



A Weaver's View of Santiago Atitlan

A Farmer to Farmer board member invited seven friends to accompany her to Guatemala in mid-July.

For the past 12 years we've listened to Jody's stories of her Guatemalan adventures and misadventures with the weavers' group in Santiago Atitlan and *Farmer to Farmer*. Her stories described the people she's befriended, the countryside, and her struggles overcoming the language barrier. Because we're a curious bunch, we wanted to see for ourselves what pulls Jody back to that country again and again. Accompany Jody was an appealing idea in itself, and the trip turned out to be a fortunate and rewarding time also spent among her gentle and generous indigenous Guatemalan friends.

The eight of us have been friends since the seventies. We're woven together by our mutual love for textiles. Some of us—I won't mention any names—have grown into crazed collectors, and all of us know that Guatemala is a major destination for serious textile collectors. It's one of the few remaining countries with authentic living textile traditions intact. Functional fabrics are woven on simple looms, then embroidered with elaborate designs. Their clothing expresses village identity as well as artistry. Each eye-dazzling pattern announces, "I am from Chichicastenango," or "I am from Aguas Caliente," or from one of many other villages in the region.

photos (l to r) are: Susie Gunn Glanville and Francisca Tacaxoy; MaryAnne Wise and Maria, a new member of the weavers' group; a view of Lake Atitlan.

Fabrics are also used to carry tight bundles of tortillas, peaches, poultry or small children. Narrow belts with intricate designs, painstakingly crafted, hold up long, hand-woven skirts or may also be coiled on top of the head to wear as a hat.

After a simultaneously pleasant and somewhat frustrating week attending Spanish language school in Antigua, we traveled to Santiago. Located on Lake Atitlan, Santiago has 45,000 residents. Most of them speak Tzu'tujil, one of the thirty-two Mayan languages. The Tzu'tujil society refer to themselves as "the house of birds."

Dormant volcanoes surround Lake Atitlan. Misty clouds drop from the sky like veils obscuring the volcanoes then lift to reveal peaks beyond peaks receding in the vista. Flocks of noisy parrots fly in tight formations as if stitched together, their iridescent bodies flashing a blur of bright green. Fishermen in simple dugouts toss nets into bottomless pools then wait patiently to the ends of time.

This paradise setting is where the American priest, Father Stanley Rother, was gunned down by the Guatemalan military in 1981. The people of Santiago have made a permanent shrine to his much loved memory.

Twenty-two family members of the weaving cooperative and growers of *Farmer to Farmer's* ethically traded coffee are

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

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

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

visit our website:

farmertofarmer.org

where you can sign up to join our
Yahoo group.

Farmer to Farmer booth at the Green Expo in Saint Paul

Last May 6-7, *Farmer to Farmer* gave out coffee samples and sold beadwork and coffee beans at the Living Green Expo in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was an upbeat and inspiring event.

Many thanks to the fifteen *Farmer to Farmer* members and five PAX exchange students who volunteered at the booth. Volunteers enthusiastically

made connections with many folks determined to live sustainably and thoughtfully.

The booth was visually striking. Jody Slocum, Kurt Buetow, Rebecca Kilde and Craig Adams designed and built the display, which incorporates large photos of Santiago Atitlan, and colorful weavings and embroidery on a frame made from locally-grown poles.



Booth volunteers included (picture above from left to right) Azamat (Uzbekistan), Ulyana (Ukraine), Regina (Russia), Sabrina (Germany) & Wesama (Thailand) all PAX students in northwest Wisconsin.

Kudos to Ken

Thanks again to Ken Seguire, who takes time away from his busy schedule to work on our website. He is one of our volunteers we couldn't live without! Our website has news about upcoming events, coffee-ordering information, a slide-show of last January's trip and newsletter archives. Check us out at farmertofarmer.org.



FROM THE COVER

based in and around Santiago. Jody has watched many children of the co-op members grow up and get married.

With Jody as our guide, we were invited into some of the co-op member's homes. The homes are mostly single room dwellings that function as workshop, bedroom, living and dining room all at once. While contrasts to our many roomed homes here in the Midwest are obvious, there are also wide economic gaps between the Santiago co-op members.

In spite of crushing economic conditions, the Tzu'tujil's wealth of textile traditions and their extravagant use of color make westerners look drab by comparison. Textile patterns express a cultural and community identity, which is in stark contrast to the U.S.

Technical expertise is traditionally passed along from mother to daughter, binding one generation to the next. The abundance of their textile production is impossible to overstate and their daily hardships are equally impossible to overlook. Many of the women are hanging on by threads.

We visited Panabaj, a "suburb" of Santiago on Lake Atitlan. The village was all but completely destroyed by mudslides caused by Hurricane Stan, and the economic and emotional aftermath has been especially devastating.

According to geologists, who made assessments of the terrain after the disaster, the landslides changed the mountainsides, making the entire Panabaj area unsafe for future rebuilding.

We toured the rocky rubble-strewn

fields where, 15 feet below the very ground we were walking on, 900 village members were buried alive the night of the mudslide. As we walked we came upon a man sitting in the middle of a barren compound, defined simply by tree branches pounded into the ground approximating the former location of his home. He had lost his wife and four children that night. He'd found some of their clothing that he'd draped over the sticks like shrouds. He explained that he comes back to the compound to feel close to his family.

Many in the weavers' group lost friends and loved ones. Group members who accompanied us across this sad landscape guessed at the location of so-and-so's home, and wasn't it a miracle

IN SPITE OF CRUSHING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, THE TZU'TUJIL'S WEALTH OF TEXTILE TRADITIONS AND THEIR EXTRAVAGANT USE OF COLOR MAKE WESTERNERS LOOK DRAB BY COMPARISON.

their baby lived when everyone else in the family died.

While in Santiago we stayed at the Posada de Santiago. Immediately after the mudslide the American owners, David and Susie Glanville, became involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of the community. Many of their staff members used to live in Panabaj. Dave and Susie opened their hotel to survivors and international teams of rescue workers.

One month after the emergency, Susie, in a flash of insight, understood a key part of the despondency etched on the women's faces. Not only had survivors lost family, friends and homes. The mud that literally stripped the

clothes off their backs in the middle of that awful night also carried away their cultural and village identities.

Susie believed the women could regain an important part of their sense of self by returning to their looms to weave huipils, the traditional shirts that express their cultural and village identities. But their looms were gone and there was no money for yarn. With the support of Oxfam, Pueblo á Pueblo, and several private donations, Susie was able to supply 760 women with looms and yarn to weave their traditional huipils. "The Huipil Project" was their first step on the road to recovering their lives.

Today, ten months after the disaster, the Huipil Project has taken on a

new dimension: to train the women to use their traditional techniques to produce objects with a broader appeal for the U.S. apparel and design market.

An important component of the project is to catalog and preserve traditional techniques.

The training classes begin next month. The class

schedule is one day a week for twenty weeks. Over 800 women signed up for the training course, but many of the women have recently reconsidered their enrollment and participation has dwindled to 450 women. Susie explained why the women drop out, "They can't afford to take one day off from work each week for the twenty-week-long class, or, they have a hard time convincing their husbands of a long-term pay off for a short-term loss of wages."

"How much would the women lose if they took the class and didn't work the one-day a week?" we asked.

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Susie reported, "Three dollars per woman per day." We came to an immediate and resounding commitment to find 450 sponsors. 450 American friends to sponsor each woman's training. \$60 per woman, sponsorship for lost wages. If you'd like to be a sponsor, please contact **Farmer to Farmer** at info@farmertofarmer.org or mail your donation with the form on page five.

In addition to 450 sponsors Susie needs art books as visual references for the students. Books with lots of pictures—no one reads English. Back issues of *Hali* would be great. (If your travel plans include a trip to Guatemala, you can help Susie by delivering these books).

We are also collecting eyeglasses: the dime store or prescription variety you no longer need. Elders still struggling to produce fine handwork will appreciate the reading glasses.

Americans often use textile metaphors like these to describe our daily lives: the fabric of society, dyed in the wool, to spin a tall yarn. To the women of Santiago these words aren't just metaphors, but literally describe their lives. They put the yarn on the loom, weave the fabric, sell the cloth, buy the food, and feed the kids. It's a tight connection. There is no separation between cloth and life.

Jody sees this and she envisions a livelihood where Mayan labor and artistry are justly compensated for their unique, beautiful, and magical textiles—and that's what pulls her back to Guatemala.

Mary Anne Wise

*friend of Jody's, traveling companion,
textile artist, crazed collector.*

July 28, 2006, Stockholm, Wisconsin

The Coffee is Here!

We are happy to report that our container of 18,000 pounds of coffee has arrived from Lake Atitlan, Guatemala, and is safely tucked in at Roaster Direct's new warehouse in Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

Yes! we did it again for the third year and I can say that the process of getting a container here from Guatemala has *not* gotten any easier. Can I say it will be more straightforward next year? No. I mean...I hope so. But maybe the worry and careful attention make it taste even better? Anyway, we are grateful for the business, the wonderful coffee and the opportunity to work on our patience.

submitted by Jody Slocum and Vicky Wiegand

Bead by Bead

On our last trip to Guatemala we brought back beautiful beadwork and weavings to sell. We have: beaded bracelets, purses, small coin/credit card purses, handwoven one-of-a-kind fabrics, and gorgeous embroideries. The profits go to pay for the weaving workshop we are helping build in Santiago Atitlan with our friends, the members of the weavers group. If you have ideas for markets or are interested in purchasing some, call Jody at 715 643-3603 or email info@farmertofarmer.com.

*(right) Francisco in the new
Weaving Workshop!*



"Our customers not only love the quality and beauty of the bags and bracelets, they often are influenced to purchase the beadwork because it supports such a good program."

**Kat Schon, owner
Portland Store Fixtures,
Portland, Oregon
wholesaler for Farmer to Farmer**

Going Organic at the Kickapoo Country Fair

By Roberta Popp

During the scorching weekend of July 29-30, *Farmer to Farmer* participated as a vendor in the Kickapoo Country Fair on the grounds of Organic Valley's world headquarters in La Farge, Wisconsin, set in the ancient and beautiful hills of the Kickapoo River Valley.

This rural heritage and farming festival was a showcase of rural cultural traditions, farm and garden exhibits, music, dance, arts, natural and organic foods and cooking, green housing and renewable energy, community health and education, environmental responsibility, and eco-development. The all-weekend event also featured organic farm tours, farmers and farm animals, sustainability workshops, hiking, The Kickapoo Country Bike Tour, food and artisan vendors, not-for-profit exhibitors, family "farm-friendly" activities, all-day music and entertainment, and dancing. *Farmer to Farmer* members were encouraged to attend some of these activities as there were always plenty of volunteers at the tent.

As a vendor at the Kickapoo Country Fair our goal was not so much about making a profit, but about educating others on the objectives of *Farmer to Farmer*, and our work with the weavers and coffee producers in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. We marketed weavings and beadwork, whole beans, cold-pressed iced coffee and mocha, as well as hot coffee featuring our medium and French roasts. Some of those who participated in the January 2006 working trip to Santiago, as well as on other visits to Lake Atitlan, were present to share their personal experiences with visitors at the fair. We'd like to thank our volunteers: Amy Alpine, John Grump, Don

McCrery, Donna Goodlaxen, Roberta, Nancy and Jonas Popp, Craig Adams and Lucy Altemus. Also, Jody Slocum who worked hard to help us get all the coffee ready!

Though the heat prevented a record turn-out, our time at the fair should be considered a success. It was a great opportunity to network with like-minded individuals and organizations about the necessity of supporting small farms and cooperatives domestically and abroad. The fair also provided a platform for knowledge exchange and personal growth. And, of course, it was an occasion to spend time with *Farmer to Farmer* friends.

For more information on Organic Valley, organizer of the Kickapoo Country Fair, go to www.organicvalley.coop.

Bioneers Conference

The Seventeenth Annual Bioneers Conference is a hub of practical solutions for restoring the Earth—and people. It's a thriving network of visionary innovators who are working with nature to heal nature. The bioneers draw from four billion years of evolutionary intelligence and apply nature's operating instructions in practical ways to serve human ends harmlessly. We herald a dawning age of interdependence founded in nature's principles of diversity, kinship, community, cooperation and reciprocity. The event will be at the Marin Center in San Rafael, California from October 20 to 22, 2006. There will also be a satellite conference in the Twin Cities this fall.

Take part in this fertile network, rich with inspiring ideas, models, tools, resources and powerful connections. For more information go to www.bioneers.org/conference.

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Please consider joining Farmer to Farmer.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

e-mail:

___\$15 ___\$25 \$_____ other (extra donations appreciated)
___I'd like to sponsor ___weavers for the Huipil Project training at \$60 each. (information in cover story)

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.

Want To Go Somewhere?

Farmer to Farmer Trip To Guatemala

After a successful work / tour trip to Guatemala last January, the *Farmer to Farmer* board has decided to do it again in January, 2007. We will go for 1-2 weeks and tailor the trip to the specific interests of the group. The group will be limited to 12 people. We plan to spend the majority of our time in Santiago Atitlan working on the weaving workshop, the hospital, visiting families, picking coffee and sightseeing. We will visit Antigua, the beautiful Spanish colonial town for a few days too. If you are interested in going along or just want more information, email *Farmer to Farmer* at info@farmertofarmer.org or call Jody at 715-643-3603.

Farmer to Farmer Annual Trip to Fort Benning to Close the SOA

It is becoming increasingly apparent that military "solutions" to social problems, supported by institutions like the School of the Americas, are ineffective and immoral. Each year, the School of the Americas Watch holds a peaceful protest at the gates of Fort Benning in Georgia. (You can read about past trips in the newsletter archives at the *Farmer to Farmer* website.)

Farmer to Farmer will be sending down a van again this November to join thousands from across the country and around the world to demand the closing of the School of the Americas. This is a very powerful nonviolent vigil that shouldn't be missed. For more information on the event go to the School of the Americas Watch website at www.soaw.org. More details about our trip will be available in the next newsletter and at www.farmertofarmer.org.

¡Vámanos!

Shut Down the School of the Americas
November 17-19, 2006
Converge on Fort Benning, Georgia
Thurs., Nov. 16, 2006: Benefit Concert in Atlanta, GA

OTRA AMERICA ESTA EN MARCHA
Social movements are changing the Americas



Human Rights Defenders from across the Americas will gather at the gates of Fort Benning, Georgia to speak out for justice, dignity and reconciliation.

For hotel or travel information or for other questions call: (202) 234 3440 or visit: www.SOAW.org

FARMER to FARMER

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THE DATE AFTER YOUR NAME IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE.