
Amigos de Honduras

Vol. XXIII, No. 2

May 2016

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan M. Larimore (San Francisco del Valle 1986-88)
amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com

Our current balance is \$2282.85. We try to maintain a minimum balance of \$1000 so we have about \$1200 available for grants. Thanks to Fred Corvi who has been diligently tracking down every PC Volunteer who ever was assigned to Honduras. We as Amigos de Honduras, have been helping by sending letters to those he can't contact by email.

There have been over 4000 of us who have served in Honduras and Fred has narrowed it down to just a few missing folks. A lot of kudos to Brant Miller who took on the task of "pdf King" and sees to it that those who wish to receive their Newsletter electronically do so quickly and efficiently. He has also assisted Fred Corvi. All the people being "found" receive a copy of the newsletter.

And what interests the members of Amigos? The things happening in our country, of course! Dale and Frances Schmitz just returned from a long stay in Honduras with their Tools for Opportunity Program. It is exciting to hear about the PCV programs that take a hold and

continue to function years after they have been started.

2016 AMIGOS DE HONDURAS GRANT FUND DONATIONS:

Steve Dylinski, Marie Beougher, Sigrid Brooks, Martha Goldstein, Frank Schwarz, Brenda Crumpacker, Ali Fujino, Maria Robinson, Lisa Kisling Thompson, Nick Anderson, Jenifer McMurry, Rodia Flores-Joslyn, Edward Fischer, Dale Schmitz

Many thanks to those of you who have sent grant funds! We have just funded an adobe brick making factory in the Aguan Valley. Your dues, after covering the minimal costs of Amigos, also help toward our grants. The Grant Committee consists of Loren Hintz, Judith Whitney-Terry, Suzanne Mills and Joan Larimore. Please send new grant requests to Joan at amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com

EDITOR'S CORNER

Loren Hintz (Olancho, 1980-82)
ldhintz@bellsouth.net

Thanks to the Honduras Reunion in New Orleans, folks sharing news and recent trips to Honduras by RPCVs, there are a number of articles for you to read. **More Reunion stories will follow in the August 2016 issue.** I

managed a trip to Honduras 3/27-4/10 too! Several ideas were floated at the New Orleans reunion. It was agreed to spend some of the left over money from the reunion for a PC Honduras web page presence. We need volunteers to step forward and lead this effort. One option is to piggy back onto the NPCA webpage <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/community/> and use their program: SilkStart "an all-in-one website and membership/donor management program." Another is to modify the reunion website <http://www.peacecorpshondurasreunion2013.com/>. A third is to just continue using Facebook as our web presence.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2209604190/> **Please contact me if YOU are interested in helping.**

Also at the reunion there was a suggestion to change our membership model to what NPCA has done (free basic membership, premiums with donations). After listening to feedback from Honduran RPCVs and experiences of other PC groups and looking at the history and realities of Amigos de Honduras, it has been decided to continue to collect annual membership **dues of \$15/year** and to also request donations to the Amigos de Honduras Grant Fund. Dues collected beyond the expenses of running Amigos de Honduras (not very many) will continue to be used for the Grant Fund.

PEACE CORPS BEYOND — September 22-25, 2016

Peace Corps Connect <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/community/annual-gathering/> is the Peace Corps community's annual conference hosted by the National Peace Corps Association and its affiliate groups to connect, engage and inspire our community. At this year's conference – **Peace Corps Beyond** – we look forward to celebrating 55 years of Peace Corps and the limitless potential of our community to continue to affect change.

This is a new era for the Peace Corps community and the NPCA. With recent developments at NPCA, including advances in technology, more – and stronger – partnerships with like-minded organizations and an increasingly connected community we have unprecedented capacity as an organization and as a community to make an impact. You are invited to be part of it. **Amigos de Honduras plans to have an event there.**

**RESUSCITATING the
RPCV ARCHIVAL
PROJECT** Barbara Kaare-Lopez (Olanchito, Tocoa & Trujillo, 1978-1980) Denver, Email: bkaarelopez@hotmail.com

“Who is that lady that keeps asking us questions? She said she was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Olanchito, Tocoa & Trujillo. And what is this strange Interview Project that she keeps mentioning? She said something about recording our interview, which would then be sent to the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. Why does she use the word “resuscitate” when she refers to this

interview project? Oh, I think she said she was a nurse. Maybe she wants to perform CPR on our interviews...or on us! Do you think she could be a spy? Tal vez, she has Early Dementia. Caramba, she sure can ask muchas preguntas.”

Amigos de Honduras: allow me to explain to those of you I approached about this RPCV interview or archival project while we were in New Orleans for our **Amigos de Honduras** reunion. These are some of the real and/or imagined questions and remarks I think I heard, or imagined, people asking after I approached them about this project which I was part of in Denver. We begin with un poquito of history about this project. **Robert “Bob” Klein**, (Ghana 1), summarized this project's history at a meeting in Denver September, 2006. He began in 1999 with the intention of only interviewing members of his Ghana 1 group. Instead, the project grew having interviewed 250 people over 5 years. A connection was made with the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. As he told us, “nobody can give the flavor or your experience but you.” When asked about any risks involved conducting these interviews, he replied, “the only danger I experienced was falling asleep during an interview.”

“Year by year we are losing the personal narratives of the experiences of thousands who have served as PCV throughout the world since 1961. Believing that theirs is the true story of what the Peace Corps is, the **Archival Project** works to preserve those accounts through oral history interviews and identification of personal papers for donation, with as many former volunteers and staff

as possible. All these materials are deposited with the National Archives in the RPCV Collection of the Kennedy Library in Boston.”

Fast forward to 2016. Somehow our Interview Project fizzled out in Denver after 2009. At that time, we could only conduct the interviews using a tape recorder. Bob Klein passed away in 2012. Truthfully, I lost track of the project. One day in 2015, I received an email, amongst the hundreds many of us receive weekly, from a **Phyllis Noble** (Nigeria, 65-67) in Madison, Wisconsin. She was attempting to revive this project. And don't drop your dentures if you wear them...we can now use a DIGITAL RECORDER! Before our upcoming reunion in New Orleans, I phoned Phyllis and asked for any guidance she could give me. To those who are interested, Phyllis will email a packet of information about our project along with specifications on what type of digital or tape recorder to use. The suggested interview questions are included, along with the paperwork that needs to be completed, (Basic Data Form, Deed of Gift, and Memo to Interviewee). Her email is: pnoble42@gmail.com. She welcomes phone calls at 608 293-4233.

I approached at least 5 people during the conference and once again at the Casa Honduras, knowing that we could not conduct an interview with the loud music from the band drowning us out. But I was hoping that, perhaps, I could learn how to Skype (but learned later Skype can't be used) and conduct the interviews afterwards. I especially wanted to interview the two panelists from Honduras Group 1, Brenda

August and Evangeline Tierney. They were part of Sunday's panel discussions. What stories they had, BUT they also had a unique perspective that many of us did not have. As Evangeline told me, "we went to Peace Corps, from living in New Orleans, during racial segregation in the South. I/we have stories to tell...." (Ed. Note: see what they shared in the Aug. issue!)

Barbara with Matt and Sandra Holzapfel in New Orleans, Feb 2016



I hope my article may have lit a spark, you may have in your Peace Corps soul, about learning more about this project, being interviewed OR becoming an interviewer. To me, this seems perhaps a daunting task. But I love what Bob Klein told us at our RPCV Interview meeting in 2006...and will end my article with his quote from The Talmud. **"It is not for you to complete the task, NOR are you free to desist from doing it."** P.S. I am NOT a spy...but my husband thinks I ask too many questions.

NEW ORLEANS PC HONDURAS REUNION

Loren Hintz (Olanchito, 1980-82)

FYI: I warned everyone at the Panel Discussion that I need your help to report on the event. Please send me your stories and your corrections to this summary.

The PC Honduras Reunion was held in New Orleans from Feb 11 to Feb. 15. About 122 people attended with most folks attending from the 60s, late 70s and early to mid-80s. Folks enjoyed Rock "N" Bowl with Zydeco music, Dooky Chase Lunch, Gray Line tours, Hurricane Katrina tours, Mint Museum, Natchez Mississippi River Boat with live Jazz, Mardi Gras-style Party at The Maison on Frenchmen Street, Fiesta at Casa Honduras and Panels at Tulane School of Social Work. A special shout out of **GRACIAS to Terri Salus and Desiree Loeb-Guth** for all of their work. Also Piero Casera, Frank Almaguer, Antoinette Almaguer, Brant Miller, Jim Barborak and Arnie Applegate were other movers and shakers. Folks showed off their Cuerpo de Paz Honduras shirts, stories and Marti Gras beads.



About 80 people attended the Meeting and Panel Discussions at Tulane School of Social Work. We sang "Tu Bandera" and watched a video of greetings from the Honduran Ambassador to the US. Terri shared a tribute to Sara Hall Goodwin who died recently. Frank Almaguer presented the Orden de Salva Vida to this year's honorees. Phyllis (Bloch) Shelton (San Juan Pueblo, 86-88) volunteered to organize a future reunion in Portland, Oregon. Terri said about \$1000 was left over from reunion which the group agreed should be spent on website communication. Also money would be collected for zika response.



Glen Blumhorst (President, NPCA) recognized Amigos de Honduras and the Honduran RPCVs as a vibrant community. He described the goals of the National Peace Corps Association including support for RPCVs, continued service and advocacy for Peace Corps. He presented to Brenda and Evangeline the special PC pin standing for hope, peace and friendship.

Many memories (good and bad) were shared by the First Panel:

Brenda August and Evangeline Tierney (Group 1, 62-64), Jack Riehl and Piero Casera (Group 8, 67-69) and Kathy Synder Cox (71-73).

Kathy shared her work in Olancho as a health and community promoter. Local women were invited to be trained as health promoters. In each area 5 were nominated, interviewed and 2 were selected. They received a month course and learned how to give injections, ID diseases and had a small kit with medicines. Over 90 women were trained from surrounding aldeas. The Catholic NGO Caritas worked in the Juticalpa area. They included smart men who were good at organizing. Because of the lack of priests Comunidades de Base and Servidores de La Palabra formed using the concepts of Liberation Theology. Literacy classes were offered using the Brazilian Freire method. This focused on students using the Socratic Method and sharing their social reality such as lack of food and land. In the area a 7 acre farming cooperative formed. This upset the powers that be and the military arrived. The men were

bound and the women were told to run. The aftermath: seven bodies. Kathy helped obtain a pickup truck to retrieve the bodies. Massive protests resulted. There was an effort to remove PCVs from the area and to blame Peace Corps for the unrest. Volunteers felt it was important to stay and support the local communities. A few years later (June 25, 1975) the priest Ivan Betancourt and 13 others were murdered in the same area (**Los Horcones**).

Panel #2 included Loren Hintz (80-82) with a discussion of Amigos de Honduras, Brant Miller (75-77) shared about the newsletter, Fred Corvi (78-80) talked about our mega RPCV database) and Jim Barborak (77-79) gave a fantastic summary about the impact of PC on the Honduran Park System and environment and the leadership many RPCVs have played in US environmental agencies and NGOs.

The Honduran Consul Roberto Martinez Castellanos welcomed RPCVs to New Orleans. He said much of the violent crime in Honduras is associated with the narcotrafficking. Honduras gov. believes the problem is shared with United States. Other people produce and consume it. Hondurans are not big consumer of drugs. To put things in perspective New Orleans crime rate is bigger than Honduras. 88 deaths per 100,000 vs. 66. Now the Honduran rate has fallen to 55/100,000 which is a big accomplishment. The Ambassador wanted to come here this year. He hopes we can come to Honduras next year. Honduras has radar installations and a frontal war against drug smuggling. Summer of 2014 heard incredible stories of minors fleeing to US. He visited schools unprepared for new students. Need ESL programs. Children are migrants but there has been a 70%

decrease since 14-15. Migrants are fleeing crime and hoping for a better way of life. Crime varies throughout the entire country. Gangs/maras are near the borders with El Salvador and Guatemala and the big cities. There is a campaign to educate families that the risks to migrate are too great to try and reach the US. The wall and deporting is not the solution. The US and Honduras are connected. When the US sneezes, Honduras gets sick. There is a need for safety, jobs and production. There is now a new program for Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua: **Strategic Actions; Plan of the Alliance for the Prosperity of the Northern Triangle.** (A copy was shared with the audience). The program “via major” creates comunidades seguras in the most dangerous neighborhoods by having family fairs, soccer, canchitas, security and a friendly environment. Gang members are returning from US. It is best get back and meet them but it is not easy for them to leave old ways. Gangs were first a problem 15 years ago. They are growing again. Not just drugs. General crime. Complex problem. When asked how we can help, he said just by being here and singing “Tu Bandera” helps. Also you know more about Honduras. Share your knowledge. Come back and visit. Help with the Zika virus prevention efforts. When asked about the Honduran population in New Orleans he replied that it is no longer the largest in the US. Florida/Texas have more as do DC, NYC and LA. Here there are many 2nd, 3rd generations. Many have arrived after Hurricane Mitch and to help with post Katrina reconstruction in New Orleans. **“Muchas Gracias y que Dios te bendiga.”**

After the panels folks enjoyed music, food and dance at Casa Honduras. Songs included Muevete tu centura,

TN Road Kill Bill by Brant Miller, forestry sing along and a conga line which had all the Honduran diners taking photos of RPCVs and HCNs dancing around the room.



AN OLANCHITO REUNION

Scott Zoromski (Olanchito, La Ceiba, 1978-80)

Hello everyone! I had a great time at the Reunion in New Orleans and probably too good of a time on Bourbon Street! My sincere thanks to all who helped put the Reunion together! I left New Orleans for Olanchito, Honduras very early in the morning on Monday, the final day of our Reunion. I was glad I attended the session with the Honduran Consul at our Reunion. He spoke of Traveler Safety in Honduras comparing it to visiting a large city in the United State. There are precautions we take when we live in or visit a large city like Chicago, New Orleans, New York to name a few. I had been biased by our media and our Department of State to believe that it was just not possible to visit Honduras because of violence. What I found out in reality was that the Honduran Consul was correct.

I never felt that I was in danger in Honduras the whole time I was there but reality hit home when Berta Caceres was assassinated. Berta was a leading environmentalist, hoping to stop the development of a dam which would, if built, force the indigenous Lenca people from their land and for that she gave up her life.

For those of you who are going to vote for Hillary you should know that she backed the 2009 Coup that eventually put Juan Orlando Hernandez in office as President of Honduras. It is Juan's administration that is behind the corruption and the killings of innocent people. Juan is now rewriting the constitution to allow himself to be in power for a second term. I don't know how to help Honduras effectively other than to get the word out, but sending our tax dollars there to support this regime should be reconsidered. For those of you thinking about voting for Trump please note that Honduras is now governed by an elite, very wealthy Oligarchy based mostly in Tegucigalpa. Could it happen here? I've heard from some that it is a developing nation, as an excuse for the corruption, the killings, the poverty but my response is that Honduras was a developing nation 36 years ago when I served in the Peace Corps and long before that, so just how long is a nation supposed to be "in development," forever? Honduras has so much to offer to the world in culture, tourism and exports that it should be right up there with Costa Rica. So this was the reality that clobbered me just as I was leaving for home near the end of my trip, **but up until then I was in Paradise!**

I say that because I made some very good friends in Olanchito, we've kept in touch all these years and finally, I was able to put together enough "frijoles" to go back to visit them. My journey in Country began at the San Pedro Sula airport. I booked the flight to land there during the early afternoon to avoid trying to find a place to stay overnight. My best friend in Honduras, Martin was to meet me with his family's car at the airport but the car needed some work so he took

a bus to meet me. We had a joyful reunion, then went about the business of negotiating a cab to take us to the bus station. There are so many cars in Honduras now that the busses were not crowded at all, no chickens, no shoulder to shoulder seating, it was way too normal until about half way to Olanchito the bus decided to break down.

The driver and his assistant opened the engine compartment which was located between the driver and the door, they discovered that the throttle cable had broken so they took it off and tied a string to the throttle. The Cobrador sat behind the driver with the string in hand, the driver started the bus and told the cobrador to *dale* so he pulled the string and down the road we roared! They had it worked out so that the cobrador operated the throttle and the driver steered, clutched and braked. All was well except for the grinding of gears during shifting until we hit a huge pothole in the road about an hour later. The driver kept on going without checking for damage so by the time we got to Tocoa, a short ride on the new paved road from Olanchito, smoke began pouring out of the engine compartment. We all rushed to the door and got out of the bus. By now it is pitch dark on the outskirts of town and once again the guys looked for the problem. It turned out that hitting the pothole had somehow damaged the radiator and guess what, it was dry! So while the cobrador was out looking for water and the passengers were cursing out the driver and he giving it right back to them, another busito pulled up. We abandoned the big bus, driver and cobrador, jammed ourselves into the busito and went shoulder to shoulder merrily down the road to home! **I said to myself Bienvenidos a Honduras, Scott!**



Ana, Martin's wife and his mother Wilma had supper waiting for us. It was late but we ate and told them about our adventure, then it was lights out until the morning. I was so happy to hear the roosters crow in the morning when I got up, I really had missed that. I was treated to another good meal and conversation, a pattern that was to repeat itself many times over in Martin and Ana's home. I hadn't used my knowledge of the Spanish language very much in the States after Peace Corps so it took a few days for it to come back and my ear to keep up with native speakers. The citizens of Olanchito had always prided themselves on the fact that they speak rapidly and Martin's family, of course, had to speak even more rapidly than that! I discovered that once I knew what the subject of conversation was the easier it was to follow and contribute to it. The only problem was the subjects changed very quickly so by the time I caught on to one they were on another one already!

I met Martins' family and friends when I was there in 1978, so I basically joined in with them, a new family and new friends. The guys liked to jump the fence in my back yard and set up cards and coca-colas in the small screen porch attached to the house I rented so they would be there when I took my noon break from school. We would play cards, talk about what happened in town that day or what was about to happen, we discussed politics a lot and listened to rock and roll music on our cassettes. We would get together in the evenings also but

instead of Coca-Cola we had Salva Vida or Flor de Cana. Speaking of Salva Vida, somehow during the past thirty years or so someone figured out how to put two and one half bottles of Salva Vida into one bottle! Now when you ask for a **Salva Vida bien heladita at a pulperia** you will get a “Big One”!

Our group of world problem solvers consisted of myself, **Martin, Eric, Tony, Freddy, Jorge, Renato, Walter, Jose, Paco and Jacobo**. Their families all lived in town but the guys were all in University at La Ceiba or Tegucigalpa so they weren't always all home at the same time. I found out that Tony and Freddy had passed away and Eric, Martin's brother in law had just passed in January of this year. I attended Eric's fortieth day after death service, it was held in his back yard and it was a beautiful service on a beautiful day in a beautiful place. I was glad I had the opportunity to attend because Eric was a good friend and I found that attending gave me closure. Renato had passed as well but he had moved to the southern coast of Honduras. Paco still lives in Olanchito. Jacobo lives in Spain and Jose lives near SPS. Walter is a dentist in Olanchito and Jose is a doctor! Apparently we didn't kill all our brain cells back then! Jorge, a former student of mine, cares for his aging father, Martin is an engineer who worked for Standard Fruit and I remained a teacher. Martin, Walter, Jorge and I spent a lot of time together during my recent visit talking about the old days and the present days of Honduras. Oh and there were women also, Ana, Erica, Marguerita, Mirian (Tony's sister and my novia back then) among others but they didn't hang out with us all the time unless it was a larger family or fiesta type gathering. All the ladies are still around **y todavilla son guapas!**

Ana's family and her neighborhood friends are from old well established families in Olanchito. Her brother Fito does some beekeeping and winemaking. Fito is a passionate environmentalist, he is not outspoken in general publically but he has a lot to say on Facebook! Martin's Mom, Wilma walks the six blocks to church every morning in the dark and is greeted by friends along the way. I know this because I went to church with her one Sunday morning. The old Colonial style church is well maintained and beautiful, the central park where it is located is landscaped nicely. The park benches, buildings and statues of famous citizens are painted brightly. Olanchito has grown in population. There are two main paved roads that didn't exist back then along with paved streets in some neighborhoods.

I only saw one or two *campesinos* with their machete and lunch pail in hand versus many in 1978. There were no longer any *mula* drawn carts, those being replaced by motorcycle drawn carts. There are numerous motorcycles now and a new law that two males cannot ride on a moto together, only solo or with a female because when the boys rode together there was a lot of snatch and run theft going on. Bottled water is everywhere, I drank it all the time and didn't have any amoeba problems other than the normal daily travelers' diarrhea business. To my dismay I saw abandoned run down properties in this old part of town, which was very uncommon in 1978. The owners of these properties are either absent or don't care so homeless families move in until someone chases them out. There still is a lot of poverty in Honduras, which is something that has not changed. There are big changes in La Ceiba, it has grown too

and is home to malls with Dollar Stores, Chester's Chicken and upscale clothing. The city itself is a blend of the old and new with fast food franchises like Pizza Hut alongside *pulperias y tiendas*. Martin's son Junior lives with his wife Claudia in La Ceiba, we visited them on our way to Roatan. Junior is a delivery van driver and Claudia operates a sweet bread bakery, they live in a nice apartment above the bakery.

The food was so good, on the island, at Martin's house and in La Ceiba. Ana's sister owns a restaurant in Olanchito, we had many good meals there. Ana and Michelle both enjoy cooking so much that they have a small *boquita* business preparing snacks for weddings, fiestas and the like. So Ya, I did not come home flaco this time! The time to come home came way too fast, I asked Ana if she ever thought of moving to the United States, she said no, her home is here in Olanchito. **It is awesome to know that I feel at home there too and who knows I might just go back for a longer stay next time!**



Vacation Home For RPCVs

La Casa Rara, West End, Roatan, Honduras

[www.lacasarara.comhttps://www.airbnb.com/rooms/1890880](https://www.airbnb.com/rooms/1890880)

Fixed Price for Honduras RPCVs \$100 up to 1 wk.

Contact: Desiree Guth

Phone: (504) 494-9689



Casaraforent2015RPCVs.pdf

Click the box for details.

INTERNATIONAL BIRDING DISCOVERS HONDURAS

In spite of, or perhaps because of, a lot of the violent news from Honduras a number of folks are enjoying bird watching in Honduras. Don Pendleton, Mark Bonta, Robert Gallardo, Ruth Bennett, Loren Hintz and other RPCVs are showing up on **eBird**, Aviturismo de Honduras and in some of the premier birding magazines. The current US Ambassador to Honduras has been facilitating. There are at least 3 birding and environmental tours occurring. **Check them out!**

BIRDING FUNDRAISING TOUR Robert Gallardo (Olancho, La Mosquitia, 1993-96)

My Guide to the Birds of Honduras has now been published, but there is a need to have a Spanish translation so it can be used more in Honduras by Spanish speakers. A fundraising tour will be held **Feb. 15-25, 2017**. This tour was designed to visit three major regions of the country and includes highlights of natural history, culture, ancient civilizations, and cuisine. The tour includes the famous Mayan site of Copan Ruins, the scenic Lake Yojoa, and the lush rainforests of Pico Bonito N.P. It is also being offered as a means to help acquire sufficient money to fund the translation of Robert's "Guide to the Birds of Honduras". A Spanish edition would go a long ways toward education and conservation goals in the country. Most of the proceeds from this tour will go toward this endeavor. Contact Robert for more info. rgallardo32@gmail.com **Ed note: I**

travelled with Robert last year for his post publication celebration **Birding Tour and Don Pendleton (La Ceiba, 1978-80) just returned from his Feb. Hummingbirds of Honduras tour!** Click the box for more details.



Bird Guide Fundraising tour(revised).pdf



HONDURAS BIRDING CONSERVATION TOUR Nov. 4-13, 2016

Honduras is putting its best foot forward as a premier birding destination in Central America. The Honduras Birding for Conservation Tour is a low-key competition among five groups of birders, each one led by two professional guides, one a well-known birding personality (Tim Appleton, Richard Crossley, Jeff Gordon, Adam Riley and Bill Thompson III, *Birders Digest*) and one a knowledgeable local Honduran guide (Alex Alvarado, Elmer Escoto, Esdras Lopez, William Orellana, **who lead the Beaks and Peaks tour I enjoyed this year in early April**, and Jose Calderon). The teams will compete Nov. 4-13 to see the most species over the course of the 10 days, with the winning team receiving a cash prize of \$20,000. This money will then be donated to a bird conservation cause within

Honduras. It is sponsored by The Lodge at Pico Bonito. PANACAM Lodge, Honduran Birds, US AID. info@hondurasbirdtour.com and www.hondurasbirdtour.com

BIRDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE Mark Bonta (Juticalpa, 91-93)

The Honduran Conservation Coalition, an *ad hoc* network of Honduran and US conservationists, is organizing a Birding for Environmental Justice rapid avian assessment expedition to Honduras **this December and January**. The trip will be led by RPCV Mark Bonta, a geography professor at Penn State, and several top US and Honduran birders. In addition to gathering valuable data on little-known wilderness areas of the Mosquitia and Olancho, our goal is to raise money for small-scale, community-based conservation efforts, and in particular for Las Orquideas (<http://www.honduranconservationcoalition.com/#!orquideas-field-station/c1111>), one of Honduras's most amazing private reserves, which will be one of our bases for field operations. To learn how all this connects to environmental justice, please read "Birding Honduras - A Paean to Berta Caceres" (<http://www.canopywatchinternational.org/2016/03/birding-honduras-a-paean-to-bertha-caceres/>)

12/8-19/16for Moskitia leg only. Mabita field station in Rus-Rus near the Coco River. We can take up to 3 clients. \$1500. 12/19-29/16- Birding tour of mainland Honduras. \$2000. Limit of 5 clients. 12/29/16 to January - Botaderos National Park rapid assessment. We can take up to 3 clients. \$1000. Prices go to cover costs, fund both rapid assessment expeditions, and support bird education, community-based

conservation and environmental justice but not airfare.

We are able to accept private donations (via the Juniata Valley Audubon Society, a 501 c 3)) toward this effort. If you haven't heard by now, you will be pleased to know that Honduras is rapidly becoming one of Latin America's premier destinations, and is in the Top 25 worldwide in number of species. Interested in going, donating, or helping fundraise/promote? Contact Mark at markabonta@yahoo.com , or 610-348-3282 (WhatsApp is preferable).



MEMORIES OF THE 1969 HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR WAR John S. Quick, Jr. (Tegucigalpa, 1967-69)

I served as a PCV in Tegucigalpa from 1967 to 1969. Group 8 Honduras trained at Camp Crozier, Arecibo, Puerto Rico beginning March 3, 1967, then we arrived at Toncontin Airport June 7, 1967 to begin our service. I was assigned to work with some Honduran counterparts and a few other PCV's in forming a new City Planning Office at the City Hall of Tegucigalpa where I later met my wife. We performed several studies to aid the growth and improvement of the city. Ruby worked on the second floor in the marriage license department and I worked on the third floor in the planning department. The restrooms and the smoking area was half way

between. I am named John Quick and she was named Rubenia Ethelvina Sierra Aguilera de Quick after we were married on September 28, 1968. Later she changed her name to just plain Ruby Quick when she became a USA citizen in 1975.

Upon completion of my Peace Corp service in 1969, Ruby and I returned for a few months to the Los Angeles area to introduce my wife to my parents and family. Before leaving the Peace Corps in Honduras, I had accepted employment with the Public Works Department for Honduras. This job was funded by USAID through the US Embassy and I was to be working under Mr. Mario Martin, a Honduran who had studied Urban Planning in the USA and recently returned to Honduras with his family and who was an advisor to the Peace Corps on behalf of the Honduran government and would soon be the Director of Public Works. Since I was a registered Landscape Architect, I hoped to be able to work with this specialty while in Honduras.

In California, Ruby and I prepared for our return to Honduras by buying a station wagon and stocking it with food, clothes and tools. We intended to drive leisurely down the Pan American Highway, Route 1, for about a 10-day trip starting in July of 1969. During our time in California the international news was talking about some political unrest going on between El Salvador and Honduras. Along the way we stopped at a small town called Sauce where they make Sauce Tequila. We purchased many bottles of tequila as presents for my new Honduran brothers-in-law. A few days later we stayed at a run-down motel in some poor town. Since it was very hot at night and with no air conditioning, we strolled down the cobbled street

under a gigantic golden full moon. The neighbors had their television on a table on the front porch with a dozen or more folks watching something intently, jabbering away in Spanish and pointing at the TV then at the moon. This was the exact night of the first walk on the moon. It was magical for us to look up at the moon then down at the TV to see the first man walking and jumping on moon. A few nights later we stayed overnight at a Camino Real Motel nearer to Mexico City where we had a real meal, warm shower and clean sheets, etc. From there we began the final leg of our trip to Honduras but were stopped at the border with Guatemala where the customs officials slowly unloaded everything in the station wagon, looking for whatever, then made us load it all back in. They must have been waiting for some bribe money, but they only relieved us of several of my tools, mumbling something about illegal, and they did not find the tequila.

While driving we had been hearing more about a war between El Salvador and Honduras which worried us, especially since Ruby's family was there. They were calling it the 'Soccer War' and the '100 Hours War' (the fighting lasted 4 days). There was escalating name calling, bottle throwing and fighting during the three FIFA World Cup qualifying soccer games between El Salvador and Honduras. El Salvador finally beat Honduras in the third game which was played in Mexico in order to avoid more violence. On July 14, 1969 The Salvadoran military attacked into Honduras with troops and planes and inflicted substantial damage all along their mutual border. The Organization of American States quickly negotiated a ceasefire which took effect on Aug. 2 when El Salvador agreed to withdraw their troops from

Honduras. The war was not really about the rumored violence during and after the three FIFA soccer matches but was really about a recently adopted Honduras land reform act which caused many of the +/- 300,000 Salvadoran farmers and workers to be kicked out of Honduras and their lands given to native Hondurans, splitting up many Salvadoran/Honduran families.

To be safe, we stopped at the Honduran Consul's office in Guatemala City to ask for an update on the war. They told us that the war was over and that it would be perfectly safe to travel by auto from Guatemala through El Salvador to Honduras. Ruby believed that it would still be dangerous for a Honduran, especially a woman, to travel through El Salvador (enemy territory) so we decided that she should fly home from Guatemala. She was also having a lot of problems with her stomach and did not feel like driving any more. Since the automobile trip from Guatemala City to Tegucigalpa was only about 8 hours, I kissed her goodbye and said I would see her at her family home later that night. This must have been on about August 4th, a day or two after the Salvadorian troop withdrawal so I was excited as I sped south toward the Honduras border crossing at Amatillo. Foto: San Salvador 1979.



About 20 miles before the border I was flagged down by some Salvadorian soldiers equipped with machine guns and told to stop at the gas station just beyond their check point. There was parked a caravan of cars, vans, campers and trailers. We were told that we could go no closer to the border for our own safety. They told us that since the Honduran troops were just then being allowed back into the occupied territory that they might counter attack or fire across the border especially after seeing all of the damage that their troops had inflicted in Honduras. The delayed tourists were from many areas and several countries. Most were headed for Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. We 60 or so vagabonds camped out in our cars and hustled up a meal of sorts with everyone donating something to eat or drink. The guy from Mexico yelled that he had limes and a lady said she had salt and shot glasses and did anyone have the alcohol? So, I dug out a couple of bottles of tequila and we had a great fiesta around the campfire in the parking lot. We all slept well after the bottles were empty and the fire went out.

I later learned that my wife had arrived safely in Tegus and was with her family waiting for me to arrive. When I did not show up that night or the next day she became increasingly concerned for my safety. Her stomach was still very upset either from not eating or from being very worried. Of course there was no way to relay my situation to her since there was no communication between enemy countries and the cell phone was not yet invented.

The next day we managed breakfast then lined up all of our vehicles and headed down to cross the border. More soldiers stopped us about 10

miles from the border, again warning us of impending danger of possible counter attacks and eventually we were forced to return to the gas station for another night of camping, drinking and partying. Another two bottles of my tequila were consumed and we all slept warm and cozy. The next day we were allowed to approach to within 5 miles of the border but were eventually sent back to the 'gasolinera motel'. **"Dos mas botellas, por favor, y mas limones y sal"**

The next day we were escorted all the way to the border immigration and customs house where we were all officially processed and stamped to pass into Honduras. We were free to cross at last. But there was nobody to attend us on the Honduras side because troops had not yet occupied it. Eventually some troops carefully began to occupy the buildings but we were still not allowed to cross by the Hondurans. We were then told sarcastically that El Salvador would graciously let us leave but it was now the darned Hondurans that would not want us to enter.

We were all running out of food and drink. The gas station was almost out of fuel. That day the Red Cross sent a truck with some food, tortillas, cheese, beans and water to feed the troops at the border who had been without for most of the time. I will remember forever the image of the band of 'gringos' elbowing their way through the crowd of soldiers gathered around the back of the dump truck to get to the 'free food' meant for the soldiers. The soldiers politely waited at parade rest for the tourists to get what food they could before getting their turn to eat. I was able to add only my 4 remaining airline sized plastic bottles of tequila. Later a guy from Panama and myself were elected to act as

spokesmen for the group to approach the soldiers on the other side to request entry. We two marched cautiously across the bridge to Honduras to parlay with the officer in command. It felt like we were acting out a scene from 'The Bridge Over the River Kwai' with everyone from both sides, with their rifles sighted, watching us march alone across the bridge not knowing if there would be shots or not. The head official there told us that since this was their first day back at the 'aduana' he must first assess the damage then clean it up. He had no official orders to let us pass and he had no stamps or forms to process our passports. He would let us know when he was ready to allow us to pass.

It was a Sunday, so many local sightseers from the capital city came down to gawk at the war damage. I was able to talk to a lady there who knew the family of my wife. I passed her a note and phone number to contact my wife and let her know we were all OK but were low on food and patience. She told me she would talk to Ruby as soon as she got back home that evening. She, out of politeness, decided not to call until later the next day since it was a bit late and didn't want to wake anyone. Of course, by this time Ruby was worried sick about the status of her missing husband, imagining that I might be a prisoner of war or worse. Hearing finally of our status from the lady, she was panicked and immediately called her uncle, who happened to be the Sub-Secretary of Defense for the army. She asked him to please get us out of there, exaggerating that there were over 100 of us sick and starving tourists waiting on the border, one being her new husband, and that we were probably being abused by the enemy or worse, and could he assist in our escape and freedom! By early

afternoon the Army had sent a military convoy to help reinforce the border and to deliver stamps and legal paper to process our passports since theirs had been stolen by the enemy. Finally, we were allowed to proceed south through Honduras with military convoy jeeps, complete with mounted machine guns, to escort us down the Pan Am Hwy. Most of the tourists crossed through Honduras but I turned left and headed up the mountains to Tegucigalpa and arrived a few hours later much to the relief of Ruby and her family.

The family questioned me about the war damage I might have seen or rumors about the enemy's war heroes I might have heard while living among the enemy or damage in Honduras I might have witnessed. They were very curious since in time of war one cannot believe anything one hears or reads. All one hears is propaganda. I was almost a hero for a day since I had survived the 'Soccer War' or at least its leftovers. Finally, I had to inform my brothers-in-laws that I did not bring them any presents since all of their tequila had been consumed on the fields of battle. And as for Ruby's chronic stomach discomfort, she was actually pregnant with our first child, Sally Ann Quick, who was born 8 months later in Tegus. We were never really sure if she was conceived in Los Angeles or in Mexico, but since she was born on April 14, 1970 which is celebrated as the 'Dia De Las Americas' in Honduras and all of Latin America, we assume that it was in L.A.

RECENT NEWS FROM HONDURAS

On March 3 **Berta Caceras**, winner of the 2015 Goldman Environment Award, was murdered in La

Esperanza, Intibucá. Environmentalist Gustavo Cruz of Mexico was wounded. Berta Caceras was the 1993 co-founder of the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). Also this year several Lenca communities were evicted by police on land they occupied and another COPINH leader Nelson Garcia was murdered March 15 in La Naranjera, Pena Blanca, Santa Cruz de Yojoa. Cruz was not allowed to leave the country until March 30. From Mexico he has given several interviews protesting the judicial process in Honduras and the threats against environmental and indigenous leaders. (From 2010 to 2014 over one hundred Honduran environmentalists have been killed.) Photo from La Esperanza,



On March 26th Didier Ramirez was arrested for the murder of Garcia. COPINH was supporting the community of Rio Blanca protesting the **Agua Zarca hydroelectric project at Gualcarque River by the Honduran company DESA**. Since the murders and protests the Dutch and Finnish finance agencies have suspended their funding. In April it was released to the press, that on March 13 the police entered the offices of DESA and confiscated weapons, took documents and interviewed employees. Dam projects have been promoted as

being carbon free/clean energy but are being criticized for their negative impacts on local communities and ecosystems.

Documents published by El Heraldo in April have shown that for years it was known within certain government circles that the 2009 and 2011 murders of the top antidrug officials was due to a conspiracy of top police officials and drug traffickers. This has given more push for the “depuracion” of the National Police and their replacement by Policia Militar. Another attempt at reducing the economic and social damage of government corruption is the **MACCIH (in English, Support Mechanism to Confront Corruption and Impunity in Honduras)**. This started April 11 and is similar to the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) but under the OAS (Organization of American States).

The International Human Rights Court (CIDH) condemned Honduras for the persistent property rights violation of the Garifuna community Triunfo de Cruz and demanded the investigation of the murders of activists Jesús Álvarez, Oscar Brega, Jorge Castillo Jiménez, and Julio Alberto Morales. Also OAS asked Honduras to request the CIDH to help investigate the murder of Berta Caceras.

On Feb. 15 the US NGO Casa Alianza denounced the murder of almost 100 children a month in Honduras. It demanded the government investigate death squads targeting youths in a so called social cleaning of the cities. It also protested that youths and children who traveled by bus to a soccer game were stopped by uniformed, forced out and placed face down on the pavement. The former Honduran

President Rafael Callejas was extradited to the US for crimes committed while he was president of the Honduran Soccer Federation (Fenafuth) in the ongoing FIFAgate scandal. LIBRE party is having infighting on whether to have primary elections or not for the next election cycle.

The UPI reported Apr. 13 that an international task force made up of Mexican and Honduran authorities as well as the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration recently seized Daniel Lombardi's assets. He is accused of being the Honduran operator for Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's Sinaloa Cartel. Lombardi, 45, was arrested on April 1 and later extradited to the United States over charges of trafficking cocaine and heroin, as well as money laundering. In simultaneous raids, nine buildings, three commercial companies, several vehicles and the El Bosque tourism resort of Roatan were seized. Guzman often travelled to Honduras while on the run between 2001-14.

After 20 years of talk, construction is beginning at Palmerola military base (near Comayagua) to build the **new international airport for Honduras**. Funding will come from Spain (\$53M), Honduras (\$23M) and Emco SA (\$87M) It should open in January 2018. The Toncontin Tegucigalpa airport will close, although many hope it will remain open as a regional airport. Foto: landing at Toncontin Airport 4.8.16.



Nationally there were 198 forest fires burning 6000ha including one in Jeannette Kawas National Park near Tela that burnt 50ha. Both the US and Honduran Air Force helped put it out. The Association of Palm Oil Producers announced they had nothing to do with the Jeannette Kawas fire. During Semana Santa 199 people were rescued from drowning but another 35 drowned (up 10 deaths from last year.) Over 700,000 people left Tegucigalpa for the holiday.

Gas rises in April by L2.12 to L76.12/gallon. As of April 8 there have been 19,200 cases of **zika virus** infection including 214 pregnant women. There have been 68 reported cases of **Guillain-Barré** but none of microencephalia births. Since January there have been 13 murders of taxi and bus drivers or cobradores. Transit stoppages in protest have occurred. Operation Smile Honduras announced they would be doing 75 corrective surgeries in one day in April.

(Sources La Prensa, El Heraldo, La Tribuna while I was in Honduras 3/27 -4/10; AP, UPI and shared media.)



Amigos de Honduras Membership Info

Use this form to renew membership or notify us of a change in address. Or, copy and give to a friend whom you think might like to keep in touch with Honduras and RPCVs. Other than your name, enter only the info that has changed.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: _____ e-mail address _____

Peace Corps Info:

Years of service: from _____ to _____ Group # _____ Site(s) _____

Job _____

Post-Peace Corps Experiences (occupation, marriage, children, travels, interests) _____

Make check payable to Amigos de Honduras: Mail to Joan Larimore, 2334 Sunset Avenue, Enumclaw, WA 98022

5-16

Amigos de Honduras :	\$15 <input type="checkbox"/>
NPCA Supporter (Basic FREE):	\$50 <input type="checkbox"/>
Amigos, NPCA & another group:name of other group	\$30 <input type="checkbox"/>
Contribution to projects Amigos will fund in Honduras:	
\$ _____	
Total Amount Enclosed: _____	

I would prefer to receive my newsletter in .pdf format.

the date on the mailing label is the expiration date of your membership - please renew if you're due!



Amigos de Honduras
c/o Joan Larimore
2334 Sunset Avenue
Enumclaw, WA 98022