

Surviving Stan



The following article is from journal entries of Rosa Dalila Esquina de Sapalú, Rosa Esquina's daughter and resident of Santiago Atitlan.

September 28, 2005.

I began the day with premonitions, worry and fear all wrapped up, because the night had brought weird noises of domestic animals—hens, roosters, dogs, cats. I asked myself, “What are these animals trying to tell us with their cries? Do these sounds mean something terrible is going to happen? Maybe an earthquake?” These were the questions I asked myself.

October 1

It is the first of October, thanks to God that nothing has happened, but something in my chest tells me that I should continue believing something out of the ordinary is going to happen. The day was cloudy and the day itself felt sad.

I was remembering how three months ago the mayor had said that the Guatemalan Seismological Center (INCIDUME) had done a study of the Volcano and that there was a high probability that soon the Volcano would erupt. These words had me thinking. and I asked myself, “What will happen, could it be an eruption? Will we all die because of the eruption? Or maybe, if they knew the dates, maybe we could get away from the eruption?” But it never had crossed my mind what would happen because of the strong rains of Hurricane Stan.

Really my worry was that if there was an eruption, I would be caught alone, because my children and I live a ways away from where my parents live. I am often alone with my children because my husband works in the Capital (Guatemala City). Maybe I wouldn't be so worried if my husband were at home. If he lived with us we would be happier, not only because we miss him so much, but also because sometimes he returns from the Capital late at night and we are always worried for his safe return and our own safety in his absence. At night there are so many thieves out, and others who like to scare people by knocking on doors just to bother them, or maybe to see if people are really there.

I was even more worried when the domestic animals continued to howl strangely, and I remembered how my husband, Jeronimo, had said the when the animals make abnormal sounds they are trying to tell us something. This is because animals always are more in touch with their premonitions than people are. The one thing Jeronimo



*top: a house buried by the mudslides, marked by a cross
middle: the mudflow covered the entire village of Panabaj
bottom: the new Hospitalito was destroyed*

continued on page 3

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.

.....

Board of Directors

Nancy Keith-Popp, president
Donn & Sadie Goodlaxson,
vice-president/secretary
Jody Slocum, treasurer
Rebecca Kilde, newsletter
Kisten Gillespie, organization
Andy Gaertner, outreach
Craig Adams, fundraising

Contact Information

We're always pleased to hear from you. You can get in touch with us by mail at:

Farmer to Farmer
PO Box 303
Glenwood City, WI 54013

or by e-mail at:
info@farmertofarmer.org

visit our website:
farmertofarmer.org

where you can sign up to join our
Yahoo group.

IN THIS (BIG) ISSUE

Spring is exploding outside here in Wisconsin, with a glorious din of birdsong, and a riot of green. Farmer to Farmer is also budding; strong roots are sending out vigorous growth. It's been an incredible few months, and the newsletter is bigger this time so there's space for the many voices that contribute vibrancy and vision to our organization.

As always, this newsletter is a wonderful collaboration. Jody Slocum worked her usual organizational magic, and pulled in all the pieces, as well as contributing a wealth of photographs. Kisten Gillespie helped out with editing, and Andy Gaertner translated our cover story. We have some new writers in this issue, along with our cadre of dedicated wordsmiths.

The cover story is a powerful, first-hand account of the devastating night that the mudslides engulfed Panabaj. While pictures and news reports give one perspective, we felt that Dalila's words offer an insight that could only come from someone who was there. We are greatly indebted to her for sharing this moving and personal account.

Our first Work Tour to Santiago Atitlan was a resounding success! The crews pitched in, and got a lot done. More than building a workshop and improving a school, participants built friendships and formed insights that are as strong as the physical changes. We've included a few of their stories and pictures.

Farmer to Farmer's Annual Meeting this year broke new ground, too. The board got together to envision what the future could hold for our organization, and put together some practical ways to move in that direction. And, as always, we shared food, heard new ideas, and got to see some of our supporters. You can find out more on pages 10 and 11.

Add your voice! Write us. Tell us what you think. Volunteer, or come to one of our events. Spring is in the air, and it's a great time to grow.

FARMER TO FARMER BOOTH AT THE LIVING GREEN EXPO MAY 6-7

Stop by and check out Farmer to Farmer's booth at the Living Green Expo, held at the Grandstand Building at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in St. Paul, Minnesota. We'll be sampling brewed coffee and selling beans, selling beadwork from Guatemala, and sharing information. There'll be exhibitors related to all aspects of living more sustainably. Family activities are planned for both days. Admission and parking are free. For more information, go to www.livinggreen.org.

BOARD MEETING REPORT

The Retreat

On Saturday, March fourth, the board of Farmer to Farmer met for a day-long retreat led by long-time member Tom Quinn.

- The board developed some concrete strategies for managing our growth:
- We need a budget at the beginning of our fiscal year to streamline the decision-making processes.
 - The committees were empowered to make recommendations to the board, rather than having to discuss everything at the board meetings.

continued on page 10

continued from the cover

told me was to have faith in God that nothing bad will happen, and ask God to protect us and bless us today and forever. These words from my husband consoled me a lot, however there was still something that wouldn't let me feel comfortable.

...Now a day and a night have passed and nothing has happened, but there are grey clouds and a little drizzle and it feels very cold and the sky looks forlorn.

October 3

I needed to travel to Guatemala City and I went with my sisters to the Capital, them to their studies and me to arrange my papers in order to work in a new hotel. I took my children along, and we stopped by to see my husband. When I returned it was 2:30 in the morning and raining hard (this was Monday). I was really tired because I had to bring my children and it had been raining so hard, but this trip was in order to help my husband so that one day our financial circumstances would allow him to return to work in Santiago Atitlan. His children miss him so.

In the return trip from the Capital, as we arrived at a place called Miramar, there was a long line of vehicles. We learned that there had been an accident because of the hard rains we'd been having. As soon as I heard that the accident involved a truck from Santiago Atitlan, I said to myself with a pain in my heart, "My God, I hope that there won't be too many dead and wounded!" And when they told us that there was only one dead and many wounded, I started to think about their families. This had happened to me once, and it can really be worrisome and sad.

As we arrived at Santiago Atitlan, my parents came out to receive us and my mom said "Thank God that you're safe because everywhere it is raining hard because of Hurricane Stan, and there

have been a lot of accidents!" I told her that we were fine but I was tired and I wanted to go rest. My energy would come and go, so my dad took us to our house.

October 4

It rained more and the rain wouldn't stop and the earth was completely saturated and the sun wouldn't come out for anything. We really did miss the sun. People in town now couldn't leave their houses because the rain came with high winds.

By the afternoon of the fourth, the electricity went out for the first time because of the high winds. As soon as I saw that it wouldn't stop raining, I went to the store to buy what I needed

I thought that I was dreaming that there were ambulance sirens and people crying for help in the street.

so I wouldn't have to leave my house again as the night fell. At 8:30 pm, the energy quit again, and since everything was dark I heard a loud noise and I felt a little rumble, but I didn't even imagine that the Volcano was already making noises and was already worrying people of the village of Panabaj.

When I next noticed what time it was, it was 10:05 pm. It was night and I was very worried. I kept a candle burning in the house so we wouldn't be left in absolute darkness. With fear and sadness we laid down to sleep, we prayed, and we asked God to guard us from danger and forgive us our sins. At that moment, Scarlett, my six-year-old daughter, because of the rumble and noise of the rain with the wind and because it wouldn't stop raining, said to me with fear "Mama, why are there tremors and so much rain? I've never seen so much rain in my whole life." The only thing I

could say to her is that it was normal to have so much rain and wind and if we've never seen it before, well, there's a first time for everything.

About ten minutes later she asked me if I could go with her to the bathroom, and I went with her. I hadn't noticed anything, but she screamed "Mama! Mama! The rainwater is running down the steps of the house!" There was a lot of rainwater entering the house and with fear I took the lantern and went out to the yard of our house to see if maybe the tube where the water should go was clogged. When I saw that it wasn't clogged, I was really afraid, because it continued to rain and even rained harder. Scarlett told me with fear, "I miss my dad and I'm afraid of the rain!" As I

saw her fear, I lay myself down between my two children and hugged them close and told them not to fear because God is with them and so am I. Scarlett told me "When my dad is here I'm not afraid." After singing to and caressing my children, they both fell fast asleep. I stayed awake and afraid, but I had to be the strong one for them. A lot of cold air was entering under the doors and windows and I went to cover the drafts and then I finally fell asleep.

October 5

Around 2:00 in the morning, I got up. I thought that I was dreaming that there were ambulance sirens and people crying for help in the street, screaming for help and telling people to go to Panabaj to help because the whole town is being carried away by the rushing rainwater and mud. But I wasn't dreaming. It was reality. I stayed in bed a little while to

hear better. It continued to rain hard with a lot of wind.

After five minutes, I got up slowly. When I put my foot down to the floor of my house there was water all over the floor. I was frightened. I thought, "My God! I'm going to call my mom. What could be happening? There's a lot of activity in the street." When I tried to call, the lines were dead and I said to myself, "Could I have heard right that the current has taken the people of Panabaj?" and I said, "I imagine that those who were taken by the current

lit the lantern, and saw that there were many people going by in the street. I saw that I couldn't get the water out of my house because the streets were already full of water—so I left it. When I went back in, I tried calling my parents again and the lines were still down.

Dawn had come. It was 6:15 in the morning and my neighbors were protecting themselves from the rain with sheets of plastic, and I started to do the same so I could go out and see what was happening. As I entered the main street, I started to feel sad and feel pain

*Our whole town came together...
all of us with tears on our cheeks, and
under heavy rains and winds, came
together like brothers and sisters:
Atitlanecos.*

were those who live by the soccer field (on the other side of town) and the ambulance went by because they were taking the wounded to the Hospital in Panabaj." But in reality, those who were being carried away by the mudslides were the brothers and sisters of Panabaj.

I was worried because I couldn't understand what was going on in the streets and I couldn't leave because of the rain and because it was too late at night and I stayed in bed to wait to see if the rain would stop. It wouldn't stop, and it seemed to rain harder and dawn would not come. I wanted to hear my neighbor's voices. I started to think, and I imagined how the current went right down the streets, and how I could get the water out of my house. I said to myself, "I will wait for dawn," and even though I would like to keep sleeping I could not because of the noise of the sirens. I started to think more and more.

When I noticed the time it was 5:00 am, I got up to try to get the water out of the house. The streets were dark. I

in my soul. I saw how my brothers and sisters from Panabaj were coming into town, some covered in mud up to their necks, others up to their waists, others to the knees, and some totally covered in mud. They carried bags in their hands, and saying how their houses were buried and their family members had stayed trapped in the mud. Tears of anguish were on their cheeks, and they had no idea of where to go to find refuge. I could not hold it back once I saw the people of Panabaj.

I entered the house, and Scarlett and Issac had woken up. Scarlett asked, "Where are you coming from and how come there is so much noise from the ambulances?" I told her nothing has happened so as not to scare her. When she went to the bathroom, she asked me again "Why is there water in the house? Are we going to drown and die?" I calmed her down and she stopped crying and after a little while the telephone rang and I was happy to hear from my husband, Jeronimo. He was

worried and he told me he was going to leave the Capital right away in order to come to us. I told him how there were many deaths in Panabaj due to a mudslide and then the telephone went dead. He didn't know any more about us nor us of him.

Because of the heavy rains and landslides, all of the roads going into Santiago Atitlan were closed, and the daily commerce couldn't get in or out. Jeronimo was stuck on the highway on his way home.

After I gave food to my children I went out into the street again and one of the affected men told me with pain and tears on his cheeks, "I have lost my house, and I only was able to save one of my children. I'm looking for him, because I have lost sight of him again. Maybe you can give me some food and clothing." I helped him the best I could and I sent him out warm and dry and protected from the rain, so he could keep looking for his son, the only child he could get out before the landslide. He was thankful...

Thanks to the mayor, things were organized quickly to form temporary shelters for those affected by the landslide. Our whole town came together, some with clothing, some with food, purified water, hot coffee, etc. All of us, all with tears on our cheeks, and under heavy rains and winds, came together like brothers and sisters: Atitlanecos.

My daughter Scarlett was anxious and scared, and I had to tell her what was happening. She asked me, "Are we going to die because there is so much rain and no sun?" I told her, "We have to get out clothing to give to children and adults." When she heard this she started to put her clothes into bags. When he saw that Scarlett was putting her clothing in bags, Isaac (age two) started to take out his little clothing to put it in the bag so we could take it to the shelters.

Other groups from town went to

Panabaj to rescue more people. It was already the fifth of October when everything was organized.

By afternoon, many of us in my alley were worried because firefighters had come by to alarm us with these words:

“Please leave your houses, because probably the mountain will have more landslides because of the heavy rains. The ground is saturated and could come down at any moment.”

Everyone was scared and started to leave their houses and go to the town center so that at least they would spend the night out of their houses.

After a little while my sister-in-law came by with tears and worry. She said the San Pedro Volcano is having landslides and making noises. Since they live close to the public beach and the water level of the lake was rising fast, they were told that the houses near the water would be affected worse because of the huge waves.

When she said this, I was more scared and I couldn't find the way to tell her that they had told us to leave our houses and find refuge by the lake, and they had told them to find refuge on the hill with us. We decided that if we were destined to die, at least we would die together as

family. We decided to all stay together in my house and in my husband's parents' house nearby.

Soon night was coming and we went out into the street to see the burial of those who were killed by the landslide. When we saw the caskets full of the dead, we were all filled with pain in our souls because it wasn't just one or two but many, many dead.

The first line was 30 caskets and the second line was 50 and then we saw 65 more. We were all moved to tears. Some were double caskets, mothers who wouldn't let go of their babies and so they were buried them like just that. In every line of caskets there were boys, girls, babies, grandmas, grandpas, teenagers, young men and women, and mothers and fathers. It was a lamentation full of pain.

As night fell, there was more fear because of the lack of electricity and it was still raining. My mother, Rosa, was helping those affected by the mudslides at the soccer field, and had forgotten about us. When they told her that the fire department had told us to leave our houses, she came running, anxious to see us and hugged us strongly. She told us, “You can't go to our house because

probably the San Pedro volcano is going to blow. They can hear it rumbling inside.” So with tears in our eyes, we stayed in my house, and together with in-laws and nieces and nephews, we all stayed in one house and prayed. We asked God to watch over us and have pity on us because we haven't cared for nature. Maybe this is a warning so that we care for nature, because in the end they have been cutting down many trees and wasting water.

October 6

We have finally begun to see some help come in from other towns. They have come to try to rescue some and unbury other bodies of our brothers and sisters in Panabaj. People have come from San Pedro la Laguna, San Jaun la Laguna, San Lucas Toliman, and although they could not come personally, help was sent from Solola, Panajachel and other towns. This was because there was no passable road left because of all of the mudslides.

By now the rain had finally slowed down to a drizzle, and by 5:00 pm our old friend “sun” came out a little. Everyone said, “Thank God, because the sun will dry up the earth and make it so there won't be any more landslides!”

In the stores, everything was super expensive, and store owners were running out of the most needed articles. For example, normally an egg costs .65 Quetzales and at this date it was up to 2.00 Quetzales, and there were hardly any to buy anyway. There was scarcity of corn, beans, tomato, coffee, ground corn, etc. And if you could find them, the price was very expensive.

All of the town's men continued digging out those who were buried by the mudslide. Soon there was a lot of help coming in for the affected people. I've never seen so many helicopters flying over Santiago, four or five an hour, all full of help. Thank you to the United States, because they were the very first

Dalila and her children, Scarlett and Isaac.



to arrive, even though it was still risky. There were some very emotional cases during the digging, according to what my brothers Pedro and Juan told me. For example, in the first houses hit by the mudslide, those inside couldn't get out or even tell that the mudslide was coming. They were buried alive as they slept. In one house there was a family of

the fisherpeople haven't had their income come back to pre-hurricane levels. Hurricane Stan has brought unemployment and scarcity to all of Guatemala and other affected countries, not just to Santiago Atitlan.

In the case of my family, Stan left us afraid of rain. Every time it rains, Scarlett asks me, "Mom, are we going

Hurricane Stan in 2005.

The premonitions and strange noises from the animals really did have something to tell us.

We should never lose hope.

We should never lose hope.

seven, all clothed in their ponchos and jackets against the cold, asleep and then dead, all found in one bed.

October 7

The President of Guatemala came to give us his condolences and bring help to those affected and say that together we will build houses for them. He declared the village of Panabaj a "General Cemetery" because there were no more people to rescue after so many days. It had started to smell terrible and there could be disease, so access to Panabaj was blocked on this day.

Epilogue

Several days later the health center opened its doors to try to vaccinate everyone so people wouldn't contract disease. Also several days later, in a place called Panaj on the shore of the lake, some fisherpeople discovered floating on the lake a large bone-white doll. But as they come closer they saw it wasn't a doll, but a cadaver of a small child, nine or ten months old. With much pain they went to advise the authorities, who came to collect and bury the body. To me this one hurt bad. I could imagine my own children when they were this age.

After the mudslides, all of the people stopped eating fish from the lake, and up until today (as reported several months after the landslide)

to die, or is the volcano going to come down on top of us?" These are the same sorts of questions that I imagine all of the children in Santiago Atitlan are asking.

Now, those who survived the landslide live with fear and in pain for the little pieces of land that they have lost.

Public places most affected were:

- The Hospitalito of Atitlan (located in Panabaj)
- The Justice Center
- The Elementary School of Panabaj
- The school itself had 900 children before the landslide. Today there are only 500 survivors.

The mudslide brought huge boulders and giant trees, lots of sand and heavy soil. It also brought mountain lions and other wild cats, looking for carrion.

Really, it is unexplainable. The mudslides also affected families living in Santiago Atitlan near the soccer field, but the devastation was little in comparison to Panabaj, where many whole families are gone and there are many more orphans, widows, widowers, and old people left alone and without anyone to trust.

There is much more aid continuing to arrive with much love and care.

I want to thank Farmer to Farmer especially for your help economically to the members of our Committee of Weavers who were affected by

Translator's Notes:

Geography: Rosa Dalila lives in Santiago Atitlan, a town of about 50,000 Tz'tuhuil Maya. She lives with her son Isaac (two) and daughter Scarlett (six) in a house on a road leading out of town. Her husband, Jeronimo, lives and works in the capital city of Guatemala City, a three to four hour bus ride, and he comes home on weekends. Dalila's house is on the street that becomes the road that goes out of town to the village of Panabaj (original population about 2,000), about a fifteen to twenty minute walk. Panabaj is a relatively recent village, springing up as a sort of suburb of Santiago Atitlan, and most of the people there are from Santiago Atitlan. Dalila's mother and father (Francisco and Rosa) live on the other side of town near the soccer field on the road leading out toward the town of San Lucas Toliman.

Terminology: Throughout I refer interchangeably to mudslides and landslides. The steep volcanic slopes of this region and thin soils with no underlying water table are prone to small landslides when it rains hard, and there were indeed innumerable small landslides all around lake Atitlan, blocking roads, carving ditches and burying farmland. However, the mudslide at the Village of Panabaj was no ordinary mudslide. In fact we don't seem to have an appropriate word in either language to describe it. A scar many hundreds of feet wide could be seen going high up the side of the Volcano. It was as if the whole mountain had come in one big fall, burying up to 200 houses in tens of feet of mud, rocks and trees. When we toured the landslide site, we saw the tops of tall trees poking out of the ground looking like small shrubs.

Translated by Andy Gaertner.

WOW, WHAT A TRIP! by Jody Slocum

In January, Farmer to Farmer led a two-week work trip to Guatemala. This was a first for Farmer to Farmer and a great adventure! We had a great group of 14-19 people that worked hard and played hard. Between all the work we visited families, visited coffee and farm fields, went to San Lucas to hear Father Greg speak, watched the coffee growers bringing in their 150 pound sacks of fresh coffee fruit to be processed, visited the site of the mudslides and devastation from Hurricane Stan, traveled to one of the refugee camps for the displaced families from the hurricane, and listened to peoples' stories of the mudslides.

This trip was planned last July. The idea began two years ago when we were touring the uncompleted weaving workshop. Through our conversations with the weavers it was clear that this dream of their own workshop was fading due to lack of funds, lack of enthusiasm and lack of time to complete it. We thought it would be great to come with a group and help with the building.

Our plans expanded after Hurricane Stan hit Guatemala last October causing terrible mudslides around Lake Atitlan. We were shocked to see first-hand the path of the mudslides.

When word got out that we had willing workers we were asked to help with several other projects. Farmer to Farmer members helped clear land for new homes for displaced families, dig a hole for a septic system at a Tzutujil school, and several members worked at the relocated Hospitalito (hospital). The Hospitalito was in the direct path of the mudslides and was forced to move to a safer location. When we arrived they were very happy put us to work. Aimee Alpine, Lynn Barringer and Don McCrery worked building, painting, cleaning and organizing for the entire two weeks. Kitz Cleary taught Spanish every day to a U.S. midwife working at the Hospitalito.

We shared wonderful times with the weavers group working side by side on the workshop. The work at the weaving workshop was a lot of dirty work. The majority of the time was spent slinging cement onto the walls and ceilings, the primary coats and preparation for the finish coat of cement. Every day there were at least four F2F members and the Weavers Committee working together. But the highlight of

**continued
on page 8**



*above top: Jody Slocum and Father Greg;
above center: morning coffee; above bottom:
Kitz Cleary & Aimee Alpine*

*below top: Sadie with Isaac; below bot-
tom, left to right: Isaac, Sadie, Cari, Kathy,
Scarlett, Dalila, Linda (standing)*



MY GUATEMALA TRIP by Sadie Goodlaxson

On the 17th of January, my mom and I got on a plane destined for Guatemala. As we arrived in the capital city, we stepped out of the airport to be engulfed by new sounds, smells, and sights. We immediately found a taxi and told the driver in broken Spanish where we wanted to go.

Our first stop was Antigua, where we spent the night. The next morning we woke to find the mountains standing tall and proud over all of Guatemala. At 12:30pm a van came to pick us up and take us to Panajachel.

We made the three hour car ride and one hour boat ride to our final designation of Santiago, Atitlan. After we arrived, we had to get on a "tuk-tuk" a small vehicle from India that is now used in Guatemala.

When we arrived at our hotel, Posada de Santiago Atitlan, we found our room, settled in, and got a snack. That evening, we ate at the hotel restaurant, where we had a very nice

continued on page 9



Wow, What a Trip! continued from page 7

our day was eating the fantastic lunches prepared by women members of the group. John Grump, John Thomas, Jonas Popp and Donna Goodlaxson worked every day here. Andy Gaertner, Sadie Goodlaxson, Nick Barringer, Bob Cleary, Cari Witcher, David and Linda Caradori, Kathy Ruggles, Amy and Joel Paken and Lisa Warner worked on the workshop and other projects.

There is so much to tell about this trip and a lot of it is hard to put into words. We witnessed deep sorrow in people telling their stories about the hurricane. It became apparent that just listening to people was one of the most important parts of our being there, bearing witness to the suffering. Often we would begin to visit with someone and spend the next half hour or more listening to his or her experiences of the mudslides. It was very sad and at times very hard to take it all in. We walked on land that buried a whole community of houses

and people. We saw the refugee camps where over 3,000 people are living in 10x10 foot tarp walled rooms wall to wall with hundreds of other families. Most lost all their belongings and many are without work. Their hope is that the government will help them rebuild somewhere safe. Everyone lost someone in this disaster. The suffering is worn on their faces.

Along side the terrible suffering in Santiago there is also a lot of hope. There are many groups and individuals working hard to help rebuild the area. One fantastic project is lead by Susie, the owner of the Posada. In the Mayan culture traditional dress is very important to identity and self-respect. After the mudslides hundreds of women lost all their clothing. Their clothing is hand woven and embroidered with figures important to their culture. Susie began a project giving back-strap looms and yarn to these women so they could

weave their traje (traditional dress). This simple idea was incredibly empowering to the women, and today over 700 women are participating in the project.

Daily, we watched groups of women arrive at the Posada to show Susie their first weaving of a huipil (shirt). She would take a photo of each woman with her huipil. The look of pride on their faces was wonderful to see.

I want to thank these travelers that took this first Farmer to Farmer work trip and, by giving so much of themselves, making this a successful trip.

Also thanks to Cari Witcher and Andy Gaertner for doing a fantastic job translating for our group. I'm convinced there aren't two better translators in the world than these two! What a gift.

Note: We plan to return with a work group to Santiago Atitlan in July 2006 & January 2007. Contact Farmer to Farmer if you want more information.

YOU'RE NEXT by Don McCreery

In most organizations one finds a small number of dedicated members who take leadership positions and do much of the work. They're supported financially by other members who want to feel connected to the good works, but who haven't felt that they could actually participate. They may have their hands full in advancing their careers, or their age or health preclude greater involvement. I speak as one of these "background" members.

I joined F2F seventeen years ago when Craig and Lucy and family embarked by bus on their venture to Nicaragua. I've been to several annual meetings and always read the newsletter cover to cover, but while I have thought about joining one of the trips, I just haven't seen where I could fit in. It would be generous to say I am not fluent in Spanish. The tipping point for me was the announced need for builders, and it appeared there would be enough Spanish speakers to keep the rest of us in the loop. It turned out that of the roughly twenty people on the recent Santiago trip, ten of us were first time participants. This is a great bunch of people to work with.

continued on the back



*Don McCreery & Bob Cleary
working at the Hospitalito*

Talking with Nick Barringer

I really liked the trip. The people were really cool. I really liked Nino; I helped him dig a hole for the school. All the people were nice, and they had a good sense of humor. Wherever we went, people would say "buenos dias!"

Guatemala City is pretty tropical, with warm, fresh air and banana trees.

Right when I got there, having kids ask for money was kind of weird. Jody said we shouldn't give them money, so then they carried our bags. Then we could give them a tip.

Driving was pretty cool, because all the roads had one lane, and they go really fast. They honk their horns around the curves.

I learned a lot of words, and it's helped me with Spanish at school. (Nick's Spanish teacher is putting together a unit on Guatemala, inspired by Nick's trip.) I'd like to go back to Guatemala.

Nick & Lynn Barringer



Sadie Goodlaxson, continued from page 7

shrimp dish with onions and leeks. The food was very good and was not all that different from home. During dinner, we met the group members who we would work with over the next 13 days.

The next day the work began. Several of us went to dig a hole for a latrine for a small pre-school. The hole had to be seven feet deep, six feet across. We ran into three huge and very hard rocks. We tried to break them apart, but no luck.

Because it was cooler in the mornings, that's when we did most of the work. The other half of the day was for vacation! I tried to take in all the new things, including the heat, which shot up to 80 degrees, and the cold, which got down to 40 degrees fahrenheit. The temperature varies because the altitude is so high.

One day the group went to the landslide site. We began at the site where the people that were affected were staying. The small temporary house held two or three families. Next we walked over to the place where the mudflow came down. The destruction was unreal. At the time I couldn't feel anything, but as we walked I began to realize that I was walking over 600 people.

In the mud we could see the foot prints of people who ran out on the mud to save their friends, relatives, or anyone in

An e-mail from Vicky Wiegand

(Sent early January, 2006) Yesterday, Rosa and Dalila took us to see the destruction from the landslide, shocking and unbelievable. Almost all last night I was awake with the images going through my head.

Coming from the top of the volcano is a huge white gash through the lush forest to the earth at our feet. There are whole areas that are wide swept dirt, where formerly hundreds of small homes stood. Some houses have only a foot or two of mud surrounding them, and people are beginning to dig paths to the doors, as we would through snow. Most people are still not returning.

A temporary camp has been built, a grid of sheetmetal and tan plastic buildings that are ten by ten feet. Delila finds Concepcion's place; there's a bed and a few belongings. I have only 100 Quetzales in my pocket and give it to her. Lots of kids are everywhere. Two vendors are selling stuff in front of their "homes", little things like candy and gum. Outhouses and showers are on the fringes.

A man chops through the dirt, unearthing a buried tree for firewood.

danger. The hospital in that area was hit, as was a school that had 900 kids. After the landslide only 400 kids were alive. The others were missing or dead. In another situation, a man's wife was giving birth at the time of the mudslide. He doesn't know if he had a boy or a girl, as the mother, child, and midwife all died that night.

The next day, we went to a site where handicapped families that were affected by the landslide would live. We cleared the land of overgrown coffee trees. At the end of the day we had cleared 15 to 20 trees.

Each day in the evening, I would read, listen to CDs, and learn how to play ping pong. In the evenings we would eat at the hotel. Later, people would just sit at the table and talk or read, and sometimes people would go out for refreshments at another place. Almost every night someone from our party could be seen or heard in the hot tub.

By the end of the two weeks I was ready to see snow and all my family and friends, but I was not ready to leave. I loved going to Guatemala, and I am intending to improve my Spanish and return.

I have been back for two months or so, and I still feel that Wisconsin is lovely, but I will always miss the little town of Santiago Atitlan.

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT, continued from page 2

- Minutes from meetings will go out via e-mail with action items and assignments—so we don't forget.
- We'll welcome growth in the coffee business, but not let it grow uncontrollably.
- We'll to pursue the micro-loans idea.
- We focused our plans for the coming year, and identified ways to involve more members(see below).

Involving Members

Here are some of the things we'll be emphasizing in 2006 (volunteer opportunities in bold):

- Our trip to Atitlan this January to work on the weaving workshop and other projects was a phenomenal success. We are planning another trip for this coming winter. **Go on the trip and/or help organize.**
- Our coffee sales will continue and we may need to bring up another container full of coffee. **Help bag coffee for the Just Food order.**
- For the first time in many years, we may not be making malts at all. Our fundraising will be focused on the coffee business, a table at the Living Green Expo in St. Paul in May, and possibly another public event. **Take a shift at one of the stands.**
- We'll work with the Farmer's Union again to have our coffee available at the Minnesota State Fair. **Give out information and samples of our coffee.**
- We'll continue to organize and sponsor groups to go to the annual protests at the School of the Americas (now known as WHISC). **Help coordinate and go.**
- We'll continue to sell the beadwork produced by our friends in Santiago Atitlan. **Find new outlets.**
- We will plan events during the year to help build community here in Western Wisconsin, like movie nights, speakers, etc. **Help organize and/or attend an event.**
- We will continue to support our friends in the Weaver's Committee in Santiago Atitlan by sending scholarships for the children to go to school and economically supporting their traditional crops of corn and beans. **Host a fundraiser.**
- We want to begin some sort of micro-loan project with the Weavers through an institution called Friendship Bridges. **Help us set this up.**
- We will be meeting as a board 11 times this year. **Please feel free to join us and add your voice to the meetings or to a committee meeting.**
- Our newsletter and website will continue to be great forms of communication. **Write an article.**
- We will support and network with other like-minded organizations. **Help us network and connect.**

Chavez: Bringing Change or Hot Air to Venezuela?

Farmer to Farmer's Annual Meeting hosted Rebecca Trotsky and Sarah Langford, recently returned from Venezuela. As health care workers, they brought a unique perspective based on their work with an orphanage and their research at a Venezuelan University. They challenged us to think about the assumptions of our own economic and health care systems. Some of their major points:

- Fifteen percent of the oil U.S. oil consumption comes from Venezuela. 80% of Venezuelan oil production is exported to the U.S.
- Hugo Chavez has gained the reputation of price hawk in OPEC by pushing for stringent enforcement of production quotas and higher target oil prices.
- Barrio Adentro, a model for community health-care services, places doctors in the communities they serve. Home visits are common, and preventative care and education are integrated into its services. According to the UN, Venezuela is no longer reliant on international vaccination programs, in large part because of this health care program; seventy percent of Venezuelans have gone to Barrio Adentro. When health care is viewed as a basic human right, great strides can be made in public health.
- Poor Venezuelans told Trotsky & Langford, "Before Chavez, our needs were never taken into consideration."
- Since Chavez has been in office, the average level of education has risen from 7th grade to 8th grade level.
- Rebecca's research shows that there is a direct relationship between social justice (the gap between rich and poor) and the health of a society (as measured by infant mortality rate).

The presentation was followed by lively discussion.

Because You Asked

So many of you asked Vicky for this recipe, so here it is.

Terri's Wonderful Cabbage Slaw

The Sauce:

1/2 onion, chopped

1 clove garlic, smashed

about 2-inch piece of ginger

Soak them in malt vinegar in a smaller bowl, then add

1/2 tsp. Thai curry

3 tsp. tamari paste (find both at the Menomonie Co-op)

1/2 to 1 tsp. sweetener (eg. Honey)

4 to 5 tbsp. toasted sesame oil and equal amount of regular oil-like canola-in addition to the sesame oil. Adjust to taste.

ADD shredded cabbage, grated or chopped carrots and chipped cilantro. Toss with sauce, sprinkle with peanuts just before serving. Zesty!

Money Talks

2005 Notes to Financials by Carol Nies

The good news is that we are a financially healthy organization! And there isn't really any bad news. We just have to make more decisions now about money...

A Big Hill O' Beans

We started 2005 with \$6635 and \$6428 in green coffee beans. We ended 2005 with \$11296 and \$11460 in green beans. What that means for the math impaired is that we're buying a lot of green beans and selling a lot of coffee. We brought up 17,000 pounds of green beans, and it wasn't easy!

Our coffee sales increased by 54% compared 2004, while our coffee expenses only increased 32%. (That's good!) Our coffee bottom line increased from \$2,197 in 2004 to \$11,572 in 2005. We sold 894 pounds in green beans in 2001; in 2005 it was a whopping 13,449 pounds! We continue to modestly believe that this is the best coffee in the world.

We still paid three contract workers a small stipend to sell the coffee and do the bookkeeping. We doubled the amount two workers are paid, based on increased hours and expenses.

We'd like to thank our coffee customers. Our top coffee customers (based on sales in dollars) were Mississippi Market (16%), Just Local Foods (10%), Bean Factory Coffee Shop (9%), Whole Earth Coop (8%) and Menomonie Market (6%).

Hurricane Relief

Thanks to all of you that donated specifically to help after the hurricane. F2F sent \$1,000 to Santiago Atitlan within a week after the mudslides. We collected \$3,680 of relief money for hurricane victims. While in Santiago Atitlan, our group had a wonderful meeting where everyone on the trip gave their input into this decision.

Afterwards we gave \$2000 to the Weavers Committe. We felt it was best to let them decide as a group how to divide up that money. They gave some to each member, as everyone suffered from loss of work, loss of crops, etc.

A larger amount was given to the three families whose homes had been lost or damaged in the mudslides.

The other \$1680 we sent to Pueblo to Pueblo, the organization running the hospitalito. They're at the center of the community and the hurricane rebuilding. We spoke with many people working in the area and were told that would be the most effective place to donate. (You can find out more at pueblotopueblo.org.)

Other stuff

We more than doubled our membership income. Welcome to our new members, and thank you to those of you who increased your support.

We started selling beadwork made by the weavers group—the full impact of that project will be a 2006 story!

We sold malts at the Renewable Energy fair in Amherst, Wisc., and at the Stockholm Art Fair. After many years at the Dunn County Fair we decided not to go back due to declining attendance at the fair. Even so, our sales were up \$840 over 2004. Expenses were up \$1610, in large part for replenishing our paper supplies with biodegradable products.

We provided scholarships for several young people to go to the annual School of the Americas protest.

A personal note

It's been a pleasure to serve as the treasurer of Farmer to Farmer the last four years! I look forward to continuing service as the bookkeeper. I think with the increased financial activity it will be a healthy change for the organization to separate the jobs of treasurer and bookkeeper. I'll keep the numbers coming!

Please consider joining Farmer to Farmer.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

e-mail:

___\$15 ___\$25 \$_____ other (extra donations appreciated)

Send to Farmer to Farmer, PO Box 303, Glenwood City, WI 54013.
Farmer to Farmer is a 501(c)3. Your donations are tax-deductible.

YOU'RE NEXT, continued from page 8

Maybe your travel has been limited to Vail or Carnival Cruise Lines. Possibly you enjoy rubbing shoulders with the beautiful people and discussing the comparative advantages of Lamborghinis over Porsches. If so, this is not your group.

The people you meet on a F2F project, or in many other similar volunteer organizations, are more apt to be telling you about their garden or discussing the political situation in Venezuela and telling you about good books they have read than in impressing you with their accomplishments. It's refreshing to be able to interact with dozens of people from all over the globe and be confident in the assumption and universal agreement that our president is an embarrassment.

You need not be a physician or

specialist of any kind to be helpful. When the Panabaj mudslide made it necessary to move the hospital across town, they needed people who could sort and find a place for all of the supplies that lay in boxes. Some of us dug holes while others dug up coffee plants. Little skill required.

According to Gore Vidal, only 12 percent of Americans have a passport. Of those, one must suppose that the majority are used for tourism. While there's much to be gained by touring a country, I found it much more satisfying to interact with those of other cultures while helping them get through rough times. I am very new to this experience, but I wish I had started earlier. On this trip I met people from our group and others who have worked all over the world. The carpenter who I worked with works

nine months building in Ithaca, New York, and shuts down his business to do volunteer work every winter. When I commented to a Canadian lady that Santiago was the dirtiest city I had ever seen, she thought a second and suggested that Afghanistan was dirtier. I think the point is that we can best appreciate what's going on in the world if we expose ourselves to all aspects of life. It's too easy to think of foreign countries as different colored splotches on a map. I just Googled "International Volunteers" and came up with 50 million 500 thousand listings. I suspect that in there somewhere is an opportunity that could change your life.



*above: Don McCrery and Linda Caradori working the the hospitalito
left: Nick Barringer, Donna Goodlaxson and John Grump*



**Next Work Trip to
Santiago Atitlan is set
for July 2006! Go to
farmertofarmer.org
for more information.**

FARMER to FARMER

PO Box 303
Glenwood City, WI 54013

www.farmertofarmer.org

THE DATE AFTER YOUR NAME IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE.