



Friends of Sierra Leone Newsletter

July 2013

2013 Annual Meeting



Some who attended the Friends of Sierra Leone annual meeting at Simmons College in Boston concurrent with the National Peace Corps Association's second annual Gathering.

[Story on page three]

Election Results

The 2013 Friends of Sierra Leone election results are:

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Peggy Murrah | President | 2 year term |
| Aiah Fanday | Vice President | 2 year term |
| Patty Bruzek | Secretary, | 2 year term |
| Amadu Massally, | Public Affairs (SL), | 2 year term |
| James Sheahan, | Public Affairs (US), | 2 year term |
| Judy Figi | Director at Large, | 4 year term |
| Thomas Hull | Director at Large, | 4 year term |
| Gary Schulze, | Director at Large, | 4 year term |
| Alison Sinning, | Director at Large, | 4 year term |
| Anthony McMillon | Director at Large, | (fills a vacancy, 2 years) |



President Obama has announced his intent to nominate John Hoover, a career diplomat, as Ambassador to Sierra Leone, succeeding Ambassador Mike Owen. Mr. Hoover is currently the Director of the Office of Regional and Security Affairs for the Bureau of African Affairs at the U. S. Department of State. He has served in a number of diplomatic assignments

2013 Annual Meeting

The meeting began with a presentation from Tom Johnson, Jr., about his work bringing surgical teams to Sierra Leone since he first returned to the country at the end of the war in December 2001. Tom served as a Peace Corps Volunteer (1989-1991) working with farmers on tree crops and beekeeping. Sierra Leone's already weak medical infrastructure was almost completely destroyed during the civil war. He began by facilitating surgical treatment for patients in need of complex spinal surgery. He now spends at least three months a year in Sierra Leone and much of the rest of the time raising money and arranging treatment for those in need of spinal and other surgeries through the 501 c-3 not for profit corporation Africa Surgery, Inc.

Susan Schwartz, an Agriculture RPCV in Moyamba District from 1981-1983, showed a half hour video of the first village she lived in. Tennessee missionaries held a dental clinic there in the fall of 1981 and asked Susan to narrate a video, which she did as she and the cameraman walked from one end of the village to the other. Years later, when she became a public school teacher,

Susan edited the footage, inserted still photos from around Sierra Leone, and added a postscript about the war. She regularly shows the documentary to her middle school students when teaching about Africa. Susan enjoyed attending her first FoSL Annual Meeting and showing the video to other Salone RPCVs.

Mohammed Barie summarized the various activities of the Sierra Leonean diaspora.

A comprehensive country update was presented by Tom Hull, former ambassador to Sierra Leone and Friends of Sierra Leone at-large board member, by reading a letter from retiring ambassador Owen (see page 4).

Gary Schulze related his experience being inaugurated as an honorary Paramount Chief (see page 9).

The afternoon concluded with a brief presentation from Allen Mondell discussing his DVD, "Waging Peace" an insightful and reflective view of the value of volunteering and experiencing cultures other than one's own.

Letter from Ambassador Owen

Dear Friends of Sierra Leone Members:

It's a great honor for me as United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone to send you warm greetings on the occasion of your annual general meeting in Boston. FoSL has done a tremendous job in supporting the development of Sierra Leone, and in broadening the relations between the United States and Sierra Leone over many years, and I as Ambassador am deeply appreciative of all your efforts.

The past year, my third in Sierra Leone, has been highly eventful, and I would like to recount for you some of the important things that have happened. As you all certainly know, there were national elections in November of 2012 that were critically important for the sustenance of Sierra Leone's growing democracy. The United States played an absolutely essential role in ensuring these elections went well. We supported a strong observer mission from the Carter Center, organized our own strong observer mission with support from neighboring U.S. embassies in Monrovia and Conakry, and also collaborated closely with similar missions from the EU, AU, Commonwealth, and ECOWAS, among others. Prior to the elections we provided extensive technical support to the National Election Commission, Political Parties Registration

Commission, party groups, and civil society, through the National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. We also did extensive police training via the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure all police personnel knew electoral procedures and could handle any disputes through non-violent means. I am happy to report that the elections went extremely well, and that all observers stated publicly that the polling was free, fair, non-violent, transparent, and accurate. Almost all Sierra Leoneans immediately accepted the results, and senior representatives from both major parties have personally thanked me for the helpful role that the U.S. played.

Just over ten years ago, Sierra Leone was considered a Failed State, with widespread anarchy that was only partially controlled by international peacekeeping forces. And yet today, just over ten years later, Sierra Leone has dispatched peacekeeping troops to Darfur, and has now sent a full battalion to Somalia. There is no greater measure of the successful trend of this country than the fact that Sierra Leone has gone from being a "peacekeeping importer", to a "peacekeeping exporter" in just one decade. This has been accomplished in large part due to the training and equipping of the Sierra Leonean

forces by the U.S. Government. We have had successive teams of U.S. trainers here, and have almost completely equipped these peacekeeping forces. It hasn't always been easy - I've had nightmares about all-weather size 9 combat boots not arriving on time. But today some 850 Sierra Leonean soldiers are proudly deployed as peacekeepers in Somalia; they have already engaged Al-Shabab successfully and have acquitted themselves extremely well.

When I arrived in Sierra Leone in 2010, they passed on only 5 out of 20 indicators for the Millennium Challenge Account. The MCA is a highly rigorous U.S. development assistance program that requires governments to demonstrate - by measureable statistics - strong progress in democratic governance, investing in their own people, and establishing an open free-market economy. We started a very rigorous and detailed dialogue with the government of Sierra Leone to help them to improve their score. They moved up to 7 in 2011 - still pretty low - but with our strong guidance and advice from the U.S. Embassy, they went leaping up the scale to 12 in 2012. This score qualified them for an MCA compact program. We are now working closely with the Government of Sierra Leone to develop a full MCA program, and I think it is likely to be completed by the end of 2013. This

will be a five-year program of at least a couple hundred million dollars, and will probably involve investments in infrastructure, electric power, and perhaps other areas. Most importantly, it labels Sierra Leone as a successful and strongly developing state.

Sierra Leone has huge mineral resources and they are finally starting to be developed in an organized way. More and more international mining companies are coming in, and the export of mineral resources is becoming quite significant. According to the IMF, Sierra Leone's real GDP grew by 15 percent last year, will grow by almost that amount this year, and will continue to grow by around 15 percent for the next decade. According to the IMF estimates, by 2020 Sierra Leone will officially be a middle-income country. This is almost entirely due to mineral exports - iron ore, rutile, bauxite, gold, and diamonds. And there is a strong possibility of oil offshore - American companies Chevron, Anadarko, Noble, and others are currently exploring. This is all great news, but of course we all need to think about how this increased revenue will come down to the ordinary citizen in a way that produces tangible results.

In many other areas Sierra Leone continues to make progress. Corruption is still a huge problem, but the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) is functioning very well, with our support. The

ACC recently indicted 29 officials in the Ministry of Health for diverting funds, and they are now pursuing a major case involving the National Revenue Authority and the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank. Sierra Leone moved up on the State Department's Tier Ranking on Trafficking in Persons from Watch List to Tier 2. I just hosted two events to highlight this progress and the importance of continuing to combat the scourge of trafficking, which is still very real in Sierra Leone. The United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) is now winding down and will close their operations in March of 2014. I have long advocated in favor of this because I believe this is a strong indication of success. Sierra Leone is no longer a Failed State or a Country in Crisis, but instead it is a democratic, developing country that needs some development assistance like so many other countries around the world. In other words, Sierra Leone is no longer a special case, and we should all be happy about this.

And of course as you all know, I had the honor of accompanying President Koroma to Washington in late March of this year for an official visit. We had a great visit in the White House with President Obama, which got extended by an hour because the conversation was so interesting. We also had many other really productive meetings with USAID, OPIC, ExIm, Treasury, the Corporate Council on Africa, major private sector players like

Bechtel, Chevron, etc. One of the highlights of the trip was an official visit to the Peace Corps Headquarters. President Koroma gave a formal speech to about 200 people, but before that we had a terrific meeting in Carrie Radelet's office to talk about the future of Peace Corps in Sierra Leone. Carrie was extremely positive and supportive, said she was very pleased with the PC program in Sierra Leone and the FoSL support, and emphasized that she would like to expand the size of the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, subject to funding availability.

But perhaps the high point of this visit to Peace Corps headquarters was the presence of Sharon Alvarado, a PCV from the 1960s, now retired in Florida. She was a volunteer in Makeni when President Koroma was a child, and Sharon actually stayed in a house owned by President Koroma's parents. The Peace Corps was extremely kind and generous to bring her up from Florida to be there to meet with President Koroma, and they really had a wonderful exchange. President Koroma was beaming throughout as they exchanged so many memories, and he repeatedly said what an impact the Peace Corps has had in Sierra Leone. Sharon also had some great memories, perhaps the most noteworthy being her memory of the President's late Mother taking her under her wing and saying "Please do not go out drinking with those boys late at night." Still pretty good advice, huh? The President got a great

laugh out of this one.

I want to reassure all of you that the Peace Corps is doing extraordinarily well in Sierra Leone. Just a few days ago I attended the welcoming ceremony of 43 new volunteers at State House, which President Koroma hosted. Both of us spoke, and it was great to see all the volunteers dressed in their traditional Sierra Leonean clothing, courtesy of the Foreign Ministry. I have managed to visit almost all of the volunteers at their sites over the last three years, and I am consistently impressed by their strong commitment, and by the great impact they are having on their communities. We all have a lot to be proud of in the work of these volunteers.

In closing, there is a sad note: my three years in Sierra Leone are drawing to a close and I will be departing this late summer or fall. I've had a great experience here in Sierra Leone and it has been a true honor to represent the United States of America here. I will be moving on to other assignments, but I will always keep a little piece of Sierra Leone in my heart, as I am sure all you do as well. Many thanks to all of the members of the Friends of Sierra Leone for the tremendous work you have done here, and for the great example you set for the United States of America.

Warm regards to you all.



Ernest Bai Koroma (President of Sierra Leone) with Friends of Sierra Leone representatives : [left to right] Anthony McMillon (board member), Mike Diliberti (board member), Sharon Kasper Alvarado (member), President Koroma, Aiah Fanday (vice president), Dave O'Neill (member), and Linda Slonksnes (member)



Gary is honored by the Poro Lakka.

Gary being carried in a hammock through the town to the court barrie.



Paramount Chief Charles Caulker, Chairman of the Council of Paramount Chiefs, presents Gary with chief's robe.



Current Peace Corps Volunteers Nicole Alexander, Meghan Walsh and Mike Lee with Acting Country Director Daryn Walker at the ceremony.

Gary is an (honorary) Paramount Chief!

On Becoming an Honorary Paramount Chief

by Gary Schultze

I first learned that I would be made an Honorary Paramount Chief in Sierra Leone when I visited Shenge in April 2012. There I was met by hundreds of people together with the Paramount Chief and her Speaker. Chief Doris announced to the crowd that because of my contributions to Sierra Leone and to the Kagboro Chiefdom since I first came to Sierra Leone as a young Peace Corps Volunteer in 1962, I would be installed as an Honorary Paramount Chief the following year.

I was later asked if I would be willing to be inducted into the Poro Secret Society before the ceremony. I agreed but later found out the elders had nixed the idea.

Shortly after arriving in Freetown, in 2013 I met with the Minister of Tourism & Cultural Affairs, Peter Bayaku Konteh, to tell him about the photograph of Bai Bureh I brought with me to present to the country.

On Friday May 3, 2013, I and a number of friends left Tombo by boat for Shenge. Some waded into the water to get on the boat, but I was carried on the shoulders of someone, piggy-back, and nearly toppled into the muddy water

with my camera and telephone. The ride to Shenge took about three hours.

Upon arriving in the town I was greeted by a long procession of young Poro initiates led by a Lakka covered with circular body decorations carrying a flat shield with mysterious markings. The Lakka is a very high Poro official and enforcer who makes his appearance as a sign of respect for a newly crowned Paramount Chief in a traditional Sherbro ceremony that goes back hundreds of years. T.J. Alledredge, the Traveling Commissioner in Sherbro-Land, photographed a Lakka with the same markings and shield in 1901. I was told to acknowledge his greeting by touching him on the right shoulder.

The following morning I was carried in a hammock from the Paramount Chief's Residence to the Shenge Market and then on to the Court Barrie followed by dozens of dancing women, singing and playing drums and rattling *segburehs*. I was flanked by horn blowers followed by the Chiefdom Speaker, Mr. A.A. Lamin, the Section Chiefs, Elders, traditional dancers and other people carrying welcoming banners. Even a Bundu Devil joined the procession and stayed with me throughout the installation. Includ-

ed among the guests were two former Peace Corps Volunteers, Judy Figi, and Peter Andersen, and three current Volunteers, Megan Welsh, Nicole Alexander, and Mike Lee, accompanied by the Acting Peace Corps Country Director, Daryn Walker.

After Christian and Muslim prayers, the Speaker introduced all of the Kagboro Chiefdom Authorities and Section Chiefs. The Chairman of the Installation Ceremony, Paramount Chief Charles Caulker of Rotifunk, who is also Chairman of the Council of Paramount Chiefs, then presented me with an Honorary Chieftaincy Staff and a country cloth robe of chieftaincy. After libations to the ancestors were poured, I received a new name - Pieh Gbabiyo Caulker I, a particular honor since the Caulker name is a revered one in that part of the country.

I told them this was the most important moment of my life and added that I was deeply grateful to the Peace Corps for having given me the opportunity to come to Sierra Leone in 1962. I said this honor was as much for the Peace Corps as it was for me personally. The current and former Volunteers were asked to stand up and the crowd acknowledged them with a big round of applause.

Several gifts were presented, including a beautifully carved Chief's walking cane, a carved wooden map of Sierra

Leone with both my name and Chief Doris's highlighting the location of Shenge, another country cloth robe from the Ministry of Tourism, and the traditional gifts for a new Paramount Chief - a bag of rice, a gallon can of palm oil, and a live goat. Daryn presented me with a "Certificate of Congratulations" on behalf of the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone and a representative of the Section Chiefs gave me a sack containing soil from Kagboro Chiefdom.

When we left Shenge to go back to Freetown, we were stopped at a police roadblock near Masiaka. A policeman came up to my window and asked, very curtly, where I was coming from. "Shenge," I said. Then He asked me my name. I thought I'd give it a shot and see what happened. "Paramount Chief Pieh Gbabiyo Caulker I of Kagboro Chiefdom." He responded, "Oh, a Paramount Chief. Thank you Sah!" saluted and waved us on.

This was the greatest honor of my life and I'll always be grateful to the many people who made it possible. It was also a very humbling experience because I know there are Peace Corps Volunteers, people like Tom Johnson, who have done far more for Sierra Leone than I have. I can only hope that my installation will be viewed as a symbolic tribute to all of the Peace Corps Volunteers who have served in Sierra Leone since the first group arrived in 1962.

Africa is My Home: Child of the Amistad

by Monica Edinger

I first learned of Sarah Margru Kinson, the subject of *Africa is My Home: A Child of the Amistad* (Candlewick Press, 2013), at the June 2000 meeting of the Friends of Sierra Leone, held at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. We were given a tour of the just-finished replica of the slave ship *Amistad*, saw a storyteller perform a version of the story, and taken through relevant exhibits. It was at one of these that I learned that there were children on the ship, something I had not known before. Having served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Freetown, 1974-76 (and trained at Bunumbu), I was preoccupied with the dreadful conflict going on at the time and it was only when I got home that I began to wonder about those children and started my research. *Africa is My Home* is a fictionalized memory book narrated in the first-person by Margru herself and beautifully illustrated with lush full-color art as well as archival images and documents.

Sarah Margru Kinson led an extraordinary life. Wrenched from her African homeland as an enslaved child in 1839, she returned in triumph as a college-educated young teacher. Like most of the other *Amistad* captives, Margru was Mende. Like them she was taken to a notorious slave factory on the African

coast, survived the horrific voyage to Cuba, and sold to an owner who brought her aboard the *Amistad*. There she witnessed the mighty actions of Cinque and his compatriots as they rebelled against their captors and attempted to sail the ship back to Africa. Recaptured in America, the group became a lightning rod for the debate over slavery with their case finally ending up before the Supreme Court. Ably defended by former president John Quincy Adams, they won their case and went home to Africa. Only Margru returned, crossing the ocean once again to attend Oberlin College before going home for good.

In 2011 I returned to Sierra Leone for the first time with the Friends of Sierra Leone to celebrate the first cohort of Peace Corps Volunteers since the war. It was a moving and wonderful experience and it was heartening to see that the country is making its way back from a terrible time. One day soon I hope that Margru will again go home to Sierra Leone, this time in this book --- her story needs to be known there as much as anywhere. For among the many who were taken during the dreadful time of the Transatlantic slave trade were some like Margru who did not stay in the Americas, but went home to Africa. Home for good.

Projects Committee Report by Jim Hanson

Two projects were selected for funding from the application period ending April 30. The Southern Eye Institute of Memphis, TN, was granted \$3000 for a medical device to be used in Sierra Leone. A women's empowerment program by One Village Partners in Minneapolis was funded at \$1500. Both of these groups have been working in Sierra Leone for many years.

Southern Eye was able to purchase a palm scan unit to be used to diagnose eye diseases. They work at the Serabu Eye Clinic in the Southern District and travel there twice a year to do eye surgeries at no cost. The unit will then remain in Serabu for use in the clinic. The Reflect-Action program put in place as a pilot program by One Village Partners earlier this year will be expanded to six villages with their funding. They are working in Kailahun

District in eastern Sierra Leone. This innovative program fosters social change through women's empowerment and informal learning, leading them to identify and solve their own problems.

We will also fund a secondary project by a current Peace Corps Volunteer that will be selected by Peace Corps/Sierra Leone. A generous donor has given the \$2000 needed for this project. In August, we will continue our \$250 scholarship award to the Paul School for the Blind. The Daphne Sawyer-Dunn Memorial Scholarship Fund provides money to the school each year to assist needy students.

The projects committee would like to thank all those who contribute to these programs. We are only able to support these projects in Sierra Leone because of your contributions, and we are very grateful for your donations.

The following note was received by Jim Hanson, projects chairman of Friends of Sierra Leone

Dear Mr. Hanson,

On behalf of Southern Eye Institute I am happy to thank Friends of Sierra Leone for the recent generous donation of three thousand dollars. Because of this timely and thoughtful donation, we were able to purchase a Palm Scan unit. This piece of ophthalmic equipment is invaluable to our medical clinic located in

Serabu, Sierra Leone. By having access to this equipment, our technicians are able to be more effective at outreach work in remote communities, and we can provide more accurate diagnostic readings in the field. Southern Eye Institute cannot fulfill its mission to restore sight and provide quality eye care without the generous support organizations like Friends of Sierra Leone.

All the best,

Brad Scharff, SEI Coordinator



Friends of Sierra Leone was represented at the February 28th presentation of the National Peace Corps Association's Congressional Leadership Award to Senator Isakson for his involvement in creating the Kate Puzey Volunteer Protection Act that became law in 2011. Pictured above are (from left to right): NPCA Chairman Tony Barclay, NPCA President Glenn Blum, former U. S. Senator from Pennsylvania Harris Wofford, U. S. Senator from Georgia Johnny Isakson, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer and Friends of Sierra Leone President Peggy Murrah, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Jim Sheahan, and NPCA intern Ryan Greenstein

2014 International Calendar

The 2014 International Calendar produced by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin/Madison is available through Friends of Sierra Leone. This is the calendar's twenty-seventh year. The theme is "Savoring the Harvest." In addition to volunteers' striking photographs from host countries around the world the calendar includes historic days, holidays and holy days from many cultures, astronomical data, and references to recommended books, music, films and local fare from the featured countries. The Global Peace Index compiled by the Institute for Economics and Peace attempts to measure a nation's relative peacefulness. All calendar profits will go toward Friends of Sierra Leone activities. Make your checks to **Friends of Sierra Leone**.

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| Membership: \$25 per Individual | Donations: FoSL Circle | \$1000 and up |
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Membership (\$25 per member) \$ _____

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Total Remitted \$

Membership dues support operations for Friends of Sierra Leone, including meetings, newsletter, and the website. All other donations support projects in Sierra Leone.

Dues and other contributions to Friends of Sierra Leone are fully tax-deductible. The \$35 membership fees for National Peace Corps Association are **not** tax-deductible.

Thank you for your support! Please return this form with a check payable to Friends of Sierra Leone to the address at the right. →

FoSL needs your participation. Circle your areas of interest:

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How would you prefer to receive your newsletter? (circle one)

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Friends of Sierra Leone

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