



New School, New Hope

by Andy Gaertner

I was part of a Farmer to Farmer delegation last February that visited the Weavers Committee in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. Our short visit to Guatemala was punctuated by reminders of the recent civil war. That history was present in every conversation we had, as people shared openly and emotionally about their experiences.

On our way to see the new school in Tzanchaj, a village about four kilometers from Santiago Atitlan, we stopped to visit a memorial to a massacre that had taken place nearby. In the aftermath of that massacre, the people of Atitlan had demanded that the military leave the area. Their use of non-violent resistance in the face of oppressive violence won the day. The military left Atitlan and has not returned since. What incredible strength and bravery!

When we arrive at Tzanchaj, we were again privileged to witness incredible strength and bravery of the community. One of the board members of the Weavers Committee, Diego, brought us to their community school, which he and his wife, Maria, had helped found the year before.

Prior to its founding, the students of Tzanchaj had to walk up to four kilometers to school. In addition, the families had to pay a twenty-quetzales admission fee for each student every year. Twenty quetzales (about \$2.50) is a full day's wages for a rural laborer in that part of Guatemala. Families in Tzanchaj have as many as seven to nine children and school was financially unavailable to over 60 percent of the population.

Unlike the public school, students at this community school pay no inscription fee, and are not required to wear



COFFEE REPORT FOR 2003

Farmer to Farmer

is organized to build mutual friendship and cultural understanding among rural people so that we might better understand and accompany each other in our common struggles. We seek to promote peace within ourselves, within our community, and across international boundaries. We envision agriculture that is sustainable and respectful of the earth, and one that remains in the hands of the people who live on and work the land. We support grassroots agricultural projects that are democratically initiated and managed. Always, our decisions about a project will be guided by the respect that characterizes the relationship between friends. As an organization, we affirm the sacredness of the earth and shall work for and respect the rights of all people and cultures to self-determination.

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Contact Information

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The coffee project, which was initiated three years ago, has continued to flourish. This statement can be confirmed not only by the increase in sales but also by the need to start paying the local coffee laborers a small stipend. In October 2003, Farmer to Farmer started paying Carol, Jody and Stephanie \$30/week each. This amount has helped prevent burn-out and covers some of the mileage costs.

Just to demonstrate our progress, here are some fun number comparisons. In 2002 we sold 2,059 lbs. of roasted beans and that number increased to 4,110 lbs. in 2003.

At the same time, we added about 20 more customers. Our total income from coffee sales in 2002 was \$16,000 and in 2003 that became \$30,800. That's about a 90 percent increase in sales in one year.

We are projecting sales of around 10,000 lbs. of green coffee

beans this year. Green beans lose about 20 percent of their weight in roasting, so that works out to about 8,000 lbs. of roasted beans.

We are working on bringing up our coffee in a container, shipped by boat. This would bring down the cost of shipping, making our wholesale coffee price more competitive.

Last but not least, in our last newsletter when we listed the businesses selling our coffee, we somehow left out two of our favorites: The Muffler Shop in Menomonie and Baldwin, and Jay Gilbertson Salon in Minneapolis. We apologize and send an extra thanks to these two awesome businesses.

Thanks again to all of you buying our coffee. Together, we do make a difference in the lives of these Mayan farmers and their families.



Malt Booth Update

F2F is looking into other events for fundraising with the malt booth. We're talking about selling malts at the Energy Fair in Custer, Wisconsin. We will be at either the St. Croix County Fair in Glenwood City, or the Dunn County Fair in Menomonie. We will once again need a lot of help. If you are interested in getting involved please contact Steve Hearth at (715) 455-1629 or kshearh@chibardun.net.



La Porvendencia

by Jody Slocum

In February I traveled to Guatemala with Andy Gaertner, Steve Hearth and my 16-year-old son, Matt Buetow. We spent a week visiting our friends in Santiago Atitlan and at Father Greg's Mission in San Lucas Toliman.

When we visited the El Porvenir community and farm in 2003, the families were recovering from a devastating landslide that tore through their village the previous September. The farm was abandoned. The families were living in temporary housing several kilometers away.

During our visit this year, we were pleased to see that the families have moved back to El Porvenir, where they will live until the purchase of La Porvendencia, their new farm, is completed. The place was once again full of life, with kids running around and adults working on coffee picking and processing. We were met by a large group of happy, playful children. I had my digital camera and, because the images appear immediately, all the children wanted to have their picture taken. I took

picture after picture. In between each, the children would pack around me to see their image, then laugh and laugh. It was wonderful to see them so joyful and just being



kids. I was left with no doubt that this community will make it through these hard times and thrive in their new location.

Three Mayan communities (El Porvenir, El Toltoya, and El Tierra Santa) will be sharing the 800-acre La Porvendencia farm, which will be divided between them. They will probably share a school for the older children, but it is very important for each community to keep its

own separate identity and build its own village.

Right now Father Greg and others are negotiating for the land.

This came in a recent e-mail from

Father Greg on:

"This Saturday the Committees [in charge of the land purchase] will begin work with a woman named Doña Gloria in the final arrangements for the purchase of the plantation La Porvendencia. Doña Gloria was in the U.S.A. for a while...has returned...and is as eager as we are to move ahead on the finalization of this purchase. I will keep you informed as to progress."

It's inspiring to watch this momentous undertaking move forward. There will be opportunities to assist with home construction and other projects on the new land, if you're interested in going to Guatemala to help. You may also make a donation toward the purchase of building materials or other supplies.

For more information, contact Farmer to Farmer or call Kathy Huebert at The San Lucas Diocese at 507-359-2966. •

"Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on...you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the truth of the work itself. And there, too, a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. The range tends to narrow down, but it gets much more real. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything." - excerpted from *"Letter to a young activist"* by Thomas Merton

Remembering Carol

Carol Adams' sudden death in a car accident on January 23, 2004, left a big hole in our community. Carol was a long-time F2F board member. She gave tirelessly of her time to F2F and many other organizations.



Carol and her husband, Gordon, moved to Glenwood City in 1976 where her son, Craig, and his wife, Lucy Altemus, were farming. Her daughter, Lynn, and her family also live in Glenwood City.

We will really miss Carol's contributions and presence in our organization as well as in our lives.

This poem by Kate Hearth expresses just how deeply she will be missed. •



Prisoner of Conscience

On January 26, 2004, Craig Adams was sentenced to 90 days in federal prison for trespassing onto the base of Fort Benning, Georgia, to protest the Schol of the Americas (WHINSEC). He will be serving his sentence at the Federal Corrections Institution in Sandstone, Minnesota, beginning June 22. Fifteen of his 27 co-defendants began serving their sentences on April 6th.

In June, we will post Craig's address on our website if you are interested in writing to him. More information is available at www.soaw.org.

F2F supports Craig in this courageous stand against injustice.

Friend Has Flown By Kate Hearth

Friend has flown.
She stops on her way,
sets the annual report on the side table,
numbers tallied and balanced.

Friend has flown.
At the kitchen
she takes the pan of bars from the oven,
cuts and plates it,
leaves it for the evening meeting.

Friend has flown.
Yet she pauses at the booth to make a malt,
hands it there to one who now will learn
of world's connections, through her eyes.

Friend has flown.
Sweet bird who graced us
as we walked and talked together
She turns,
There is her soft sweet smile,
then she turns again
And spreads her wings.
Friend has flown

Tribute to Roxanne Webster

Farmer to Farmer wishes to pay tribute to the passing of Roxanne Webster of Ladysmith, Wisc. Roxanne and her husband, Paul Webster, travelled with Lucy Altemus to Nicaragua in January 1989 to explore the idea of Farmer to Farmer working with the Nicaraguan National Union of Agriculturists. Roxanne was a person of deep understanding of the world's rural poor as she spent considerable time living amongst them in Guatemala, Zaire and Zambia. We share with her family in their grief upon her death.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

BY ANDY GAERTNER

What does it mean to be a farmer? What does "local" mean? What does "fair trade" imply? Since I agreed to serve as president of Farmer to Farmer I have been thinking about these issues a lot.

I am inspired by the dedication of the people who built F2F. I am proud to continue the work of a group of people committed to promoting peace, sustainable agriculture, justice, and solidarity not in the abstract, but in the real world.

One personal challenge is to learn to live and participate in community. Oppressive forces in today's society tend to isolate people from each other. When market forces supply the most products for the least price, I lose my relationship with the people who produce them. When I live a life of blissful ignorance of the consequences of my purchases, I contribute to those oppressive systems.

Travel and organic farming have been my antidotes. My time in the Peace Corps in Honduras energized my conscience and I began to

understand the links between my life in the US and my friends' lives in Central America.

When I returned from the Peace Corps and started working on a Community Supported Agriculture farm, I stopped seeing food as simply fuel. Instead I began to understand food as a means to cultivate deep connections between people.

I see that for many of us in F2F our relationship with the Weavers' Committee in Santiago Atitlan has been a catalyst to energize our consciences. The coffee project has grown because it works in the same way that Community Supported Agriculture works. You put a face on the farmer. I crave that human contact more than caffeine.

I like to think that when I hold a pound of F2F coffee I can see inside of it. It is not coffee, but it is a complex relationship between people.

I envision a time when I can see inside of all of the products I eat or use. This task is bigger than me, and requires education, research,

and the building of complex relationships.

This brings me back to my initial questions. I recently had a conversation with F2F member Lara Jablon. I had suggested that we need to think of fair trade in terms of local products like milk and chicken food as well as internationally traded products like coffee and chocolate.

She suggested that perhaps we need to expand our definition of local to include those with whom we have relationships through the products we buy.

What does it mean for Farmer to Farmer to be an organization committed to peace, justice, and solidarity in the context of local products and local relationships? How can we as a community use the coffee project as a model for healing the rest of the complex relationships that we have through the products we buy and eat? I'm looking forward to finding out. You may contact me via e-mail at farmcrew@baldwin-telecom.net. •

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New School, New Hope, continued from the cover

uniforms. Many classes are taught in Tzutuhil, the indigenous language of Santiago Atitlan. (The right to bilingual education was a major victory of the 1996 peace accords.) Teachers and students were welcoming and proud. Now in its second year, these differences are striking

The entire community has come together to work on the school. The 240 students had already burst the seams of its seven

rented classrooms. When the school was short two classrooms this year, families put together money and bought sheets of roofing material, then built temporary classrooms with hand-hewn posts to support the roof and what looked like woven-bamboo walls.

Later on, we discovered the full scope of this project, when Diego shared the plan, developed by the Committee of Concerned Citizen (COEDUCA), for a new facility.

A proposed school building in Tzanchaj will house the elementary school along with a middle school, a health care facility and a community center.

The middle school curriculum will be interdisciplinary, including sustainable agriculture and other practical life skills.

COEDUCA has received the donation of a piece of land and is seeking donors and partners. If you, or a group or institution you are affiliated with, would like help this school secure necessary books, supplies and building materials, please send your contribution to F2F and we will forward it on.

If you'd like a copy of the COEDUCA proposal in English, e-mail me at farmcrew@baldwin-telecom.net. •



from left to right: Andy Gaertner, Diego (school organizer), Francisco, Jody Slocum, Rosa and Steve Hearth.

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