback seems that it appears to be little known, and we hope to contribute to its further promotion either by talks to local groups of writing in club or more general publications.

*G & S Spenceley, England*

### 'People collection' in India

I paid my third day-visit to Mr P in Mumbai. He used to be co-ordinator. At that time he invited me to stay, among his frequent guests, but I was already with friends (who took me down to visit him.) He is now very frail but he welcomed me warmly. I love to see how Indians "collect" people - all my friends, who came to me by different routes, know one another now and ask after each other from me, then facilitate my next journey and usually meet my next host. Indian generosity puts us to shame - Servas comes naturally to them I feel.

Secondly, I paid my second visit to three sisters in Mumbai. Each of the sisters went out of her way to spend time with me. The second visit was even better than the first (five years ago). I felt they were specially pleased that I contacted them again rather than seek "new" Servas friends. Also this supplied three more for my previous hosts to add to their "People collection"

I made no further Servas contacts on this trip as the time was already filled. Next time perhaps - to add to my own People collection.

*V Culverwell, England*

### A wonderful Servas experience

#### **Brittany, France**

Our first hostess was a 'dynamic grandma' and saved us from potential disaster when our car broke and needed 10 days to repair. We spent a wonderful week with her in our own self-contained flat.

#### **La Rochelle, France**

Our second hosts were wonderful - wined and dined us and lent us bicycles.

#### **Vallodolid, Spain**

Our third hosts - 2 lovely men. We were given the door key within ½ hr of arriving and such wonderful hospitality.

#### **Placencia, Spain**

Our fourth and final hosts took us on a tour of all their favourite tapas bars and to a barbeque at a friend's "finca" to see his arab horses.

The whole Servas experience was wonderful.

*P Brockhurst, England*

### Another Spanish experience

We stayed with 3 Servas hosts in Valencia, Solsona and Sant Hilari Sacalm. Each host was enormously hospitable. We were given a lot of help by phone en email before arrival, a generous welcome and most comfortable accommodation. In a short time we learnt a tremendous amount about Spanish and Catalonian culture, society and politics. In taking local trips we much benefited from our hosts' local knowledge. It was our first experience as travellers and we are encouraged to do it again.

*J Charlton, England*

### US Servas Begins Electronic Modernization Effort

US Servas Inc has been discussing and planning changes in our internal and external data handling and online access for over a year and now the first fruits of the effort are appearing. John Gunther, long time owner of Bucks vs Bytes Inc, a New York computer consulting firm, and veteran Servas host and traveler, first proposed a major overhaul of US Servas' use of databases and the internet at the October 2006 national meeting. There was general agreement that the existing paper systems were much too costly and inflexible but many board members were also fearful of losing the "personal touch" through increased automation. There was also fear that changes would alienate older members who might not be comfortable with computer technology. Finally, the board also felt it was important to cooperate with other national Servas groups as much as possible in developing a modern, efficient system.

A proposed philosophy and goals statement dubbed AtYourServas was drawn up and circulated for comment (<http://usservas.org/atyourservas/>). Meanwhile, John started talking to the Dolphin team in the hope that the US and SI efforts could be harmonized. John became a US Servas board member in July 2007 and soon realized that the long term goals needed time to mature and gather broad support. Simultaneously, he also came to realize that the existing paper US host and traveler system was so resource, labor, and money intensive that emergency measures were needed. The board named John as US Servas' first Chief Information Officer and he set out to create interim solutions for some of the most pressing problems.

The first task was to merge the WHALE host data with the separate local traveler and key person databases. This was done by moving everything into a new database on one of the Bucks vs Bytes servers to attain local control of the data structure. To correct some of the many errors introduced over the years by manual data transcription, a bulk email capability was developed whose first task was to email everyone in the files and ask them to update their contact information online. The response was very gratifying and US Servas can now reach its membership much more accurately and economically. Over 1400 invalid email addresses were purged by automatically processing email "bounce" responses. Members are now able to specify how they wish to be contacted and the overwhelming majority choose email.

The next improvement was the creation of an online form for host renewal and enrollment. By letting hosts enter and update their own information directly into the database, accuracy will be massively improved. By collecting our own data we also have the opportunity to make some small but significant changes to the 2008 host list. One of these is to allow hosts with privacy concerns to suppress their street address from the printed list. Some US members see privacy protection as

inconsistent with the Servas concept and this small, initial measure will be evaluated through 2008 to gauge its positive and negative effects.

Every electronic form has a place for member comments and a side effect of their use is that we're receiving far more feedback than ever before. We're putting a system in place to respond quickly to such comments and we hope to expand this into a 24 hour host and traveler help line.

Rather than proceed immediately with the master plan, more interim measures are in the works: direct traveler data entry, online visit reports, targeted bulk member communications, and electronic versions of the host list. Experience with these will be reflected in the long term plan. We still hope to integrate our efforts with Dolphin but we can best contribute to it by first truly understanding our own needs and trial solutions.

Of course, the gorilla in the room is online-searchable host lists. This has never been approved by SI and the US board has not made a commitment to it. Everything we're doing, short and long term, supports this, awaiting the day when there's broad agreement that it's a desirable, even vital, feature.

John and the board of US Servas welcomes comment and criticism of the "AtYourServas" concepts. Feel free to email him at [servas@bucksvsbytes.com](mailto:servas@bucksvsbytes.com).

*John Gunther, U.S.A.*

### A Peace Plea

If we have a strong Peace Network we could organize a better, forum for the well being of the human world.

As men has already started disturbing nature, nature has already started taking revenge from the animal kingdom by way of floods, wild fire, earth quakes, land slides, volcano eruptions, typhoons etc. You hear these things very often. Also millions of people are affected by these dangers "Green Peace" Organization is world famous for its work against those who violate laws of environment. But as an organization that moves towards strengthening peace where are we? Servas may already be implementing their own peace work. But these are not exposed to the others. There should be some pool to know what we do and their needs. Thus let us join hand to promote Peace and let us begin some where as the seed of Peace.

In Peace

*Nandee., N. Amarasinghe,  
Peace Secretary, Servas International.*

## Servas UN appointments

It is time to renew Servas appointments to the UN; indeed we are a little overdue.

Normally the SI Peace Secretary recommends these appointments to the UN, Nandee asked me to assist.

Servas has access to two UN channels: information, through the Department of Public Information; and participation in peace building through Servas's accreditation in the Economic Social and Cultural Committee (ECOSOC).

The purposes of the Servas Observer positions are to observe the UN and give out information to Servas on what can be done to support peace building and justice initiatives -- and also to collect information from Servas and related groups in the form of advice to the UN through committees, etc.

We can renew or add to the appointments to the Economic Commissions and the UN at New York, Vienna and Geneva and elsewhere (there are UN stations all over the world).

Please let me know: Can you think of good persons who would like to do this, someone "youthful in spirit", and keen on international peace? it would be a bonus if they already know something about the UN or are already a member of a group like the United Nations Association.

Our priority areas, where we need help are in the following cities:

New York 1-2 people  
Geneva 1-3 people  
Austria 1 person  
Paris (Unesco) 1 person

Other areas (UN Regional Commissions) Your thoughts of good people for these following areas are very welcome (one person each):  
Addis Ababa, Santiago, Beirut, Bangkok

Servas wants to become much more active in working with CONGO (Council of non-government organizations consulting with the UN) and also with WUFUNA (world federation of UN associations), to help our national peace secretaries and UN observers prepare in their UN liaison and Servas briefing duties. These groups are headquartered in NYC and Geneva.

No SI funds are available for travel; no registration or other fees are required as Servas is already registered with the UN and CONGO.

Some Servas UN work can be done on-line and locally, in meetings with other accredited groups, especially those in national capitals and major centres. By getting involved you can meet many other good people, working the Millennium Development Goals against hunger and poverty and homelessness and in favour of women, children, and natural environment, etc.

Gary Sealey

## Peace and Social Justice

The US Servas Peace and Social Justice Secretary is appointed by the US Servas Board to "promote peace, the unity of humankind, and mutual understanding of the cultures, outlooks and problems of the people of the world" (Article II of US Servas Bylaws.) To do this, I, as the Peace and Social Justice Secretary, am to arrange representation of US Servas at peace and social justice conferences and encourage peace and social justice functions of US Servas.

For the last 4 years, US Servas staff an information booth at the all day University of California International House Festival of Cultures. There are about 80 booths, 25 Consulates, and a broad spectrum of international organizations. Since the day of the Festival is always on when UC Berkeley campus opens its academic departments and facilities to visitors over 3000 visitors attend. Being at the festival is an opportunity to visit different booths, talk to foreign students, representatives from consulates and other organizations about Servas. The Servas Business Cards, available from the office, are our best item about Servas and they accept these business cards eagerly. The two interviewers in Berkeley interviewed 26 travelers last year.

San Francisco hosts monthly Servas gatherings with attendance about 30 each month (age range 15 to 70) Members hand out Servas business cards to travellers and individuals interested in meeting foreign visitors. We ask them if they would like to attend a Servas Meeting and see the type of people interested in strengthening "... mutual understanding of the cultures, outlooks and problems of the people of the world ..." Those interested are invited to Servas Gatherings via a Yahoo invitation list. Some monthly events feature a country such as India, Brazil or Italy, its food and comments from hosts and travelers to those countries, programs such as the State Department International Visitors program, Servas members report on volunteer opportunities in the Peace Corps and in short term volunteer projects, discussion of where are the best places to take visitors, "show and tell" travel tips, photograph of a Servas experience that had great significance to me. About 20% - 35% of the Servas Meeting participants are not Servas Members. It is wonderful that members bring their Servas guests, their out-of-town visitors, and their friends and colleagues., As a result of regular friendly welcoming meetings in San Francisco and in Palo Alto (home of Stanford U) , 6 interviewers interviewed 55 travelers last year.

Ask yourself are you a peace builder? If you volunteer to help others, to make life better and more just for others, your are a peace builder. Consider having a meal with like minded people and do something together that will "promote peace, the unity of humankind, and mutual understanding of the cultures, outlooks and problems of the people of the world" Do something to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Servas. Write an article for the Servas Newsletter.

Please contact me if you would like to volunteer for special Servas Events/Projects.

Mary Jane Mikuriya [mikuriya@aol.com](mailto:mikuriya@aol.com)

## Youth - Pablo Servas Youth Action part 2

- **International Youth Meeting “Yorkshire’07”**



- **Ann Greenhough** and **Servas Britain** have done a wonderful job working on this event. THANKS!!!
- **120 persons** of all ages. 40 between **18 and 30**.
- Every region of the world was there, **27 nationalities!!!**
- See some picture on [www.servas.be](http://www.servas.be), and on <http://picasaweb.google.com/ServasPolska/Yorkshire07>
- The **“Youth Travel Award”** made it possible for Moses (Uganda), Rodolfo (Mexico), Magi (Venezuela) and Semmy (Turkey) attend to the meeting. Thanks **Dianne** and **DFC**.
- Workshops on fair trade, responsible tourism, Servas topics, outdoors activities, music, caving, trekking, dancing, etc,...
- For more info see the Monthly News of

July/Aug'07: <http://www.servas.org/siexco/images/4/4b/SIMonthly07JulyAugust.pdf> ,

Sept '07: <http://www.servas.org/siexco/images/d/dd/SIMonthly07september.pdf>

- **International Youth meeting “ISTANBUL’08”**

- **July 18<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> 2008**, in **Istanbul**, at the **Sabancı University** <http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/eng/>
- Special **prices for young members**. Every one is invited, every one can be young. It's up to you!
- Please see the complete **information sheet** on <http://www.servasturkiye.org> and send it to all (ALL) the Servas people you know. We need you.
- Send your application form through the Turkish site.
- The third International Youth Meeting, **you need to be there!!!** The local team is doing a great job with this event
- **Help us inviting**. Join us at Istanbul'08.

