



SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Number 48

2006

Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.

Working together
works.

Teams share the burden and divide
the grief.

TEAM = Together
Everyone
Achieves More

TEAMWORK

w.w.w.servas.org

A group becomes a
team when each
member is sure
enough of himself
and his contribution
to praise the skills
of the others.

Teamwork: is less
me and more we

A team is more than
a collection of
people. It is a
process of give and
take.

It is amazing what
can be
accomplished when
nobody cares about
who gets the credit.

The strength of the team
is each individual
member...the strength of
each member is the

Teamwork

What an eventful year, both in Servas and globally. Servas has been involved in some of the global events such as: Servas India helped people affected by the December 2004 Tsunami (Servas Monthly News, August), Servas Pakistan helped those affected by the Kashmiri earthquake (p6) and Servas USA members helped those affected by the Hurricane Katrina (p13). In these events individuals worked together in teams to provide greater results than the same number of people working individually.

Servas has had its own events requiring team work. Over the year Exco have been working on the Extra-ordinary General Assembly to be held in Italy in April (p17). In South America Pablo has brought together a team to produce a Youth Event in Patagonia (p14). Meetings have been taking place in most countries. Some of these have had an international flavour, such as in Germany and the Asia meeting (p16). Askov in Denmark hosted a meeting of those concerned with conflicts and looked at ways of conflict resolution (p16), What was learned here will be shared with all in Italy. All these meetings required team work in order to progress constructively.

Discussing themes with my Year 8 (12, 13 year old) students also brought out the concept of team work. They looked at teams playing in local, national and international sports events and commented on the need for the teams to work together. They suggested team work as a suitable design for Servas. They are right. Servas, as local, national, and continental groups and as the whole international being needs to work together as a team. A team where differences are discussed and outcomes agreed on. To be peace makers we have to show good team work to lead others. This can happen everywhere.

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Websites, Web members and Servas Monthly News

For those with access to the internet there is plenty of opportunity to find out what is happening in Servas. The initial Servas website: www.servas.org has links with other useful sites. One of these is www.siexco.org.

SIEXCO is Servas International EXecutive COmmittee. This site contains plenty of information about what is going on at the top and includes such events as the EGA (p17). Another very useful part is the Servas Monthly News which contains details sent in from around the world as to what is going on. Several countries send in their newsletters so that we can keep updated about what they area doing. The most recent is that covering South America. If you want to take part in discussions then use the link to the Forum. Let your views be known and share ideas with other people.

Some countries such as Denmark are setting up web membership so that people can receive mailings via the web rather than postage. This is in common with many other organisations. It allows fast contact and cuts down the cost and time of postage.

Your contributions to SI News

SI News is produced by the articles that you send in. Some of the articles are taken from the Newsletters of various countries, some are taken from former issues of Servas Monthly News. Not all articles can be used for a variety of reasons. If you sent an article and it is not in this publication, it might be in one of the Servas Monthly News on www.siexco.org

SERVAS NEEDS MORE VOLUNTEER WORK IN SOUTH AMERICA

Many South American countries would benefit a lot if they could count on more hours of volunteer work. There are several projects that could be activated in South America, that would strengthen Servas in that continent.

Roberto Borenstein, Area Coordinator for South America, has thought of several work possibilities and he is looking for volunteers to work with him, even they live in a different continent.

If you feel motivated to help in the development of Servas in South America, please write to southamerica@Servas.org

This invitation is open to any individual or National Group interested in contributing to a faster development of Servas in South America.

Some of our inspirers

Joseph GIRARD,

founder of Servas-France,

died October 31st 2005. He was 87.

(FOTO removed)

Joseph was a modest man. He has been working in a tailors for 42 years in a small town. He was deported because he had refused the compulsory work in Germany during the war. He liked trees and photographs, but most of all he loved people and that's why we have come to salute and thank him.

Joseph, Thank you for creating in France, just after the war the movement Servas whose aim is to build peace through people to people meetings within an international network of hosts and travellers. At first you wrote the list by hand under the suspicious eyes or the authorities of the time. A list of people? What for? You thought, as we still think today, that meeting and sharing daily life with other people could create solid links and become steps towards peace.

Thanks to your initiative the movement has developed and it is on behalf of 1300 members that we are with you today. We'll always keep you in our hearts.

Jacqueline Spaak French national secretary

Reverend Denys Whitehead

(the complete article is in Servas Monthly News, June, www.sixco.org)

(FOTO removed)

Reverend Denys Whitehead passed away at the age of 82, after a long and active life as a priest of the Anglican Church, first in England and from 1960 in Zambia.. He retired in 1989 after 10 years as priest in Livingstone, and settled in the same town. Denys was born and raised in UK. In the 50ties he hitchhiked around in Europe, before he emigrated, travelling overland to Zambia.

September 8th. 1984 at 7,45 a.m., I rang on their doorbell as their first Servas visitor. I came without any prior notice. Despite coming unexpectedly I was invited to stay - as so many before and after me. Denys's and Margaret's involvement in all sorts of local activities, their hospitality and compassion for their fellow man and fellow woman reflected the core of Christianity - love.

In 1993 they found themselves the only Servas Hosts left in Zambia, so they became National Secretary and recruited lots more Hosts. In 2000 Denys retired as National Secretary. But in 2003 Servas International asked him to take up the post as Anglophone Africa Co-ordinator. Denys and Margaret attended the Servas General Assembly in Barcelona in 2004.

Towards the end of his life Denys suffered from a severe hearing loss, and had problems with his heart and with walking. But his eyesight and his intellectual capacities remained fit to the end of his life. Denys is dead now, and we have lost a fiery soul. But surely Margaret will carry on their work for the community and Denys' spirit.

Steen Carlsen, Denmark

Peter Benenson,

Peter, dear friend

(the complete article is in Servas Monthly News, June, www.sixco.org)

Friday Feb 25, in the night, a dear friend, Peter Benenson, an English barrister whose outrage over the imprisonment of two students prompted him to found the human rights organization Amnesty International 43 years ago, died of pneumonia in Oxford. He was 83.

Peter Benenson was not only the known founder of Amnesty International, but a great friend of Servas too. He discovered our association in Italy, where he frequently came. He was several times our guest in our home in Novara, a city not far from his beloved little lake, where Peter rented for many years a little apartment.

Peter Benenson became Servas host too in his country house near London and he participated in the Servas International Conference in Rome in May 1986.

In the 1950s, his human rights activism included efforts in fascist Spain, British-ruled Cyprus, communist Hungary and in South Africa. The one-year Appeal for Amnesty was launched on 28 May 1961, in an article called The Forgotten Prisoners in a British newspaper.

"Once the concentration camps and the hellholes of the world were in darkness," Benenson said. "Now they are lit by the light of the Amnesty candle; the candle in barbed wire. When I first lit the Amnesty candle, I had in mind the old Chinese proverb: 'Better light a candle than curse the darkness.'"

He wrote us his last Christmas Card two months ago: it will be his last dear memory. We thank Peter for all. He was really a great friend and we never will forget his smile, his voice, his availability, his intelligent simplicity, his warm humanity, his prophetic intuition, his great imagination.

Luigi Uslenghi, Servas Italy uslenghi@fauser.it

Remembering late Andre Dalcourt

(FOTO removed)

I hosted in Delhi late Andre & his wife Louise Blanchard(Canadian journalists) as Servas travellers in 1997. They were travelling around the world for a year. Ever since we became lifelong friends. Andre wrote a book on women in Politics by interviewing important women personalities like Benazir Bhutto, Aung Saung Suu Ky, Corazon Aquino, Phoolan Devi(The Bandit Queen from India). He also authored some other books.

Louise tells me that Andre was really a Servas member at heart. Often he told her that one day he would work actively for the association as he was deeply convinced that exchanges of ideas by travelling and meeting people of other countries and cultures are the path for evolution and peace. Even as a special advisor on international affairs to various delegations at the end of his life he worked with same frame of mind. Unfortunately, he did not live long enough to fulfil his dream to get involved deeply in Servas.

He was very informal, affectionate & kind as can be seen from his stamp. It was an exception that his picture taken in Goa without a shirt was allowed to be printed on the stamp.

Gurdev Singh, India

Country Reports - Africa

MALAWI

Wow have we had a busy year down here in Malawi – the slither of a country next to Zimbabwe – some of us have had babies, others managed to bake a cake without burning it and all while increasing our host member numbers! We now have 21 hosts, we had 7 incoming travelers and 3 outgoing, 3 newsletters, 2 national meetings, 2 social events and we managed to sneak in the painting of an orphan day care centre!

Within Malawi the highlight was a visit by two travelers from the island of Reunion who told us they heard all about our group from the SI No46 news! They arrived to take a tour of Malawi, join in a national meeting and made wonderful hot wine, which loosened our joints and made dancing at the end of the meeting quite easy! They flew up and hiked down Mulanje mountain with the national secretary's newborn baby in tow – *best to start them young* is our motto in Servas Malawi! The national secretary visited neighboring Kenya and after contacting all 1998 hosts to establish if any were still interested, managed to hash together a new host list and encourage 'Charles' to become the new Kenya National secretary.

One of our '2' outgoing travelers aged 50 managed to make it to Edmonton-Canada and the World Masters Games, winning a Gold in the Team squash event for Malawi. The other, a 19 year old stayed with English hosts and is planning to visit Servas in America – it's a shame he can't get hold of our new recycled-home-made-paper 'Servas Visitors' book but he will be wearing our country T-shirt and badge! If anyone else would like one please do contact us about them on: benlewis@africa-online.net.

Demelza Benbow
Deputy Southern Africa Area & Anglophone Co-ordinator

From the Area Coordinator for Anglophone Africa:

1. A group of people in Sierra Leone would like to revive Servas there. Gambia is active but so far Ghana and Nigeria are silent.

2. We are not sure what has happened to Servas in Kenya. The lists for there and Tanzania are many years old.

Servas is alive in Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana and South Africa.

Travellers with old lists with phone numbers — we would appreciate it greatly if you could contact a number of the people on them and let us know what is happening in dormant Servas countries.

So any assistance you can give would be appreciated.

If anyone is travelling south from Kenya?

There are now buses between East Africa and Gaborone and trains go from Dar es Salaam to Lusaka.

Servas is now strongest in Malawi and Servas travellers are welcome there.

In peace, Sheldon Weeks, Botswana

BOTSWANA

Servas Botswana—First National Workshop 11-13 February 2005, Serowe, Khama Rhino Sanctuary

The 1st Servas Botswana National Workshop was held at a place in Central Botswana with the objective of making it accessible in half-a-day's drive to people in northern and western Botswana. As a consequence, because until now we had no members in that part of the country, we rented a low-cost facility with ten beds and space for tents within the Khama Rhino Camp, a nature sanctuary. As a result we may have between three and five new members from Serowe and Palapye.

(FOTO removed)

Our hosts. Are they Servas members?

This informal meeting was used to introduce people to each other. These Servas people are either born in Botswana or are long-term residents. It was noted that people from other countries are more interested than before to visit Botswana, and that publishing our host list through Servas may attract more Servas visitors. They will then benefit from the varied background of our hosts: journalists, teachers, health professionals, artists, and so on.

Servas International is worldwide and the General Assembly meets every few years, last in Barcelona. Sheldon attended that session. The meeting was problematic because of issues with funds unaccounted for. Africa is divided in Anglophone and Francophone regions. An Anglophone meeting for Southern Africa was held in Malawi in 2003. The report of this meeting was circulated.

Botswana as a host country is newly inaugurated with this meeting.

Servas Lunch in Tlokweng Botswana

A lunch was held for Servas members and people who had applied to become members to be interviewed. Regrets were received from five old members in the area south eastern Botswana. Three old members came and four prospective new members. People talked about themselves, their interest in Botswana, their other activities, life and travels. The four new members were interviewed and accepted with pleasure. We began at noon and the last person left at five p.m. It was a pleasant afternoon.

Travel Reports - Africa

Reduce speed-Botswana

Dorothee Krezmar and Kurt Beutler have just been here for four nights staying in our Okavango House, but sharing meals with us and watching a German DVD.

They were able to be the first Servas travellers to stay with new hosts that enrolled in Servas in February this year at places in central Botswana: Letlhakane and Serowe.

They are originally from Germany and Switzerland but joined Servas in New Zealand two years ago. We wish for more travellers to visit Botswana. For the **Servas Newsletter** the following could be added from their statement:

"We are peace cyclists going around the world over the last eight years and Botswana is our 38th country. We started in Switzerland where we lived and worked (biologist and electrician) before setting out through Europe, Middle East, East Asia, India, China, South East Asia, North America, Central America, New Zealand and Australia. Wherever possible we go by bicycle and do not take public transport. We like cycling very much and we think that it is the best way to travel. One of our purposes is to meet people from different countries, religions and cultures. We have made friends all over the world. We also like nature, hiking and the outdoor life."

They plan to visit Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, and then north to Malawi and East Africa. They may take a year to get to Cairo. They do between 50 and 100 km a day. Thus their slogan "Reduce speed".

*In peace, Sheldon
Servas BOTSWANA—Sheldon and Gudrun Weeks*

Malawi,

"the warm heart of Africa"!

Considering the warm welcome from all the SERVAS members we met during our trip, Malawi is definitely "the warm heart of Africa"!

We were lucky to be able to take part in the 10th Servas Malawi meeting, one of Ben's salsa classes, to visit a school and 2 orphanages, singing with the children, to fly to Mount Mulanje and to hike in this marvellous area with Masayo, a young Japanese woman, and Demelza carrying and feeding her adorable 3 month old baby. It was very special to stay in the hut up there, at 2000 metres of altitude, watching the stars at night before sleeping in front of the fireplace... It was so quiet until some eagles walking on the roof woke us up in the morning!

(FOTO removed)

It has also been a treat to share a few days with George who drove us safely to Liwonde Park and to Cape Maclear on Lake Malawi, trying to avoid the many holes on the roads, but not the cobra which was crossing in front of our car! We stayed at Mvuu Lodge, a nice, comfortable place with a beautiful view on River Shire, especially at sunset. We had never seen so many hippos! One of them even stepped on a pipe next to our chalet so that there was no water left in the shower ☺

We are very grateful to our hosts (Marcel & Caroline, Silverio & Jane, Marco & Edith and all their children), Demelza, Ben, George, Mary, and all the other people we met, for the wonderful time we spent in Malawi thanks to them.

Myriam MICHEL, Reunion and Delphine HARTER

Ups and downs in West Africa.

Teresa Mazzella from Rome visited Gambia and Senegal. She had varying experiences with Servas in these countries. She is concerned that in some countries there is perhaps more help needed to run Servas effectively. Here are some extracts from her report.

I went to Gambia for a week but with the intention to remain longer. I was there for a month but I could not see any list.

The Senegalese secretary has been more efficient. He has an email address but he has no computer and he has no money to use the public one. He has no money even for a telephone call so he had the last century list with dead members.

I organized a Servas meeting in his house where I was hosted for a few days. He seemed very happy to be helped. Now he has a list of about 70 members even if many of them are in his village, 15 km from Dakar. Now he goes round with a Servas folder looking for someone who can help him to print the list and send it to the main countries.

I think this is the situation of many western African countries. The secretaries have a lack of personal experiences, of money, of advice, which weakens their enthusiasm and so undermines the Servas project and aim. They don't pay anything to be in the list (some of them even didn't know they were in the list) They have no travellers (which would be the only income) they have no explanatory material and of course no budget to face a minimum form of organization. What can we do, to help them? Even if they can't afford long trips they can visit nearby countries, learn from others, get new energies and create peace team back home.

Some simple ideas:

- 1) Send them explanatory material (simple English and French pamphlets to hand out in Universities, Embassy, cultural centre etc
- 2) Give secretaries, who show a "real" efficiency, a bonus
- 3) Support them with ideas, advice, suggestions without abuse
- 4) Ask for up to date lists and check them (There are 10 members in the list and one bed)
- 5) You can talk about this in your national newsletters and at meetings

These are just a few ideas. I'm sure there are many more.

Country Reports - Asia

Life in Myanmar

Greetings to all our friends in SERVAS worldwide, from Yangon, Myanmar. Some of you may be more familiar with the old name for our country, Burma. For many years tourists and visitors to our lovely country were discouraged, but in the past several years we are seeing more and more visitors, all of whom receive welcoming smiles and salutations from all our people.

My name is Soung Sandar Aung, and together with my mother, Mabel, we are now SERVAS hosts in Yangon. I work as a teacher at one of the few English language schools in Yangon, and am married with two teenage children. As with many Yangon residents we live in a multi generation family home. Although we have been lucky enough to have been able to make recent renovations, it is generally more convenient for SERVAS visitors to stay in one of the many hotels or guest houses when in Myanmar, so both my mom and I at present are happy to act as day hosts.

We are both lifetime residents of Yangon, so know the city well. Our family are Buddhists and have a special devotion room in our home for practicing our prayers. We also regularly have monks visit us for meals and gift giving, as is the practice here in Myanmar.

Our home is very conveniently situated only a short walk away from the most famous shrine the Shwedegon Pagoda, Myanmar's largest. My mom visits Shwedegon weekly as part of her religious practice.

I am hoping that any SERVAS visitors to Myanmar will choose to contact us before their visit. There is no SERVAS book for Myanmar yet, my mom and I are the only hosts! All contact details for me can be received in the normal way from the South East Asia Host list that I think is kept by coordinator Siriporn in Bangkok, Thailand.

Soung Sandar Aung, Myanmar

Sahyadri Ayurveda Hospital, Peermade 685531, Idukki Dist., Kerala, India

I travelled in south India during August this year. During my travel I spent a fortnight at the Ayurvedic Hospital and Resort at Peermade in District Idukki in Kerala, a hilly area amidst tea gardens with excellent climate.

The Ayurvedic hospital is managed by Catholic Diocese of Kanjirappally, founded by the Present Bishop Mar Mathew Arackal and headed by the Executive Director Fr Augustine Kariapuram.

I discussed about our Servas philosophy with Fr Augustine Kariapuram & the Director, Dr Jacob Thomas MD(Ayurveda)PhD. They both felt much impressed about our Servas philosophy & agreed to allow 10% discount in the prevailing cost of accommodation and Ayurvedic treatments to any Servas traveller seeking Ayurvedic treatment from their hospital. The traveller will be required to produce some documentary proof of his/her being a member of Servas.

Pakistan, Earthquake

56th Anniversary of Servas International was held on 10-10-2005 in Lahore but it was not celebrated with smiles & laughs. The reason behind this was the most devastating & destructive earthquake which caused numerous injuries & the end of an enormous number of lives.

First of all the briefing about the above mentioned disaster was given & conveyed condolence message to all the victims, then prayer was performed by the National Secretary of Servas Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Naseem Khan for the eternal peace to the people who lost their lives in this terrifying incident & patience & forbearance for all those who had a narrow escape from death. The routine proceeding started thereafter.

A few distinguished personalities were invited to the anniversary celebration:

Dr. Tariq Mehmood Mian a very experienced & renowned person in medical profession with a lot of services given voluntarily (General Secretary Pakistan Society of Family Physicians) was present as a "Chief Guest" he delivered his speech on awareness of medical facilities, treatment & surgery, he also highlighted the peaceful activities of Servas Pakistan & Servas International.

Mr. Zia Haider Rizvi our senior member (Honorary Consul General for Thailand at Lahore) was there as a "Guest Speaker" he highlighted the prospects of "PEACE" through tourism & Servas International activities worldwide. He also appreciated the efforts of Mr. Muhammad Naseem Khan for his Servas volunteer work & growing Servas in Pakistan,

All the invited guests added their feelings of consolation to the earthquake victims first, then proceeded with Servas oriented things. In the end Mr. Muhammad Naseem Khan gave his feelings about the casualties & victims & then threw light on the Servas functions --- how it is being run & managed giving full cooperation & devotion.

He further added that Servas is running nicely & smoothly not on account of his own efforts only, but all the members have played a very important role, so as to keep this peaceful organization on the right track; This reflects the dignity of this great person.

Mr. Muhammad Naseem Khan appealed to all the Servas members that they ought to offer their volunteer services to the victims with full devotion.

Hereby I, Muhammad Amjad, the Information Secretary of Servas Pakistan also request to all the members of Servas International & Servas Pakistan to take active part in helping the sufferers of the earthquake as much as possible, because we, as Servas members & volunteers have great responsibility to handle all the crisis of human beings up to the extent where we can get access to.

Muhammad Amjad, Servas Pakistan

Our Servas travellers travelling in South India can visit the Sahyadri Ayurveda Hospital at Peermade which is known for excellence in Ayurveda.

The details can be found at websites:

www.ayurvedaexcellence.com www.sahyadri.org

E-mail: pedes@satyam.net.in

Fax: 0091-4869-232096

ph: 0091-4869-232496, 232497, 232197, 232725

Gurdev Singh, Servas India

Travel Reports - Asia

Visit of Mr Peter Postel From Hamburg Germany May 2005

I have been hosting travellers from Germany/France/Switzerland but I would like to narrate my family's experience of hosting Mr Peter from Hamburg Germany who came for a period of 2 nights and stayed at my place almost for a week understanding our culture, way of living and our family value systems.

I got an email from Mr Peter aged 52 of Hamburg and he wanted to know whether he could stay with me for a couple of nights. I explained that I was having my aged mother (who could not move about much for opening the door etc) and my daughter who was school going. He confirmed back that he would adjust to our family schedule and he would not be a hindrance to us. I reconfirmed with an welcome invitation that he could spend the two nights at our place. He arrived at our place and understood our family relations. He showed us his credentials and photos of his family. He valued respected and adopted Gandhian values and was a strict vegetarian and teetotaler and fitted in perfectly with our family.

He was a computer programmer working for the University and had taken a year off from his work to be in India and understand the diverse cultures prevailing here. He had travelled all parts of India and stayed with different families and enjoyed his stay with all.

He was keen to know about our customs, how we did pujas. I took him to temple and also to the shops and made him familiar with the bus numbers and bus stops. I thought he will have difficulty but he could manage to travel and reach home well in time. He would help me while preparing dinner and soon learnt the art of making rasam and sambhar during his stay at our place.

He helped my mother with the little household chores and also spent a lot of time speaking to her in English and understanding our culture. He saw the goodness of our joint family and asked me about why I keep my mother with me. I told him about our Hindu philosophy as to how children take care of their aged parents. He became very emotional and said " I am in Hamburg and my mother at the outskirts village all alone but after having seen you take care of your mother, I will also take her with me to Hamburg to the place where I stay." And this he confirmed after reaching Hamburg that he has brought his mother. This gave me and my mother lot of happiness since we could impart some of our valuable Hindu value based advice to him which he accepted willingly.

He is regularly in contact with me and has sent us photographs of his family and children and also invited us all to visit Germany and stay at his place.

We found this association a wonderful experience and do look forward to similar ones in the near future.

L V Subramanian, Bangalore, Servas India Newsletter

A window reopens... Turkey

This was my first trip to Turkey. With great joy I received an invitation from a Servas member. Dorothea Schelch had answered my email: "Sure you can stay with me." She would be there at the airport. That was a comforting thought because I was travelling alone.

For two days I toured Istanbul following the advice of my host, busy with her teaching job. She told me she would invite Servas members for a party on the third night. They came with guitar and singing. What a wonderful evening that was in a living room with a view! What a view! The Bosphorus with all the boats travelling the world.

"What brings you to Turkey?" asked Ömer. - "I have always wanted to visit Turkey, see, when I was 16 years old I had a Turkish pen pal. He sent me postcards and I dreamed of visiting all these places. We corresponded for 15 years then something happened, we lost track of each other". -"Give me his name, I will find him on the Internet." -"Erol Karatekin, he worked in Ankara for the Agriculture ministry". I had tried so many times to find Erol in vain...

I had no definite plans for my travel in Turkey. I left for Bursa. I knew the name of the city; Erol and his family had lived there for a while. I visited a Servas couple in an old house on the hill overlooking the city. We were having a wonderful visit. On the second day when I came back from sightseeing they announced that I had a phone message: Erol had been found! I looked at the phone number completely amazed. I was shaking with emotions when I called: "Erol?" the voice said "Mireille?" It was a voice calling me from so long ago, from 1961. He invited me to visit his family. My journey was taking shape. I was on the road to Ankara to meet that young man of long ago.

The road from Bursa to Ankara was a journey of reverie back to my school days in Dol de Bretagne when I was a prisoner in the boarding school. Having a pen pal in Turkey was a window to the world. We shared ideas and stories. Later I married and he did also, we had children. We shared more stories then one day we lost contact. "I will meet you at the bus" he had said on the phone. It was hard for me to believe this was really going to happen. I was reconnecting with myself, the sixteen-year old girl waiting to open a letter from Erol. This friend had resurrected in my life.

There he was, standing at the bus stop. "Hello Mireille!" -"Hello Erol!" People watching never could guess the story behind the reunion of the gray hair friends. He took out a picture from his pocket and showed me the picture I received long ago. Yes! He really was the lost friend! We laughed... Then, I met his family, his wife Muzeyyen, his daughter, his grandson, his son and his wife and friends. It was like meeting a family I knew long ago.

"Do you remember the gift you sent me from Brittany? I still have it." I looked at the antique bookends with the carved wooden shoes. I never dreamed I would see them again! "We must have a picture, this is a memorable event!" I held the precious gift and sat between Muzeyyen and Erol who always signed his letters: "Your friend in Turkey ever..."

That evening there was music in the garden across the street. People were dancing the dances to music so similar to the Breton music I knew. I was home...

Much later I found more meaning reflecting on this event. I had gone to Turkey in time and space and I reclaimed the bookends; my wooden shoes from Brittany carried me and I was holding the book of my life...the journey.

Mireille Perrotte,, France

Country Reports - America

Brief review of SERVAS` history, the celebration of its 25th anniversary in Costa Rica

In the early 80's, Mrs. Kate Lazarus (former SERVAS International Secretary) visited Costa Rica and brought with her the ideas supporting the SERVAS organization.

Several persons initiated the SERVAS chapter in Costa Rica, quantity which increased to the current number of 72 active members, all feeling really happy about participating in this type of organization.

(FOTO removd)

A special gathering was organized for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the SERVAS chapter in Costa Rica. In this meeting we all participated in common Costa Rican games and fun activities during an entire afternoon. We also dedicated time to analyze the situation of potential travelers, hosts, day-hosts, and other important issues. Furthermore, comments were presented about the past GA celebrated in Spain by the members that attended this meeting.

Our main conclusion from the gathering was the great expectation for new travelers to arrive to CR in the coming year, in order to show them our natural treasures and the kindness of our people.

Carmen Mora M. National Secretary, Costa Rica

Bolivia

Servas needs more hosts in Bolivia. The Servas Coordination in South America asks the cooperation of anyone who can contribute to this effort, to contact more people who might be interested in being part of our organization. If you can help, please write to: southamerica@servas.org.

Ecuador

Servas again has hosts in Ecuador.

The interest and initiative of some volunteers has brought Servas back to life in Ecuador.

Servas needs more hosts in Ecuador. The Servas South American coordinator asks all those who can participate to help us by contacting more persons who might be interested in being part of our organization. If you can help, please contact:

southamerica@servas.org.

Winds of change for SERVAS MEXICO

STATUTES and Members' CONTRIBUTIONS were approved and Board of Directors for Servas Mexico was elected

The first National Assembly of Servas México took place on May 28 and 29. It was most relevant to set the basis for a new era in the organization of Servas in our country.

The event was arranged for 9 a.m. in the Shakespeare Forum, an important cultural centre in México city. About 20 members from the Federal District as well as from other states - Aguascalientes, Cuernavaca y Veracruz - attended.

After a short presentation by each member the agenda was voted and a moderator was chosen. The meeting ran in a positive climate, and its results can be considered very successful, considering that the main objectives that had been set could be reached, the creation of statutes for Servas Mexico.

Mrs. Rosalinda Fasen de Gortari's work was given recognition and we also gave thanks to her for being our President for 15 years.

(FOTO removed)

Every change implies important challenges and Dr. Héctor Peralta as well as all other members of the new committee reaffirmed their commitment to work as parts of a team for the growth of Servas Mexico.

As months went by, Servas Mexico has witnessed the realizations achieved, based on shared efforts. Now, new ambitious projects have been set, as the first meeting Servas México-United States 2006, creation of a youth committee in Mexico, subscription of Servas México in the Youth Exchange program, participation in the first meeting Servas Youth Patagonia '06, updating of the Servas host list Mexico 2005, monthly meetings in Mexico city and activities fostering integration with members of other cities in the Republic of Mexico.

¡Let's celebrate the democratic change and for the wellbeing of Servas Mexico!

Erika Haller, Bulletin coordinator, Servas México

Travel Reports - America

Thanks to Servas Mexico!

This is a little report of my experiences with *SERVAS in MEXICO* : above all - short and clear: I LOVED it ! It was honestly my best experience of SERVAS of all countries I had contact with hosts.

What made it so special in Mexico ?

Mainly the quality of the HOSTS ! I had 2 in Mexico City and 1 in Cancun. For the rest of my travels through the southern part of the country I stayed in hostels and Posadas.

My host provided me a first class welcome at the airport ! The best which can happen after a long tiring flight from another continent is somebody picking you up at a big new airport - where you would have no clue how and where to go next easily My hosts were very good hosts, and I enjoyed their young age and similar lifestyle to mine in Europe, and of course their lovely big Labrador dog Guenter. They took much time to explain me the important first information about the daily life in this huge capital, we spend a very nice evening together with their friends/family members at home talking, a nice Sunday walk with the doggy and finally an important event: to assist at an informal SERVAS coordinator meeting in a small restaurant -where I could meet Pablo from Argentina.

My second host, who very spontaneously invited me to spend some days at his house, which I accepted on a feeling of common sympathy with him. I enjoyed very much spending more time with these hosts in their beautiful house together with cats and dogs, because I was getting a bit tired of packing and unpacking my bag all the time, and I could after some 2 days of adaptation there, feel a little bit as a new family-member ...spending meals together, going market-shopping, being introduced to their local friends of different characters and interests, talking and exchanging a lot about our lives, accompanying them to their different meetings and activities, getting practical help and useful addresses and so much more

What makes it so especially valuable?

Pure hospitality and a very open approach to me, frank exchanges about everything and me introducing to so many new people! When I finally left Mexico City after I had the chance to have a farewell-dinner with some NEW FRIENDS !

What more could a traveller expect from SERVAS ?? This IS THE IDEA of Servas - human contact and exchanges above all ! And it worked perfectly fine in Mexico !

My charming host and his lovely wife in CANCUN did a very good "job" too ! Cancun, known as THE tourist-destination above all in Mexico Quintaroo-state: thanks to SERVAS I could discover a little bit of the REAL , quiet downtown Cancun, a part which many tourists there would never discover - I could stay in their lovely new little house, very tasty, modern and clean and I felt very well and welcome from my arrival onwards. I shared the interest of music and esoteric issues and much more with my hosts and although both had to work during the day, we could spend enough relaxed quality time together talking in the evenings and mornings.

These rich memories do not only come from visiting ruins, castles, and admiring nature's beauties, but mainly from meeting new people with whom I can CONNECT easily and EXCHANGE and LEARN from them and their lives

That is for me, what makes QUALITY in travelling and such a big DIFFERENCE - thanks to the great idea of SERVAS bringing people together ... - worldwide !

So, thanks from all my heart to Servas Mexico for making my trip through Mexico such a unique HUMAN experience.

SABINE POOL, Belgium & Luxemburg

TRAVEL REPORT: BUENOS AIRES (ARGENTINA) SEPT-OCT, 2004

Traveling with Servas was one of the best discoveries I ever made. I love people and I am ready to feel the atmosphere of each place I go.

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

I arrived in Buenos Aires with the expectation of having fun. I was going to meet Argentine Servas members who were to be meeting that night for the bimonthly gathering in the old Café Tortini. Before traveling, I had exchanged several messages with Elena, the local coordinator, and from her first reply I felt welcome. However, the week before my trip I was so busy that I couldn't contact any Argentine host other than Elena. So I decided to reserve a hotel room for at least one night.

The gathering was very nice, with a lot of Argentine beer and an exchange of experiences. All the hosts were surprised that I was in a hotel and not at the home of one of them. Jorge, who was very funny, took the opportunity to take his key out of his pocket, put it in my hand and say, "if you want to go to my house now, it's OK." Noting my surprise, one of the others said that Jorge was like that: the most popular host in the city. I kept the keys, but I preferred to go there the next morning. I stayed for four nights. Those were excellent days, with good conversation, lunch with people Jorge knew, and lots of people around the house. I made several friends. One day another host, Pablo, took me to the Boca Junior tennis courts to see his favorite team beat the Gimnasia de La Plata. I also met friends of Servas members and when I left for Australia my heart was sad, I missed in advance all those people and I left with the best impressions of Argentine people.

Maria Fernanda Vomero, Brazil

Host and Traveller in Peru

In February I had the opportunity to have my first Servas visitor, Ralph Hammond; it was incredible. As the day approached I was nervous; for him also it was the first Servas visit. But when we met personally I felt that something happened, we recognized each other with an unbelievable harmony. We were very anxious waiting for him, my friends and I, because everybody knew he was coming, and he did. The most important thing was that everybody was interested in him; he shared our customs, practiced his Spanish, danced salsa very, very well. We told each other things and shared confidences in a way that I am sure will never leave us. We didn't know if we'd see him again or not, so we wanted to take advantage of the time with him and let him feel the affection we felt for him. We enjoyed his presence to the maximum and when he said he would return we said we would always be waiting for him. We're still waiting for you, Rafa, wherever you are, FRIENDS FOR LIFE.

Thanks to Hilaria Valdez for teaching me to be a Servas member. ...but this was to be Servas, the opportunity to share and know people from different places who feel and want the same as us, not to be divided by frontiers.

Kareen Rios, TacnaPeru

Country Reports and events - Europe

ITALY

We are happy to welcome our first collective member: a few days ago the "Centro Gandhi", that has its seat in Ivrea, Piedmont, has joined our organization!

The Centre was founded in 1987 by the local branch of the International Reconciliation Movement and, as its name itself suggests, has been focusing its activities on peace issues ever since. It is home to many associations operating to endorse ecology, human rights, pacifism, biological agriculture, less polluting ways to produce energy: Legambiente, Amnesty International and Servas itself are just some examples. Ever since 2004, the "Centro Gandhi" hosts Ivrea's seat of the "Centro Studi Domenico Sereno-Regis", a twin institution in Torino, as well.

The Centre rejects any kind of violence, both structural and cultural, and supports any project aiming at the promotion of people's and animals' rights and at the defence of biodiversity. All the people working at the Centre are volunteers and such is its financing. Among its activities there is the organization of meetings, lectures and book reviews and, last but not least, the so-called "wood voluntary work days", in which help in agricultural tasks is exchanged freely.

I am thankful to Nella Ramella and Antonella Gilli who made it possible for the Centre to become a Servas member. The "Centro Gandhi" is undoubtedly worth a visit for any Servas member caring for the future of our planet, for peace and for the study of new models of economic and social development. The Centre is in via Arduino, 75, Ivrea, some 30 km north of Torino, Piedmont. You can arrange an appointment over the phone: 0039-0125-43460 or 0039-0125-658578 or via e-mail: meo89@libero.it.

I wish the Centre will find many new friends through Servas!

Giuliana Cupi – Servas Coordinator, Piedmont, Italy.

Pathways together 2005, Italy

It was the 25th sentierinsieme which took place in Italy this time. It was a well organised meeting with 200 participants from 9 countries! There was a lot of talking, walking and sightseeing in the beautiful landscape of Valsesia in Italy. Luigi and his team of Servas Italy did a great job in organising the meeting and also the two different trekkings following the meeting. Thank you to everyone who helped to realise this great event.

More fotos on: www.foto-schaerli.ch
/Fotoshop/Servas Italia 05 Valsesia

Ursula Schaerli, Servas Switzerland"

GERMANY

Pathways Together – Sentier Insieme – Route d' Amitié – Miteinander unterwegs 28 - 30 July 2006 in the Black Forest

Traditionally organized by Servas friends in Italy, France or Switzerland alternatingly, the next meeting will – for the first time- be organized in Germany. The meeting will take place in the southern part of the **Black Forest (Schwarzwald)** near the Feldberg, the highest peak of that mountain range (1498 m). This is not an alpine region, but on clear days you enjoy beautiful views of the Alps, the Rhine Valley and the Vosges Mountains from the mountain tops. The Black Forest is well-known for its extended network of hiking trails.

(FOTO removed)

Date: Friday 28 to Sunday 30 July 2006, plus option of 3 day- trekking afterwards

Venue for the weekend is the „**Leistungszentrum Herzogenhorn**“, **(Feldberg)**

Accommodation: 25 double rooms with en suite or communal showers.

Prices: €26 to €34 per person per day for half board in a double (reduced rates for children possible)

Leistungszentrum Herzogenhorn is located in the Nature Park "Südschwarzwald", approx. 30 km east of Freiburg, 60 km northeast of Basel, it is accessible by car on a small road, off road No B317 between Todtnau and Titisee-Neustadt

As the number of places is limited to 50, we would advise you to register soon. For registration contact:

Gudrun.baumgartner@web.de

See you in the Black Forest!

Gudrun Baumgartner & Margret Klaeser

(FOTO removed)

Finished your drink? Where next?

Travel Reports - Europe

Belgium from Australia

Dear Rita,

Doug and I have just returned from our visit in among other places, Belgium. We would like to say a big thank you to you for your assistance.

The time we spent with Roos and Jo was wonderful. We enjoyed ourselves immensely. They are such friendly, warm-hearted helpful people. While Roos was recuperating from her knee operation and I might say looking after children and preparing meals Jo showed us his special parts of Bruges during the morning, then Lieve, also a host, showed us the touristic places in the afternoon and put us on to the correct bus to go home.

We spent most of the Sunday by ourselves in Bruges and Leuven and Servaes and Wivine met us at the station late in the afternoon. They took us home for dinner and to spend the night. Servaes drove us to the airport the following morning. We appreciated that as it was raining that morning.

We want you to be aware of the appreciation we feel for your assistance, also that of all the others.

If you have any of your lovely friendly folk wanting to visit Brisbane please be sure to give them our email address for them to contact us. If we are in town we will be happy to look after them.

In Friendship and Peace,

Doug and Mae Harding. Australia

HOST REPORT FROM TOP OF EUROPE

Could we have a host report from the top of Europe? The editor, asking this, travelled northern Scandinavia by motorbike, looking for airfields to rent a plane to ride in the air. She is a good example of a Servas traveller in northern Norway. I get only one or two travellers a year but those who visit me are always very interesting people, deeply determined and looking for something extra.

So who are these crazy people who find their way far north of the arctic circle?

Many come to experience the midnight sun. In May, June and July it is light all night. Many guests want to stay up all night and have difficulties in sleeping because of the light nights. (For me it is opposite. I sleep better in summer than in the dark time in winter!)

-An American university professor (in architecture?) mostly studied our wooden houses. I had to stop several time on the sightseeing trip so he could take close-up pictures of details of our buildings. (The background mountains, the impressive Lyngen Alps, was nothing. He had a cottage in Rocky Mountains, in 3000 m height)

-Two German guys were so impressed by all the mushrooms and berries they could find just behind my house. They stayed 3 extra days, picking & drying mushrooms in my oven, picking blueberries.

- My only winter visitor ever was a French biker! He wanted to bicycle around the world in five years, and write a book about the different people he met at his journey. When he stopped at my house it was icy and slippy roads, and 10 freezing degrees! This is nothing, he said. I biked in Alaska, in winter in 35° below zero!

- a family from Belgium for 3 days. The 10 year old son was fascinated by whales, his father took him up to northern Norway for Whale Watching. They were particularly interested in the traditional way of living in northern Norway, using the natural resources: Fishing in the sea, growing potatoes and other vegetables in the garden, and picking berries in autumn. →

Hungary, Romania from USA

My travels (with a friend) in Hungary and Romania would have been wonderful without Servas (both countries have so much to see, and such friendly people), but Servas doubled our experience. In Hungary we stayed with a young man who had been a Servas guest of mine the previous year. Both my other Hungarian Servas travellers came into town to say hello while we were there! In eastern Miskolc my host couldn't have been friendlier, taking me on to the next town on my itinerary and stopping at the most local of eateries on the way.

Romanian hosts were equally friendly. A highlight was to meet the Marinca family in Timisoara. Gheorge Marinca founded Servas in Romania in the 1970s, when such activities were not only illegal but quite dangerous. To hear of his efforts to get this underground organization started, and of being called into the police headquarters and burning his precious guest book was inspiring, and reminds us how easy our lives are here in the US.

In far-south Deva I expected we would be the first Servas traveller in five years -- not so! A Danish family was staying with the Pasca family when we got there, and a French traveller was expected the next month. It's the most interesting place in the country; I can understand why they want to come.

Eugen Dragoi met us for dinner in Bucharest with his lovely family even though he was pretty sick.

And the Boicescus took me to their country place in Predeal and killed me with kindness and food.

And please remember the two friendly hosts in Vienna, as charming as their wonderful city!

Hayden Wetzel, United States

Denmark from Myanmar

Before we became SERVAS hosts I was able to be a SERVAS traveller, as in early 2005 I went to Denmark as a 'guest teacher' for a boarding 'efterskole' for 2 months. This whole adventure was a bit scary for me as I had never travelled outside of Asia before. SERVAS people were so wonderful to me, and one Denmark host met my airplane on landing and made sure I got good transportation to the small town where the school was located. Many weekends when the school was closed I visited other hosts in Denmark, and they showed me around their country and introduced me to so many new sights that I never would have found on my own. In fact, it was my SERVAS experience that made my stay in Denmark so enjoyable.

Soung Sandar Aung, Myanmar

To be a Servas host in northern Norway is quite special since the travellers are special people. So many good discussions and talking in the bright summer nights - maybe that is the best thing of being a Servas host?

Kasper Holmen, Norway

Country and Travel Reports - Pacific

AUSTRALIA SYDNEY,

Before I arrived in Sydney, I had already exchanged e-mails with two Australian Servas members. Felicity could not host me because she was getting ready to share her apartment with a new roommate. But she invited me to dinner with her on one of the nights of my stay in the city. Adam was in Jamaica, but he suggested I get in touch with his friend Peter, a new Servas host. So I did, and Peter agreed to host me. I stayed three nights in a hotel (I only managed to reach Peter on the second day I was in the city) and then I went to his house where I stayed for three more nights. It was also an exceptional experience, but different from the previous one. But that's an interesting fact about travelling with Servas: the modus operandi may be the same but the experiences are always different, nothing is repeated. So, we had so much in common that Peter and I became good friends. Trips to the Opera Quay and fish & chips shops in Palm Beach were memorable. Dinner at Felicity's house also was delicious! Again, it was difficult to pack and leave for the next destination.

MELBOURNE

Susan was the only host I stayed with in Melbourne. She was on vacation but returned the day I arrived in the city. Since I had reserved a bed in a youth hostel for two nights, we agreed that she would put me up in her house after that. It was sensational. Susan is a really nice person, very animated. We took walks together, we went to the Fringe Festival, we had lots of conversations along with glasses of wine, not to mention the classes in twist. The trip continued (Tasmania and Cairns), but without Servas. When I returned to Sydney, I stayed two more nights at Peter's. But then we were no longer host and traveller but two friends who met again after a long time (18 days).

It was one of the most "human" trips I have ever taken. More than visiting pretty places, it was an experience of solidarity, friendship, and believing in people. I was delighted with the generosity and trust of the hosts that I met along the way, and with the joy of their sharing time with me. I felt totally gratified. What special people there are in the world! For this reason, living is worthwhile. I went home with my hope renewed, feeling sure that sensitivity and love for others still exists, and this will only die if we let it.

Maria Fernanda Vomero, Brazil

SERVAS JAPAN IN SPRING

After three years of Japanese studies, I decided to follow the wave of sakura cherry blossom which sweeps the main island in the spring and stay with Servas hosts. What a choice in the Servas book! There was a traditional sock-maker and a sushi-bar owner, a sunflower farmer who loves fire-flies..... Should I go to Kyoto just to meet the etiquette teacher? In the end, the regional coordinator chose seven hosts along the sakura front.

At first, I was a guest in my teacher's family in Nagoya. It was fantastic but I was relentlessly entertained at great cost. Although her mother had just recovered from cancer, she would not let me help at all and would fall asleep on the floor exhausted as I watched her, guilt ridden. Servas was a relaxing contrast.

My Japanese experience was full of surprises. I am now convinced there really are Shinto Gods inside every craggy stone and gnarled tree. In the spring, the world turns a magical pink, awash with petals. I had to abandon many received ideas: no overcrowding or minimalism in the countryside, houses were huge, kitchens indescribably cluttered and home-cooked food was fantastic. I visited a centre for stroke victims, fed cows and moved boxes of rice-shoots into a poly-tunnel. I stayed in a Tenri monastery in a stunning fishing village. It was election time and a famous wrestler was running for MP, claiming he'd sit in Parliament with his face-paint on.

I had plenty of time to cycle around temples and walk in the mountains. My hosts spoke enough English and the occasional 'tourist schedule' was welcome because I could at last pay my share. I saw magnificent temples and castles but Japanese history is cruel. So, lovelier than any gilded shrine built with money stolen from the starving are memories of fun times with families around a low heated quilt-covered table or sitting in a steamy rock pool with three generations of women, under the rain. Travelling with Servas is a privilege. It is also the only way to discover Japan.

Michèle O'Connel, England

New Zealand - memories

.....are they still there?

Maybe 20 years ago we visited a Servas family in, I think, Christchurch, definitely South Island. They had a friendly pet sheep. I remember the evening meal but cannot find the photo. We were gathered informally in the sitting room. I was on the floor with a bowl of food, chatting with someone. The sheep was sitting on the settee watching the TV!

Question:

Do they still have a sheep who watches TV?

More Travel Reports from around the world

SERVAS EXPERIENCES

Since joining Servas in 1993, Ben and I have made many new friends and learned a lot about the World and it's people.

We started as hosts while we were living aboard our boat in Eastern Australia and our first traveller was an English girl backpacking around Australia. Her parents were born in Pakistan but migrated to England after the war so we were given an insight into the problems of different values held by different faiths. We lived for three years in the Middle East in the 1960's so we already had some knowledge, but the personal meeting within our home helped our understanding.

Since that time we have hosted many interesting people, both in Australia and also in England from 2000 -2003 while we were travelling the canals in a barge. We joined Servas Britain at that time.

We have also been Servas travellers and one of our first experiences was marvellous. Australia is a large country and we had driven our campervan from Brisbane to Darwin and needed somewhere to leave it while we sailed with friends to Indonesia. A Servas Host in Darwin promptly offered space and also offered their downstairs flat for a more comfortable bed when we returned!

Our most recent Servas travelling was during August, September & October this year when we travelled by train from Beijing to London. The journey from Beijing to St.Petersburg was with a small group tour but from then on we made new Servas friends.

In Potsdam we learned first hand about life as it was during World War II and the subsequent cold war period, we were also shown the beautiful gardens and the palace of Sans Souci. In Cologne our host gave us a personal tour of the cathedral, including climbing the tower (509 steps). He also showed us the beautiful gardens in Leverkusen, a space returned to the town by Bayer thus making the River Rhine accessible to all.

In Compiègne, 80km North of Paris, our hosts took us to an outdoor market and drove us through beautiful forests, we also had the opportunity to visit Paris and the Louvre and go to the top of the Eiffel Tower.

In England we stayed with Servas friends made when we were living on the barge. With Servas, meeting again is greeting familiar friends because of the unifying desire for peace and understanding among the peoples of the World. With each host, the problems of the World were discussed and we all agreed that , in a small but very important way, Servas was helping to break down barriers between countries.

Ben & Jean Spencer.

Servas Hosts, Brisbane, Australia.

Servas friends made, thanks to Hurricane Rita

At 12:30 am on September 23, I was awakened by a phone call from a Servas Peru traveler, Roxana Suarez, fleeing Houston, Texas with her brother and friend as Hurricane Rita approached. She asked if my husband Jeff and I might be able to shelter them and their two dogs. While we offered to share our home during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we did not reach any Servas hosts in need of our offer, and so I was delighted that a Rita evacuee had called, and I immediately answered in the affirmative. Our weary travelers arrived at 2:30 am after a long, hot, 22-hour trip that should have taken 4 hours on a "normal" day.

While our guests spent most of that first day at our home sleeping and recovering from their stressful journey, we went to work. My cynical co-worker exclaimed that he would never leave strangers alone in his house, where they could "wipe me out." I knew that I could never adequately explain how much the mutual trust inherent in the Servas host-traveler relationship has enriched our lives over the years. Instead, when I go to work tomorrow, I will tell my co-worker what greeted me that afternoon when I returned home: our kitchen was overflowing with groceries that they purchased, other thoughtful gifts awaited us, and more importantly, our refreshed and very grateful guests greeted us with warm hugs.

We enjoyed a weekend sharing food and wonderful conversations. Roxana cooked us a traditional Peruvian meal, and she and her brother Edgardo offered information about their culture. My husband, Roxana, and I shared information about Servas and its philosophy with Edgardo and Mehl, who were not members. Under these emergency conditions, we did not worry that they were not official Servas travelers. However, we explained to them that the best "thank you" that they could give us would be to join Servas themselves, which they promised to do. On our last evening, we gave them "WAGE PEACE" bracelets from the American Friends Service Committee as a memento of our weekend and reminder of the mission of Servas. Finally, we toasted our new friendships and the positive impact of Servas on all of our lives. Our Hurricane Rita evacuees arrived as strangers, and left as family. Our dogs, on the other hand, are just glad that their dogs left, period.

(FOTO removed)

Story submitted by Celia Pechak

Youth Events

Patagonia, Jan 2006

PATAGONIA'06 is no more a weird word to us and we hope it is not to any of you. All the Servas family at an international level knows that in the third week of next January will take place the first international youth meeting in the southern hemisphere. It promises to be the biggest ever.

In Bariloche we will be Servas getting together from all around the globe. To me, Pablo Chufeni, it is not a minor pride to say that PATAGONIA'06 will have presence from every continent. Europe, Oceania, Asia, Africa and all the Americas.

People that will arrive with the goal of imparting their opinion, their wish to take a stand in Servas. People that, I do not have any doubt will help to convert Servas Youth into a more dynamic impulse and stronger inside Servas.

I can testify the importance that these kind of events are. It is not tourism, it is not social, it is not to get some fun, to take pictures or be on holidays. It is not just that. All these happen and it is great because they increase the real objective of these meetings. Move us, transform us, help us to remember the infinite pleasure of the task that we have in front in Servas, and how key is this task.

It is in these meetings when the projects take shape, when we can put a face to that e-mail address that we see so often in our mail box, and that improves a lot the ways of communication and more than nothing the perspective of action. The action, as a concept, is my axis in Servas, and the one I want to give to Servas Youth. We have a huge human network ready to help and provide its amazing resources to do very concrete actions. People around the world have offered their time, energy, skills, to this noble task. Develop the inter-cultural respect and build a new and peaceful culture.

Servas Youth want to offer the space of PATAGONIA'06 to link us with other organisations with perspectives and objectives compatible with ours. We will run workshops of some of the NGOs that work on social development and multiculturalism. FALE (Brazil), Development Youth Council (Bangladesh), Ecoclubes (Argentina), Panafrican Youth Congress (Senegal) and we are working with some others to invite them and build a bridge with them.

The agenda of the meeting is dedicated to the development of Servas issues: Group integration, to celebrate our cultural diversity, to design new programs and projects oriented to the youth area, focus on increasing the growth of the youth area of our organisation so that they can contribute in actuality to the major functions of our world.

Promote new active local groups, promote international actions, promote the interaction inside each region or country, and for that a young perspective and energy is vital. The distinction between that person young of age and of that one of spirit is clear for all of us, we look for this young energy, the energy that creates programs, projects, actions! Servas Youth and PATAGONIA'06 look for these people to move them, to use their support to grow in Servas.

Mi mas fuerte y sincero abrazo a todos ustedes

Pablo Chufeni Coordinator International of Servas Youth

Summer Youth and Family Event in Britain 2007

Servas Britain is planning to invite Servas young people and families from around Europe, and maybe beyond, to an event here in Britain in 2007. We are at an early stage of developing ideas but we want to include anyone who is interested in preparing for the event. We hope that the event will include young people between 16 and 25 in a group project alongside families with children and teenagers of all ages. Everyone is welcome to join in regardless of age, with or without children. This will essentially be an international youth and family event with a range of activities to suit all interests.

Just as at the European meeting at Carroty Wood in 2000 there will be an opportunity for some of the older young people to gain experience in leading activities with teenagers and children as well as having the chance to enjoy their own time together. We are looking at the possibility of applying for funding from the Youth for Europe initiative.

Originally we had hoped to hold this event in 2006 but we now feel that we should spend a year making links with other Servas national groups that are interested in taking part. We want young people to be involved as much as possible in planning for the event and hope that they will be able to meet together in their own countries beforehand. The Extraordinary General Assembly of Servas International in Rome in April 2006 will also be a good time to bring together ideas from Servas groups around Europe.

We are likely to hold the event at the end of July 2007, when British school holidays overlap with the majority of holidays in Europe. We will be looking for a suitable venue in the North of England. Ideally we would want somewhere that can offer both camping and self-catering accommodation. Any suggestions would be welcome.

Summer 2007 may seem a long time away, but we are keen to hear from anyone interested, especially if you are:

- a young person aged 14 - 25
- a family with teenagers
- a family with younger children
- able to offer skills in activities with young people
- keen to take part in an international Servas event.

Ann Greenhough, International Youth Co-ordinator
info@servasbritain.org

Youth

Servas Group In Rosario Is A Pioneer In The Youth Exchange Project

SERVAS YOUTH, under the coordinator Pablo Chufeni, created a language exchange program for young people from adjoining countries with different languages. The pilot project was developed in the month of May with great success, when the Servas group from Rosario (Argentina) hosted a Brazilian girl for an intensive cultural and social program, which included Spanish classes and classes in an art institute. As a next step, Servas Youth plans to export this idea to other cities and other countries.

.. and a participant

My name is Nayara, I am from Curitiba, Brazil and I am participating in a youth exchange program set up by SERVAS YOUTH with Servas Rosario. I arrived here on the second of May and I stayed until the first of June. In this period I had various activities, in part donated by Servas members.

The group of Servas members here in Rosario is really together. I was hosted for a short time in each house, and I was very well received in all of them. I am taking grammar classes with Celeste and conversation with Pablo Grasso, and I am understanding Spanish well. Pablo Chufeni got me a complete scholarship at the El Circulo Theater, where I am taking classes in tango, theater, singing, jazz and stage management, with excellent teachers. Every Tuesday Marini and I go around the city. With Catalina I go to see plays that are running in the city. They gave me a cell phone to keep with me, and city maps, and we have various dinners and visits to parks and fairs. We had a welcome barbeque and a farewell meal by the river. Also I had extra activities like capoeira with Willi, guitar with Leo, film, history and Brazilian music with Pablo Grasso, folklore with Julia, drawing with Giuli and even a little astronomy at the city observatory. I fell in love with the city and with the hospitality of the people of Rosario. I am grateful to all the people who entertained me, taught me and helped me.

Nayara, Brazil

What is Youth?

(This is taken from a longer article in the Servas Monthly News for December 2005. Find it on www.sioxco.org)

The definition of "YOUTH" is a big topic. Who is and who isn't? Depends on the age, the spirit? We do not need to define a fixed and rigid concept of YOUTH. We can create an open idea with different positions and different points of view. We are Servas, we are multicultural and we can live with the others differences. I asked a few friends to help me this time. Dear friends. All of them are Servas members and we share some mails to discuss about a **SERVAS YOUTH DEFINITION.**

Diane - SINGAPORE -

Being young...staying young...thinking young!

The secret is to "Be alive while you are alive!".

People who are young "by number," meaning by merely consulting documented age, usually appreciate people" in the higher numbers" who listen without criticism and who participate with enthusiasm. Today's youth hope today's elders will share their perspective in a positive and helpful manner. Servas....we have tried to give up those distinctions and look at everyone as We. Ojala!

Vipul - INDIA -

Youth doesn't have specific meaning, but commonly, a youth is defined as being between age 12 to 25. As Youth is harvested at an early stage of development; it's early time of life, and metaphorically the optimism and innocence thought accompany it. The nature of youthful experience is greatly affected by cultural and economic norms. The passage from youth to adulthood is frequently acknowledged by ritual formalities.

Cassandra - NEW ZEALAND -

Youth is a state of mind. It is a mad passion for life, a belief that you can do anything, be anyone, love everyone.

As the years progress and we strike difficult times we often lose sight of our "youthful innocence", our belief that the world is good, that we, as individuals, can really make a difference.

Through the Servas YOUTH arm we should encourage a new generation to hold tight to their idealism, passion, spirit and love of mankind, and help those that had once lost it to rediscover the youth inside of them.

Let us love each other like children do - fully, honestly, without fear.

Pablo - ARGENTINA -

I reserved for me the closing. As you know I work with YOUTH. Actually my currently job is on the design of programs for youth in social risk in my country for the local government. I must say that the YOUTH as concept is massive. But we can define some lines. A young person sees life with a long future to come, sees that the future is absolutely bigger than the past. Also characteristic of the youth is the position in front the new, something new is not something weird, it is something to learn, to discover. Defining Youth only by the age is not enough, and we all agree with that. Someone young is some one that still needs to grow up. Still needs to learn. But who does not?

Pablo Chufeni, International Youth Coordinator

Meetings

Conflict handling, Askov

On the initiative of Dag Eirik Eikeland and Jan Degrauve, National Secretaries of Norway and Denmark members of Servas from a few European countries met at Askov Folk High School in Denmark.

The participants were from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Belgium, Austria, and Britain.

There was a message of support from Geoff Maltby. Exco offered us some financial support but we decided that this meeting should be self-funded.

The topics discussed were: conflict handling and resolution, comments and questions about Distant Voting and sharing experiences of the Barcelona conference.

Jan Degrauve invited Bjarne Vestergaard a professional facilitator from Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution in Copenhagen to come and talk to us about conflict resolution. Bjarne told us about patterns in different conflicts and ways to solve them. I'd like to quote what he told us and what I later found in the brochure he gave us. "Conflicts are a part of life; they are a part of any change. They may lead to progress or havoc, depending on how we live through and approach them. The point is, in accordance with Ghandi, that conflicts should neither be suppressed nor explode in violence, but transformed into energy."

Bjarne's workshop gave us the energy to think positively about what to do in the future and how to use the tools that we had discussed at Askov at the next conference in Rome. Here are the points that we wrote and presented to Exco:

- There should be thorough introduction and information about the assembly and its agenda
- We need improvement of communication and behaviour through introducing the code of conduct (written)
- Each participant should be provided with a wordlist of basic conference words and phrases (e.g. secret ballot.)
- There is a necessity of using simple English and/or providing translation where necessary
- We should hire a professional, independent facilitator in case of foreseen conflicts
- Some issues should be discussed in smaller groups

Looking back on the GA in Barcelona were able to identify a number of good points as well as the bad ones which had already been discussed over the past year. We agreed that good will, effort and cooperation will be needed to make the next conference a successful one. We also agreed that it would be good to include our recommendations.

We discussed the draft proposal of the Distant Voting work group. We greatly appreciated their work and sent our comments.

We met every evening over a glass of wine to talk and listen to Dag Eirik's story read to us in parts. The last evening we shared the food and drink we had brought from our countries. We sang, read poems and danced. It was a true Servas night.

We worked in peace and we parted in peace. We hope to bring our new experience to Rome and share it with the participants of the EGA conference.

Ewa Dzierzawska, Poland

German GA, Scheersburg

In September 2005 we took part in the German GA in Scheersburg. This was our second time, last year we were also invited to this event, which took place near Berlin. The idea of Scheersburg was very interesting, because it was planned as a Baltic Servas organizations' meeting. Unfortunately, only four countries were represented. They were Germany (obviously!), Denmark, Finland and Poland. We were able to take part in discussions, especially the part devoted to relations with SI. We personally felt we should emphasize the fact that Servas has been operating successfully for over fifty years and our biggest responsibility should always be to this huge network of hosts and travellers involved in Servas activities. This opinion was received very positively.

We, as representatives of Poland, always feel extremely welcome in Germany. We still receive congratulations on the summer university in 2003, which is so well remembered here. From our experience we can say that it is a really effective way for countries with fewer visitors to promote themselves and encourage more people to come.

The meeting was not only spent in discussions, although German representatives debated heatedly until late. We had a chance to participate in some shows provided by the organizers (improvisation theatre) and participants – there was a joint exhibition of art created by Servas members, paintings, photos, sculpture etc, there was even a puppet show. We could also stroll along the beach and experience the Baltic Sea (some of us very literally – brave after season swimmers!). The place was very picturesque and we really regretted that we only came for the weekend, with no time to explore.

And last but not least, the conference was a great chance to meet old friends and make new ones ☺, the greatest value of Servas.

Anna Zakrzewska and Ewa Dzierzawska, Poland

From Servas Asia Meeting

Asian National Secretaries talked about their interest in four major subjects.

They want to improve the Statutes, the Distant vote, an Account management System and Appropriate Behavior and Conflict Resolution.

During discussions they thought of proposals for each subject to take to the EGA.

For the Statutes they want:

- * a statute to limit the number of terms an officer can hold the office
- * to state a length of term of office
- * an action to take if stamp fees are not paid on time
- * a number of voting rights per countries

For the Distant vote they want details of the procedure for:

- * the personal vote
- * postal voting
- * electronic voting

For an account management system they want:

- * delegate funding to be paid at the end of the conference
- * an account system using vouchers and invoices
- * a statement saying an advance may only be made if all former advances have been paid back

For behaviour + conflict resolution they want:

- * anyone who has a view to express to talk peacefully, constructively and positively.
- * all correspondence to be peaceful and positive
- * everyone to show respect to one another.

EGA - Extra General Assembly, Latina, April 2006

Your Comments please

By the time many people get SI News 2006 the EGA will be history. It will be finished and the SI Monthly News will have commented on it. What would be useful for SI News 2007 would be to have Your Comments on the EGA:

- Did you participate?
- How will it affect your country?
- How do you think it was run?
- What was good about it?
- What improvements could you suggest?
- What would you like to see in the General Assemblies?
- Should there be General Assemblies?
- Other comments.

Comments should be short and constructive. Their inclusion cannot be guaranteed. Long or derogatory comments will not be included.

Following shows some of the work done with setting up the EGA to give people an idea as to what goes on.

Agenda Working Group

From SI Exco News

8th December 2005

Servas Conference Programme

EXCO received proposals for more than a hundred items to be included in the agenda for the Servas International Conference being held at Latina (Italy) in April 2006.

There are five main types of sessions:

1. "Formal EGA sessions", where delegates and SI officers may speak, and where decisions are made, by voting on the agenda items.
2. "Associated Working Group sessions", to prepare for the Formal EGA sessions. These sessions will give you opportunities to clarify issues, help resolve differences, and focus items for final decision by voting during the Formal EGA sessions. Some of these Associated Working Group Sessions may be set up during the EGA and others may begin before the EGA (working by e-mail or teleconference).
3. "Discussion Forums" will provide a place to concentrate on specific subjects. These forums may bring reports or motions to the Formal EGA sessions.
4. "Education and Training Workshops" are intended to build our capacity to work together effectively. They are not intended to result in decisions or voting at Formal EGA sessions.
5. "Social sessions"

As President I am keen to ensure that all the agenda items submitted receive a fair hearing. Therefore, it is essential that the items are scheduled in a logical and effective way, to make best use of EGA time. As shown on the summary of agenda recommendations on www.siexco.org many agenda items will benefit from preparatory work.

In peace and friendship

Geoff Maltby, President – Servas International

Setting up the EGA

From the Peace Sec.

Like many, I am committed to a high-quality EGA. While time slipped away, I had to ask to delay the EGA, which wasted some early initiatives. The EGA had to be moved from winter in Germany to Spring, in Italy. Reconstructing the EGA plan took a lot of my time and that of others. Now many people are working together, to make this EGA one of the best Servas meetings in years.

From the General Secretary

The EGA project had two phases.

- During phase number one, we contacted all countries, eligible for funding, to remind them the deadline for requesting money was near. In addition, we offered to help them fill in the rather complicated form.

- In phase two, we contacted countries who have over 100 hosts and are therefore ineligible for funding. This contact is to remind people that the deadline for registering is due by Dec 31.

Concurrently with that project, is my work setting up a Secretariat for the EGA. It includes a group of people who are in charge of three different areas.

- **Laura Ragucci** is in charge of translations.

She will obtain people to help her translate the agenda materials in the many languages requested. These will be given to those attending the EGA at the time of their arrival. It is hoped that we can provide simultaneous translations of discussions at the EGA. We plan to project at least Spanish and French on the walls.

- **Marisa Contini** is in charge of printing.

Her work is to prepare the papers to accompany the agenda. She prepares name tags, floor plans and labels for rooms to help people find the locations where meetings will be held. In addition she is in charge of keeping delegates provided with any important information, during the EGA, to help with the work and decisions that will be made.

- **Vibeke Matorp** is in charge of public relations.

She will be acting as a liaison between delegates, observers and the hotel. She will provide a help desk. In addition she will be active in helping the moderators, the minute takers, the translators and every leader by providing services to help make their work run smoothly.

While juggling the project and secretariat, I am also in charge of working closely with the Italian support team concerning the logistics of the EGA.

Action by Servas members

Action with Asylum seekers

I read with interest the article on Servas History in the last issue of S I News, and also the report written by Servas UN representatives on the 'Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights'. One resolution passed concerned the "absolute prohibition of torture, other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment and the unlawfulness of arbitrary, summary or extrajudicial killing of an individual in all circumstances".

These words are taken directly from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of 10 Dec 1948, just before the birth of Servas, now celebrated as Human Rights Day. Other Articles of the UDHR include the right not to be held in slavery; the right to freedom of thought, conscience, opinion and expression; and the right to seek in other countries asylum from persecution.

Some of Servas Britain are helping and supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK. Amongst us we work with different organisations and Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support groups. We have been trying to get other Servas members involved by setting up a network within Servas Britain, to support each other, share concerns and exchange ideas and information. We feel this is in keeping with the original Servas ethos, and extending a welcome to those seeking asylum in our country is a reflection of our logo of the 'Open Door'.

I would like to share some of our activities. I do not want this article to be political. However it must be set in the context of recognition that the Asylum process in the UK is increasingly harsh, in which the Human Rights of those seeking asylum, including victims of torture, are ignored. The accuracy and quality of decision-making over Asylum claims has been heavily criticised by Amnesty International and by the U N High Commissioner for Refugees.

Those whose asylum claims are refused can be returned to places where they face real danger and the risk of continued persecution. Even if their claim is still being considered, Asylum Seekers are not allowed to work, but 'failed' Asylum Seekers lose all their financial support and may become totally destitute, sleeping rough, and existing on charity and hand-outs for food, clothes and other necessities. Servas members in some towns in the UK support large numbers of destitute Asylum Seekers, raising money by donations and a variety of fund-raising ventures in order to provide food and a small amount of cash on a weekly basis. Others provide short-term accommodation to homeless Asylum Seekers.

Other Servas members visit Asylum Seekers who are detained in Immigration Detention Centres. The UK is one of the few countries where Asylum Seekers, including women, some with babies and children, are routinely detained in a prison environment behind high fences, sometimes for months. This is particularly traumatic for the children, and the detention of children has been much criticised by Human Rights organisations and by lawyers.

On 1 December 2005 the EU published a new directive, as a means of 'harmonising' procedures and leading to a common Asylum system for EU states, to 'protect our borders'. In Servas International we too can work collaboratively. A couple of years ago, when an Iraqi Asylum Seeking family was deported to Spain, under the Dublin Convention / Third country ruling, because the father had fled there first before coming to the UK to be reunited with his family, Servas members in Madrid were contacted and were able to meet them and help and support them.

Wherever you are in the world, it would be great to have some response from you to the points made in this article, either in the next issue, on the web, or personally to me at saram@seelig.fsnet.co.uk.

Margaret Seelig - Servas Britain

Work as an Accompanier in Guatemala

I saw the advert in Amnesty International magazine – speak Spanish, have experience of developing countries, able to volunteer for 3 months working in Mayan communities. It was for me. After a week's training in Guatemala City with 6 other women between 28 and 65 from France, Sweden, Switzerland, I got a feel for the job ahead at the monthly reunion for all 20 accompaniers who talked about their communities and concerns that they had in their work.

My community near Chimaltenango was only 2 hours bus drive from Guatemala City. Others had 7 hour bumpy bus rides. There are mountains all over western Guatemala reaching to over 3000m. My Austrian companion and I slept on the floor of the village Health Centre at 2000m, beside the school of a village of 200 people. There was no running water but there was a cistern built into the ground which collected rainwater which we could use for washing and filter for drinking. The toilet was a latrine of cement over a large pit.

Since 1962 there had been internal armed confrontation with more than 200,000 killed and 40,000 disappeared. In 1996 the Peace Accords were signed by the government and guerrillas, overseen by the UN. The survivors are demanding an end to impunity and some are prepared to come forward as witnesses. Their concerns were intimidation and threats from members of their own and other communities where massacres had taken place during 1980-82. So the project of accompaniment started. Having an international presence in the communities proved very comforting and important to these Mayan people. They are still waiting for the court cases to be heard.

We ate with a different family each day, taking a contribution of food for them. We spent the rest of the day visiting, chatting to the witnesses, joining them or their families in their daily chores: collect water, pick beans, strip the maize plants, gather firewood, learning how to weave and crochet and make chocolate. Every meal there were tortillas and either rice and beans and very occasionally an egg, chicken or cheese if they had a cow. The sweet black coffee was very weak. Houses, clinging to the forested mountainside, were made of cane and adobe with corrugated iron roof. If the family had more money (sometimes from those in the US) the house would be of cement block.

We visited 3 other communities every 2 weeks, staying in witnesses' houses and would accompany them into the capital when there were meetings. I never felt in danger except when I went to the capital and that was probably because I read in the papers of people disappearing and women being murdered. Because I was European I felt safer.

I visited Antigua on several occasions I met up with an English host there who gave me an insider's view of Guatemala. His love and enthusiasm for his adopted country were very infectious. He's lived there since the '76 – he came just after the earthquake – and has travelled and worked extensively all over Guatemala. His opinions and his experiences of previous governments and existing corruption were thought provoking. An escapee from 1960 California and his Guatemalan wife have developed an organic macedamia nut farm and were fascinating day hosts to visit. I had an opportunity to spend the day with the coordinator of SERVAS Guatemala who worked in and drove me round Guatemala City. This was a different kind of life to my accompaniment work, her world seemed a million miles not just 2 hours drive away.

Guatemala is a magnificent country blessed with charming, colourful Maya people, the majority want to provide their families with the basics of life and retain their precious culture. But the country has massive problems, not least the wave of violence in the capital, apparently perpetuated by impunity. Until the Government and Army shake themselves rid of corrupt individuals and create the political will to see that justice is done, that racism is eradicated, and that there is greater social equality, I see a bleak future for Guatemala.

Dorothy Wilson Crow, England

Discussion

Expectations

“SERVAS is not Father Christmas,” Jane Giffould reminded me in her gently prompting email sent to remind me I had promised this article. She does have a point, but there are some apparently obvious comparisons. After all, we expect Father Christmas to deliver presents for free and give to the deserving; SERVAS is also about freely giving of your hospitality to the deserving traveller. But unlike Father Christmas, the Host should hopefully receive much in return.

I have just joined SERVAS having encountered it through Jane as ambassador and listening to her experiences of SERVAS is enough to encourage even the most doubtful, jaded or world-withdrawn to reconsider the value of simple human contact as a source of both personal and inter-societal benefit. Living in a crowded house, I have offered myself in the first place as a Day Host and hope this may lead to at least some mutually profitable encounters with those from distant shores – or close.

But is this really the expectation I should hold? It reminds me of the classic Beauty Pageant entrant saying: “I want to travel the world and meet people.” Well, who does not? But it is in the quality of the meeting that the value is found, not in the quantity. Who is to say I shall not shake hands with a dozen smiling folk, all bonhomie and goodwill and exchange conversation about the weather? It would certainly be ‘meeting people’, but would it be of value to either of us?

I think my hope is that the conversation might go beyond the weather - that the depth and breadth of it might somehow reach away from the parochial and the effervescent and find its way to more meaningful shores: the abode of true and valuable communication where one individual reaches out to another and says: “This is me.” In my view, if SERVAS is about anything, it is about that.

Eleanor Wilding, England

Languages

'Salaam'..... 'Pokoj'

'Kagiso'

'Paix'

'Rauha'

'Shalom'

All these words have the same meaning - PEACE. Some people are fluent in different languages, others are not. Yet language is essential to get meaning over to another person. How many languages do we speak between us, how many more could we speak? Look on www.siexco.org to find the Servas Monthly News. There is a language page each month. Help us extend our languages by offering to do the page in YOUR language(s), Or just send the word Peace, in your language for inclusion in SI News 2007. Send to: newsletter@servas.org

Thanks, merci, tak, xiexie, aferisto, danke schön, asante.

I wish you enough

At an airport, I overheard a father and his daughter in their last moments together. They had announced her plane's departure and standing near the door she said, 'Daddy, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I wish you enough too, Daddy.'

They kissed goodbye and she left. He walked over towards the window where I was seated. Standing there I could see he wanted and needed to cry. I tried not to intrude on his privacy, but he welcomed me in by asking, "Did you ever say goodbye to someone knowing it would be forever?"

"Yes, I have," I replied. Saying that brought back memories I had of expressing my love and appreciation for all my Dad had done for me. Recognizing that his days were limited, I took the time to tell him face to face how much he meant to me. So I knew what this man was experiencing.

"Forgive me for asking, but why is this forever goodbye?" I asked. "I am old and she lives much too far away. I have challenges ahead and the reality is, her next trip back will be for my funeral," he said.

"When you were saying goodbye I heard you say, 'I wish you enough, may I ask what that means?'"

He began to smile. "That's a wish that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everyone." He paused for a moment and, looking up as if trying to remember it in detail, he smiled even more. "When we said, 'I wish you enough,' we were wanting the other person to have a life filled with enough good things to sustain them."

He continued and then, turning toward me, he shared the following as if he were reciting it from memory:

I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.
I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.
I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.

I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger.

I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.

I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.

I wish you enough "Hellos" to get you through the final "Goodbye".

He then began to sob and walked away.

My friends and loved ones, I wish you enough.

They say, "It takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but an entire lifetime to forget them."

L V Subramanian, Bangalore India

Servas and the United Nations

SERVAS INTERNATIONAL AT UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS SIXTY-FIRST SESSION

(Geneva, 14 March – 22 April 2005)

During the six-week session, the Commission adopted 86 resolutions, 16 decisions and four statements by its Chairperson, Makarim Wibisono of Indonesia.

The Commission is composed of 53 member States. It is the World's foremost human rights forum. This sixty-first session was attended by about hundred observer States and more than two hundred Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The subject of terrorism came up in several resolutions and decisions. Within the context of its agenda item on the protection of human rights, the Commission adopted a set of Basic Principles and Guidelines on the right to a remedy and reparation for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law. Concerning the question of Palestine, the Commission expressed grave concern about the continuing construction, contrary to international law, by Israel of the wall inside the occupied Palestine territory and demanded that Israel comply fully with its legal obligations.

In his address to the Commission on 7 April, United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan elaborated on proposals to reform the human rights machinery of the United Nations: A Human Rights Council could provide conceptual and architectural clarity, in parallel with the existing councils tasked to deal with security and development.

The action plan of the High Commissioner Louise Arbour, to be submitted to the Secretary-General, is said to be based upon three concepts: that human rights were universal and indivisible; that States remained the primary actors in the field of human rights; and that there must be implementation of human rights.

On agenda item "THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION", *SERVAS INTERNATIONAL* has associated itself with 13 other NGO's on a joint oral statement* addressed to the Commission during the plenary meeting, morning of April 18.

The sixty-second session of the Commission will take place from 13 March to 21 April 2006.

*Joint statement on behalf of: Soka Gakkai International; International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education – OIDEL; Servas International; International Association for Religious Freedom; World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women; Institute for Planetary Synthesis; Pax Romana; Women's World Summit Foundation; Lutheran World Federation; International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism; African Society of International and Comparative Law; Women's Federation for World Peace International; International Council of Jewish Women; and Australian Council for Overseas Aid.

SERVAS INTERNATIONAL AT UN SUB-COMMISSION ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION

(Geneva, 25 July – 12 August 2005)

Created by the Commission on Human Rights and consisting of 26 Experts from five regional groups, the Sub-Commission undertakes studies and makes recommendations to the Commission on Human Rights. The Commission must approve all its resolutions and decisions. About hundred observer States and nearly a hundred Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) attended this fifty-seventh session of the Sub-Commission. The Chairperson was Vladimir Katashkin, himself one of the 26 Experts.

During the session 46 resolutions and decisions have been adopted.

Under specific human rights issues, this session of the Sub-Commission adopted texts concerning human rights and the human genome; discrimination against leprosy victims and their families; the World Programme for Human Rights Education; human rights and non-state actors; Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

The Sub-Commission decided on next year's composition of Experts for its Working Groups on minorities, slavery, indigenous populations, communications, and the Social Forum. The various studies and working papers undertaken by the members of the Sub-Commission had, to a large extent, helped to identify and develop new areas for further consideration.

The fifty-eighth session of the Sub-Commission will be held from 7 to 25 August 2006.

Hilda Burer

*Representative of SERVAS INTERNATIONAL to the
United Nations in Geneva*

Other sessions attended include:

58th Annual DPI/NGO Conference - Our Challenge: Voices for Peace/ Partnership and Renewal

held at the New York UN Headquarters
on 7 to 9 September 2006
attended by Noema Chaplin and others

Reports from participants are often put into the Servas Monthly News to be found on: www.siexco.org

Servas and UN, comments

New United Nations Institution -- a major UN initiative

A new institution of the UN is being established:

- 1) a global Human Rights Council, likely to be announced at the end of the current General Assembly of the UN
- 2) a major initiative: "High-Level Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor" was to be announced 13 September, 2005.

The New Human Rights Council, to be centred in Geneva, is part of the UN Reform. It would strengthen the UN focus on Human Rights.

Unlike the Human Rights Commission, which now meets only 3 months annually, the Human Rights Council will be an all year UN activity. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, is making rapid progress.

As an official ECOSOC non government organization (NGO), Servas can accredit observers, if there is any interest.

This means organizing work, linking with other observers, meetings with interested Servas people and organizers, attending discussions -- including discussion of the founding documents of the Council -- reviewing its agenda, networking with other observers in Servas and others, such as those in CONGO and introducing Servas to them.

Because Servas is not specialized in Human Rights, our observers do not require the expertise indicated at the web site below. But some knowledgeable Servas people would certainly be helpful -- both in Geneva and Servas Human Rights "ambassadors" in other regions of the world.

http://www.ishr.ch/about%20ISHR/Training/AGTC/AGTC-presentation_2006.htm

Servas observers may focus on, say, a limited range of rights identified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which however leaves out some recently-recognized rights, such as "environmental rights"). For instance, we may be interested in the rights to travel and migrate, the rights of Youth, or in the Rights of the Poor. This could contribute to the new Commission on the Poor.

Alternately, Servas Human Rights observers, might ask national secretaries across Servas to suggest priorities. 2) High Level Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor. Norway, with support from the governments of UK, Canada, Egypt, Guatemala and Tanzania proposed this to the UN. The Commission would continue for 2 years. It would be headed by former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, and centred in New York.

Please let me know whether you are interested in assisting in the birth and nurturing of the Human Rights Council, a new UN institution, or give me the names of those you think would be interested.

Also let me know whether you would like to monitor and network and report to Servas on the Commission on the Poor.

Please send me your advice. Please also note: for youth and others qualified and interested in career advancement there may be some new positions and internships at the UN, as a result of these initiatives.

Gary Sealey, peacesecretary@servas.org

Servas and United Nations

Some varying view points

following from Gary Sealey's article

Against:

Servas and the United Nations are two different organisations. One is a non-political organisation and the other is a political one consisting of all rich and powerful nations of the world. One promotes peace through people contact, be they rich or poor, throughout the world, while the other tries to bring peace to the governments of nations at war through political discussions.

I think Servas should not get involved with the activities of the United Nations. Just because the current Peace Secretary of Servas and his predecessor were able to be representing Servas at UN meetings doesn't mean that Servas members should abide by the UN decisions.

S.C. Sundararaj (Malaysia)

For:

I think that it is very important that Servas is a part of the United Nations. The United Nations is our best hope for peace in the world. When there was no United Nations or it was ineffective, we ended up with World War I and II. If at least, the countries' leaders (or their representatives) are talking to one another, there is less of a chance of war. If there was no place for all the world leaders to communicate, work things out and be susceptible to world pressure, we would likely head down the path to war again. For example, when US President George Bush took his idea of invading Iraq to the UN, the majority of countries refused to go along with Bush's plan to invade Iraq -- so it is not a UN sanctioned war/invasion.

As well, the UN does noble things like working towards eliminating poverty.

The United Nations is our only hope for world peace.

As a Servas member I am very pleased that we are associated with this peace making body.

Sylvia Krogh

Exco Reports and Budget

From the President

2005 started with more than 20% of member countries of Servas International requesting that an additional General Assembly be held. Accordingly, Exco has arranged for an Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) to be held at Latina (Italy) from 2 to 8 April 2006. A considerable amount of time and effort is required in the initial discussion stages together with financial budgeting and planning arrangements to convene a General Assembly. Whilst I know that the Exco 'team' with valuable assistance from some Servas officers have made adequate plans to convene a high quality General Assembly in Italy – there remains the fact that the time spent on this project could have been used on the much needed development of Servas globally.

The 'buddy' system has been well and truly used this past year. Servas countries who are financially well placed offer to 'buddy' another Servas country by providing the funds to publish that country's Host List. or for another country's delegate to travel to Italy to attend the EGA.

In September India held a Servas Asian meeting in New Delhi. Exco members attended the meeting together with representatives from the Servas countries of China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. It was a good meeting with lengthy discussions on current issues, which will be discussed and voted upon at the planned EGA in April. From this meeting plans were also made with Servas Kyrgyzstan for the future development of Servas in Central Asia.

Transparency has been and still is the theme of the current Exco team and decisions made, actions taken and correspondence can all be viewed or downloaded from our website at www.servas.org/siexco

In peace and friendship

Geoff Maltby, President – Servas International

From the Host list Co-ordinator

When I decided to stand for Servas International it was my intention to give my experience and ability to help it overcome some obvious problems it has experienced in the last years. I wanted to help transform it to a real organization where decentralisation, cooperation and volunteer approach was the basis and "sensitive team work" was routine.

As written in last Italian newsletter from current Italian Peace Secretary we are doing a quest to:

- appreciate and enhance each person and the common cooperation,
- share experience, values and problems,
- stimulate a constructive handling of conflicts.

My work in Servas in 2004 and 2005 had been quite diverse and covered many fields out of the strict Host List Coordination activities. In doing them I've been greatly helped by all the helpers, people from each countries and especially my friends in EXCO, who I really want to thank for their continual support and back up that was very needed.

Here is a very rough and partial resume of some of them: →

Peace in Servas and beyond: SI Peace Secretary's Report

Learnings since the GA in Spain

People are not born with rules; they learn them or make them. Through its UN observers, Servas witnesses creation of new rules, like those for managing Climate Change.

EXCO Challenges

At my election in 2004 I wanted to help Servas rise to the great goals of the world: Peace, living together in harmony with each other and with nature. I wanted to encourage networks of Peace volunteers and stronger UN Servas' observation posts, attracting new Servas hosts and travellers. About 45 people attended workshops on Peace Activism in Servas.

Servas is moving to a federated network of many local clubs and big associations. Big Servas groups may have to live by tough rules and maybe under government supervision. Small Servas groups live more informally. These differences between big and small, between friendship and formal, call for dialogue. Watch the new maps on www.servas.org -- could a Map of Servas change the way we see each other?

My first job was to help EXCO. None of us had worked together. I facilitated a meeting at Paris where we learned from each other, trying to understand old and continuing arguments.

To build understanding, I set out a format for discussion: Principles before opinions, clearly state the issues, evaluate alternatives and consequences. Avoid gossip. Work toward the positive, energy-giving side of life. With some risk, I worked with the Moderator of ServasNet.

I promoted teleconferencing to connect EXCO and volunteers more closely. Servas has much to learn in its own international regions. For that reason, I encouraged international meetings in Western Europe, Asia, the Youth Project. These preparations have been successful because of the remarkable people in Servas.

Gary Sealey, Peace Secretary

Hostlist Coordinator Tasks:

- keylist group establishing, keylist survey and hostlist request
- facilitation on some Buddy projects for hostlist electronic/ physical preparation and distribution,
- Active Participation in the Paris conference in November 2004 and preparation for eGA in Latina in April 2005,
- Help organize India and Servas Asia meeting in Sept, Delhi

ICT Caretaking tasks:

- established siexco "wiki" as a more transparent, public communication model from Servas International to each Country, Officers and Servas members,
- experimented some communication models for exchanging information and opinions among the members.
- Set up Servas forum.
- Maintained Keylist and general infrastructure of the website (except Whale, not connected with SI, handled by Germany),
- Enhanced Keylist so that can be now updated locally by Local Keylist editors.

Claudio Pacchiega, Host List Co-ordinator

Exco Reports and Budget

From the General Secretary

Recently I have organized a group of people who helped make personal contact with every National Secretary. My assignment (by EXCO) was to learn which countries were sending a delegate to the EGA.

(Detail of this is given in the EGA section)

As well, the EXCO is constantly in communication with each other. We have consistently sent all emails to all EXCO so that we are well informed about every need that is brought to EXCO. This is a policy that makes a lot of work, but it also makes it possible to make informed decisions quickly.

Throughout the year I have been collecting Annual Reports for the year 2004. At the end of this month, I will be asking for the Annual Reports for the year 2005. Those will be due during March.

We, the members of EXCO have very complex work loads. That we are seeing success, makes the work most enjoyable for me. It is gratifying to work with so many brilliant, concerned and helpful people.

Honora Clemens, SI General Secretary

From the Vice President

The Vice-president shall:

Perform the functions of the president in the absence of, or incapacity of the president;

Be responsible for the development & strengthening of national Servas groups;

Keep broadly informed about the work of the Area Coordinators, represent their interests in the executive committee;

Perform such other functions, as shall be delegated by the President or General Assembly.

Carried Out in 2005

After suspension from Exco team in the Paris meeting of Nov 9/2004 I have been unable to carry out fully any functions as VP. My suspension in my view is unconstitutional and against the wishes of those who elected me. The unfortunate position has resulted from being accused, without any evidence, of fraudulent use of Exco Servas money by the previous audit committee. Although there have been attempts to resolve the issue using intermediaries and friends, little movement has been possible as the original accusation for which I claim innocence has not been withdrawn. Without wishing to plead poverty, as a Nepali, I have no resources at my disposal to pursue my case and the justices due to me. Some activities I have done during the period are as follows:

- Attended the Rochester (New York State) Host gathering on September 10 2005
- Attended in the First Asia Meeting organized by Servas India in Delhi from Sept 23 -25 2005
- Attended the Exco meeting morning session on September 27/05

Lastly but not the least I would like to thank all friends and well wishers who had supported me in this critical situation.

Bibendra Pradhanang, Vice President, SI

From the Treasurer

(FOTO removed)

Rafting in a strong river is far easier than being Treasurer of Servas.

This picture shows how the past 1½ year were ☺

Dear Servas Friends,

I send greetings from Istanbul where Europe meets with Asia.

We are now preparing for a very important event for Servas, the General Assembly. I hope it will clear suspended and urgent issues and opens doors for development.

As the Treasurer I want to give you some brief financial information about Servas International 2004.

Exco expenses for 2004 were 30000 CHF this also includes expenses for General Assembly in Spain. There is significant decrease on telephone cost, because of using Skype as a free communication tool. Exco2004, especially Claudio Pacciega, promoted, encouraged and educated countries to use Skype.

There are no new assets (eg computer) for new Exco. The only asset was for Amir Levy, who was leader of the ICT team. For this, purchase procedures were followed cooperating with the former Audit committee and former Treasurer.

For General Assembly in Spain SI partially funded 5 Area Coordinators, SI News Editor, Audit Committee Convenor, 21 delegates, 5 Exco members and 1 UN representative. Some Youths were partially funded. A big thank you to all volunteers in Spain and all those who put lots of energy to make it success. We spent almost 100,000 CHF for conference (some paid in 2005).

General Assemblies are very expensive organizations for Servas. We can do lot with that amount of money. I wish there was a cheaper way to have a conference using developing Computer Technology. I hope Claudio can improve some "Video General Assembly" in the near future. We have to have maximum productivity in the coming General Assembly.

Expenses are approximately for all Area Coordinators 7300 CHF, for ICT 7500 and 17000 for SI News Letter during 2004. We spend a big amount of money on this Newsletter, please may members read it and help to improve the quality.

I worked on Audit Report Actions, started in Budapest, Sept 2004. It takes a lot of time to recover problems. We are now far better but still need regulations in General Assembly. I want to thank Audit committee for their work on Financial Operating Procedures. Please refer to my Treasurer Action Report- 2 April 04 for details.

Income from Stamps payment is almost 60000 CHF and most payment was done in early 2005.

End The end of 2004 SI had 38,000 CHF in Private account, 9000 EURO in Current account and 135,000 CHF in Saving account.

In 2005 SI Exco supported: S America development project, Patagonia meeting (2006), S Asia meeting, S Africa meeting.

Amounts are rounded; see Annual report for exact amounts

Bariş ve Sevgiyle (with peace and love) *Ömer Özkan, SI Treasurer*

Until next year

Looking Forward

Articles for next year

Articles for SI News 49 and Servas Monthly News are welcome. They should be no more than 200 words long. Photos can be included but cannot always be used. There is no guarantee that articles will be published either in entirety or in part. As many as possible are used. Articles which are defamatory about any specific person or place will not be used. Negative points about travellers or hosts should have been raised with the local co-ordinators to get the problem sorted out. General discussion is welcome.

Particularly looking for travel and event reports.

Articles for Servas Monthly News on the internet can arrive at any time. Articles for SI News (hard copy) must arrive before 30 Nov 2006.

Articles should be sent to:
newsletter@servas.org or
jgiffould@aol.com

or:
 20 Weavers Row, Halstead,
 Essex, CO9 2JX, England.

Notices

Learn from the mistakes of others, you won't live long enough to make them all yourself.

Meet Servas Friends in London at the Pontefract Castle

When: First Monday each month

Time: 6.30 pm onwards

Where: third floor, Pontefract Castle pub
 Wigmore Street, behind Oxford Street
 nearest tube: Bond Street.

What about your notices
 HERE
 next year?

Keep looking round, there is always something you have missed.

*From aviation:
 Never let an aircraft take you somewhere your brain didn't get to five minutes earlier - plan ahead.*

Servas Britain New on-line address

Website: www.servasbritain.org

Email: info@servasbritain.org

*SI News printed by:
 PRINT-IT, Brighouse, Yorks
 England*

Your views

These are important so that we can get it how you want it.

When and how did you get your SI News? What do you think of SI News? What would you like to see in it?

Fill in the form below and send to above address or email me at the above address. Thanks. JG editor.

Name

Country Host Traveller

Month received With what other Servas material?

Parts liked and why

.....

Parts not liked and why

.....

Would you like to contribute and article?

What topic?

Contact address

.....

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