



October 2007

# Friends of Sierra Leone

Daphne Ebilola Malphina Sawyerr-Dunn



Mentor, Confidant and Patriot

*By Linda Slonksnes and Peggy Murrah*

Born June 14, 1955, in Freetown, the loss of Daphne Sawyerr-Dunn on August 7, 2007, is too overwhelming to truly describe. The completely full church and funeral procession to the gravesite at George Washington Mt. Lebanon Cemetery, with well over a hundred cars, was a visual and human testimony to an amazing, caring and lovely woman that people across more than one continent grieved for so deeply. Tributes were made by many, including colleagues from the World Bank, Muctarr Jallow (one of the amputees she had assisted in coming to the U.S. to obtain prosthetics and find others to hear his voice of the horrors of the war), Walter Fauntroy (former U.S. Delegate from the District of Columbia to Congress), and her brother Desmond, whose love for Daphne shined brightly through his grief and many other family and friends.

After attending Freetown Secondary School for Girls, Daphne entered the Sierra Leone civil service. She resigned as secretary to the chairman of the Public Service Commission in 1978 and left Sierra Leone to attend California State University where she received a Bachelor's degree in English in 1985. After marrying Wynford Dunn in 1993, they moved east. Daphne started at the World Bank in 1994, where her last position was with the Environmentally & Socially Sustainable Development Sector Unit of Europe and Central Asia.

*Friends of Sierra Leone (FoSL) is an eclectic group. We are made up of returned Peace Corps Volunteers, Sierra Leoneans, and friends and family*

*[Daphne - continued on page 6]*

## Friends of Sierra Leone

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## PROJECTS COMMITTEE UPDATE

By Jim Hanson

Thanks to all who have given to the projects fund and to the efforts of our committee members, we were able to award over \$14,000 to five projects in Sierra Leone. We also decided to fund projects just twice a year, with application deadlines of April 30 and October 31.

Cindy Nofziger resigned as chair in April, and Richard Frazier and I were approved as co-chairs. Cindy will concentrate on her own school-building project. We all appreciate very much her work on projects.

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Aiah Fanday, Anthony McMillon, and Mike O'Neill met three times to review over 20 applications. The funded projects were announced at the California annual meeting. The focus was to help registered community groups in Sierra Leone that would reach a large number of people. The projects were to be self-sustaining, diverse and spread throughout the country. In Bombali district, an agriculture project was selected; in Makeni, a garri production project and a health and sanitation project; in Bo district, a literacy project; and in Kenema, a HIV/AIDS prevention project. Total expenditure was \$14,095.

Richard was in Salone in July with Operation Classroom, and he met with the Makeni project leaders. They were delighted to hear that they had been selected and were very excited to be able to

[Projects – continued on page 9]

## New Board Members and Committee Chairs

We welcome three new at large members to FoSL's board of directors and new committee co-chairs. Our thanks for the time and dedication of two retiring board members, Adjai Robinson and Dave O'Neill. The new members are:

John Amman (Brooklyn, NY) was a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) in Sierra Leone from 1979 to 1982 serving as a teacher trainer in primary agriculture in the village of Fadugu in Koinadugu District. He received his MS in Collective Bargaining from Cornell University in 1990. He is currently employed as a Business Representative for the International Cinematographers Guild. John is co-author of the recently released *Black Man's Grave: Letters from Sierra Leone*, which gives an account of the country's civil war from the perspective of his friends living in the village of Fadugu.

Scott Leaman (Grass Valley, CA) served as a PCV in Moyamba from 1985 to 1987. He is currently superintendent of schools for Western Placer Unified School District in Lincoln, CA. His family has hosted a Chernobyl child each of the past five summers. Scott plans to travel to Sierra Leone to work on his dissertation in the area of reading and math assessment.

Jim Temple (Minneapolis, MN) worked as a PCV as an agricultural extension agent from 1980 to 1981 in Magbele Ferry. Since returning from his assignment he has worked in social service agencies specializing in cognitive and behavioral support to persons with developmental disabilities (DD) and related conditions. Currently he is director of an agency that provides and coordinates crisis services for the seven county metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul for people with DD.

Jim Hanson is our new Projects co-chair. He was an agriculture volunteer in Mandu, north of Bo, from 1977 to 1979. He now works for the city of Athens, Georgia.

Richard Frazier is the other new Projects co-chair. As PCVs he and his wife, Catherine, taught at Njala Komboya Secondary School (Bo Northeast). He is now a science educator at the University of Central Missouri.

**MESSAGE TO THE FRIENDS OF SIERRA LEONE  
FROM  
RECENT FORMER U. S. AMBASSADOR TO SIERRA LEONE THOMAS N. HULL  
JULY 12, 2007**

I would like to once again wish the Friends of Sierra Leone an enjoyable and successful Annual Meeting on behalf of the American Embassy in Sierra Leone. I regret that I cannot be with you, but I am pleased that my Deputy Chief of Mission, Susie Pratt, will be able to brief you by phone from Washington on current events in Sierra Leone.

As you know, I will leave Sierra Leone in the coming weeks. I have stretched out my departure until next month because August will be an important juncture for the country's future, most notably the August 11 presidential and parliamentary elections.

All indications are that the elections will be the most credible that Sierra Leone has ever had. The National Electoral Commission (NEC), with strong support from the UN and international donor community, has

*[Hull – continued on page 9]*

## Advocacy Committee Update

**By Judy Figi and Jim Sheahan**

The Advocacy Committee has concentrated much of its activity on the return of the Peace Corps to Sierra Leone, as it has done for the past few years. Led by Judy Figi, visits to Capitol Hill seeking support from Members of Congress were a high priority. Meetings with staff members of key House and Senate members resulted in the generation of numerous letters to Peace Corps headquarters.

Among those responding to FoSL's efforts were Senators Russ Feingold (D-WI), Barack Obama (D-IL), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Herb Kohl (D-WI), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), and Representatives Paul Ryan (R-WI), Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX), Mark Green (R-WI), John Lewis (D-GA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Hank Johnson (D-GA), Tom Tancredo (R-CO) and Diane Watson (D-CA). Additional meetings were held at the U. S. State Department, the National Peace Corps Association and the Sierra Leone Embassy. In each case, the importance of having Peace Corps return to Salone was discussed and support solicited. Throughout this time, Ambassador Tom Hull, himself a returned Salone PCV, expressed his desire for the Peace Corps to return in meetings with various officials in the Salone government and at Peace Corps headquarters. A large delegation of Sierra Leone government officials made an official visit to Peace Corps, too.

With the naming of a new Peace Corps Director, former PCV Ronald A. Tschetter, the tide seemed to turn. In June, at the request of Mr. Tschetter, a pre-entry assessment team traveled to Sierra Leone from Washington and spent 10 days in the country. Although no official word has been received, it's been made known that the report from the team's reaction there was very positive. All that remains now is for Director Tschetter to give the go ahead and initial staff will be sent to establish an office in Freetown and prepare for the arrival of the first Volunteers sometime in the early part of 2008.

The Advocacy Committee continued to monitor legislation and events related to Sierra Leone, especially as they related to the possibility of reinstating Temporary Protective Status (TPS) or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED). Numerous calls and contacts were made to secure these on behalf of Sierra Leoneans residing in the United States who are in danger of being deported. Unfortunately, no positive results have been realized thus far.

Goodsearch is a search engine powered by Yahoo that donates a penny to a cause of your choice every time you use it to do an Internet search. Just go to <http://www.goodsearch.com/> and use Friends of Sierra Leone as your designated charity in the box at the bottom of the page. You can even check on the current amount of donation due to FoSL via the searches done in our name. The donations are paid for by the advertisers on the site.

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street in Manhattan, will present a major exhibition of sculpture by Martin Puryear, opening November 4, 2007, and running until January 14, 2008. Mr. Puryear was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Sierra Leone Group VI (1964-1966).

## New US Ambassador to Sierra Leone

FoSL hosted a small reception at the Africare House for the new US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, June Carter Perry. Several FoSL members, members of the Sierra Leonean community in Washington, and the Deputy Ambassador from Sierra Leone attended.

Am. Perry has an outstanding résumé including her recent position as Ambassador to Lesotho. In the past she served as Director of Social and Humanitarian Affairs at the Bureau of International Organization Affairs at the Department of State, and she served as Political Officer in both Zambia and Zimbabwe. Earlier in her career she served as Diplomat-in-Residence at Howard University. She holds degrees from Loyola University and the University of Chicago.

FoSL members will appreciate her extensive background with the Peace Corps. Her husband was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand and he served as Country Director in Guyana. Her mother was a volunteer in Malaysia, her sister-in-law served in Tunisia, and her niece was a volunteer in the Gambia. In addition, Am. Perry was the Director of Public Affairs for ACTION when it administered the Peace Corps programs in the 1970s.

Besides her extensive background of experience, Am. Perry has an impressive track record in development work. All of those in attendance at the reception were excited to hear her plans. Am. Perry said that she represents the United States in her position, but that she also strives to bring development to Sierra Leone. While serving as Ambassador in Lesotho, she helped attain the Millennium Challenge Grant in the amount of \$360 million. Her initial plans for helping Sierra Leone reach this goal is to begin with the Millennium Threshold Grant. She explained that Sierra Leone would have to meet several criteria to do so including addressing government corruption and investment in health and education. To this end she promises to work with all segments to achieve results and she has invited representatives of the Millennium Challenge to visit Sierra Leone.

Am. Perry discussed health concerns in Sierra Leone including HIV/AIDS and malaria. She says that Baylor University's College of Medicine is interested in projects in Sierra Leone. She will contact sources concerning Sierra Leone being included in the President's Malaria Initiative.

According to Am. Perry, the African Development Bank is planning a feasibility study for a bridge connecting Lungi to Freetown. This generated quite a bit of discussion from the Sierra Leoneans in attendance. Am. Perry invited questions/concerns from those guests and took notes as she asked for more information from them. The participants brought up many concerns - most notably that of corruption and the lack of electricity and water in Freetown. Am. Perry expressed appreciation for their input and seemed truly interested in their concerns.

The FoSL members in attendance all agreed that Am. Perry is going to be a tremendous asset to Sierra Leone and will continue the work that Am. Hull has done as well as initiate her own ideas for development. While we will greatly miss Am. Hull in his position as Ambassador to Sierra Leone, he is being replaced by someone equally qualified and equally approachable by those of us invested in the quality of life in Sierra Leone. We will welcome Am. Hull and his wife as members of FoSL once they return and we will welcome Am. Perry as our official representative of the citizens and government of the United States when she arrives in Freetown in September.

*[Daphne - continued from page 1]*

of both. We are, by nature, activists. Daphne was our natural big sister, having worked with every FoSL board since the start. She was our teacher, our mentor and our friend. She taught by example. Those who were privileged enough to work with her knew instinctively that she knew the path and we followed where she led. Peggy Murrah, FoSL's President, admitted during her tribute at the funeral that she couldn't begin to count the times that decisions were prefaced by: "Well, Daphne says...." She inspired confidence and a desire to go that extra step. Daphne Sawyerr-Dunn was the ultimate role model for our sisters, our daughters, and us.

*Friends of Sierra Leone* returned to Sierra Leone in 2004 to hold our annual meeting. Various members had been responsible for booking a meeting hall and plane tickets and such. Among other duties, Daphne was responsible for getting everyone fed. That was a job that she did well. If there was a meeting, Daphne made sure that people didn't go hungry. At the end of each day's meetings, the work of all others was finished while Daphne's was not. Having traveled to the place of her birth, she was still spending her time taking care of others. That was Daphne. She took care of others even when she should have been taking care of herself.

No one was ever more committed to her homeland. She did it all behind the scenes. Never one to take the title of leadership, she could not help but assume leadership roles anywhere she went. She didn't want the title; she wanted the action. Titles meant little to her. She would call on the highest or lowest levels of government or society if it meant improved living for Sierra Leoneans. Daphne worked for progress at every corner, every turn. And she *worked!* She initiated action. She advocated at the State Department for continued Temporary Protective Status of Sierra Leoneans living in the United States. She prepared any event with proper decor, food and agenda. She took time away from her job to protest the sale of conflict diamonds in New York's diamond district and to accompany the Gift of Limb amputees to the United Nations for testimony. She knew every US Ambassador to Sierra Leone and they knew her. She was the backbone for organization of projects

and scholarships. She did all of this with a constant illness and without complaint.

When the *Friends of Sierra Leone* advocacy committee visited Capitol Hill, Daphne took a day from work to go with them. She went from office to office representing the citizens of Sierra Leone – whether part of the diaspora or village children upcountry. She represented them all equally and well. Daphne, Judy Figi and Peggy Murrah had spent the day visiting Congressional offices trying to convince staffers of the need to send the Peace Corps back to Sierra Leone. When they reached the Peace Corps office, staff listened to Judy and Peggy earnestly explain why the Peace Corps needed to return to Sierra Leone. Unexpectedly, the Peace Corps official looked at Daphne and said, "Tell me why the Peace Corps needs to return to Sierra Leone."

She very eloquently did so and made a stronger impact.

There was never a question posed about Sierra Leone that she couldn't answer. It didn't matter if it was about something to do with food, an elected official, infrastructure, human development, or something as practical as shipping to Freetown. Daphne knew how to do it, where to do it, or who to talk to about it.

One could always e-mail or call Daphne and she would take as much time as needed to help you reach a decision. She was always calm and composed, using her gift of enabling others to find the correct answer for themselves. During the services, Wynford Dunn called his wife *Pure of Heart*. She had never harbored a bad thought about anyone. She never raised her voice in anger.

At the end of a long mahogany table in the US House of Representative sat Daphne Sawyerr-Dunn. Many Congressmen and women were posing questions to children who had lost their arms or legs

*[Daphne - continued on page 7]*

[*Daphne - continued from page 6*]

in the war. Daphne interpreted between English and Krio for both, after having been an integral part of the work to make the hearing and testimony happen. This image exemplifies Daphne's life. Mediator. Interpreter for the oppressed. Advocate. Even in Heaven, you can already see her advocating at the door of the Authority to pull Sierra Leone into prosperity. Perhaps that is why He called her. He needed a trusted Advisor on those issues. Ah, but she won't take the Title; she will initiate and follow-through on the actions. And she will make arrangements for the proper welcome of all her countrymen and women who will forevermore come through the gate she herself had just walked through.

For the world, lost determination and knowledge.

For Sierra Leone, a lost patriot.

For us, a lost mentor and friend.

But we have not lost, cannot lose, the inspiration that remains with her memory.

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## Comments from DCM Susie Pratt

by Jim Sheahan

Susie Pratt, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Freetown, reported by telephone to the FoSL annual meeting. She began by characterizing the elections as a "watershed event which could result in an accelerated pace of reform. She referred to some positive changes already in place, including the training and education of the Sierra Leone armed forces and the continued presence and support of the UN and the UK. Violent crime is currently at a low point and education at all levels is increasing each year.

She said that 60% of the Sierra Leone budget is supported by the European Community and that \$1.8 billion debt relief was recently announced.

The unemployment level in the 16 to 35 age group is 80%. DCM Pratt urged FoSL's continued support for education at the local level. Sierra Leone has the highest mortality rate in the world due to many factors, one of which is the lack of access to good water. Effort also needs to be directed at the eradication of measles and malaria.

Ms. Pratt described the business climate as "very bad" and stressed the importance of Civil Service reform and improvements in the Judiciary. She said the new government will have to move quickly to convince the public that change is coming. It will have to pay more attention to private sector growth and there must be incentives to avoid corruption. When asked about the chances of another military coup, she said it was unlikely because the people of Sierra Leone would not allow it. On a final positive note, she expects that resilient Sierra Leoneans will save the day.

## FoSL Annual Meeting Report

Friday July 13, 2007 began the Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting at the beautiful Asilomar Conference Grounds near Monterey, California. Close to 40 members attended and heard stimulating presentations from keynote speaker Joe Opala as well project presentations, a country update, a strategy meeting and a wonderfully fun Saturday night dance and awards program. West African music was spun by Mr. Gerald Senesi Samah originally from Kenema District. Many attended wearing their finest gara and dancing prevailed until closing time.

Friday evening brought us together with presentations given by Cindy Nofziger on her Schools for Salone project. This program has raised funds to build or rebuild six primary and secondary schools since 2004. Aisha Conteh, originally from Makali in Tonkalili District presented on the Hospital in Makeni which she inherited from her family and hopes to rebuild. Peggy Murrah chaired a brief strategy meeting to plan next year's meeting in Freetown. Saturday July 14<sup>th</sup> was full of stimulating presentations. Keynote speaker Joe Opala first presented on the Bunce Island Restoration Project undertaken to preserve the historically important former slave fortress in the Sierra Leone River. After the lunch break, there was a country update with Susie Pratt from the State Department and US Embassy in Freetown (see *Comments from DCM Susie Pratt* on page 7) along with Professor Opala. Topics covered included the upcoming elections, government corruption, agriculture, and economic development.

Following this Sonya Gay Bourn from the Gondobay Manga Foundation presented on the foundations' ambitious efforts in the country including its support of Bunce Island restoration, and the building of schools and hospitals. Sonya has visited Sierra Leone three times this past year alone. The foundation was started the interest of actor Isaiah Washington who has traced his genetic roots to Mende country. Coordination efforts between the foundation and FoSL were discussed.

Joe Opala gave a second fascinating presentation on the Gullah – Sierra Leone connection including the story of “The Song You Cry In” and the Priscilla Story, both offering fascinating insights into the lineage in the U.S. to slaves from Sierra Leone.

At the Saturday evening social and dance, special awards were given to Anthony McMillon for his project efforts toward computer education and small internet-based business development in the country. Cindy Nofziger was also given the FoSL service award for her extensive efforts through “Schools for Salone” in building and operating new and rebuilt schools throughout Sierra Leone.

Asilomar provided incredible natural beauty and opportunities to relax as well. It was a meaningful time to come together, to meet new FoSL members and share the multitude of efforts toward building a better future for Salone. We thank all of you who attended and encourage those interested to join us in Freetown for next year's meeting. Details will follow.

Bob Heavner  
FoSL Secretary and 2007 Annual Meeting Coordinator

## 2008 Annual Meeting

**Planning has begun for the 2008 Annual Meeting in Freetown. The dates are not set, but probably late June or early July.**

*[Projects – continued from page 2]*

help their schools and their communities. The sale of garri, a starch substitute for rice in the diet, will provide money to buy science equipment for their classrooms. It will also involve the school's agriculture department. The health project involves 12 schools in the Makeni area. Health and Sanitation Clubs will be established in 12 area schools; primary, secondary, Christian, Islamic, technical and vocational. Quite a diverse group.

My thanks to Aiah, Anthony, and Mike, for giving up their weekends to make this happen. And, most importantly, thanks to all of you who gave to the projects fund. We would like to fund five more projects in December, but don't quite have the money...yet. You may donate to the projects fund separately, when you renew your membership, or directly on-line using PayPal. This is your chance to change some lives in Sierra Leone. Thank you for helping.

*[Hull – continued from page 2]*

shown great integrity and competence in preparing for the elections. The Government and political parties have respected the constitutional autonomy of the NEC, and if that continues then the elections should be considered free and fair. Some things are certain: Sierra Leone will have a new President soon and a new Parliament that will look very different from the current one since most parliamentarians are not running for re-election and many of the new candidates are younger and more dynamic. In fact, for the first time in Sierra Leone different parties may control the presidency and the parliament.

For those of us who have known Sierra Leone for many decades this may sound too good to be true. I often say that Sierra Leone historically has shown great promise only to disappoint us in the end. I cannot say with total certainty that the vote count will not be manipulated, that the defeated parties will accept the results, or even that military will stay in the barracks. The country's future direction rides on this, and all that I can say one month before the event is that I am greatly encouraged by the positive direction that the election is taking. As I said in a soon-to-appear newspaper interview, Sierra Leoneans have high expectations for this election, and the political parties and the next government cannot afford to disappoint the people.

A democratic election will also guarantee the return of the Peace Corps which so many of you have worked hard to achieve. The progress that we have made so far, including a favorable recommendation to Director Tschetter by the re-entry team, could not have happened without your strong lobbying effort. Many African countries want the Peace Corps back, but Sierra Leone is at the top of the list thanks to you.

I also want to thank the Friends of Sierra Leone for the contributions that you have made to Sierra Leone during my tenure as Ambassador. You have contributed greatly to our mutual understanding and excellent relations with Sierra Leoneans. I have been pleased to have met many of you during your visits to do projects, and I urge you to keep up the good work that you are doing.

One of my first acts when I step down as Ambassador will be to join the Friends of Sierra Leone. I intend to be an active member, and look forward to joining you in future annual meetings.

Best wishes for a successful meeting.

**Editor's note: The Parliament election resulted in 59 seats for the APC, 43 seats for the SLPP and 10 seats for the PMDC. The presidential election resulted in 815,523 votes for Koroma (APC) and 704,012 votes for Berewa (SLPP), 255,499 votes for Margai (PMDC), and the remaining 64,174 votes spread among four other candidates. The lack of majority necessitated a runoff election between the two leaders. The September 8 run-off election result was Koroma 950,417 (54.6 %) and Berewa 789,651 (45.4 %).**

The **2008 International Calendar** produced by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin is available through FoSL. In addition to volunteers' photographs from host countries around the world, the calendar includes historic days, holidays and holy days from many cultures. A portion of the proceeds will go toward FoSL activities.

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#### **Total Remitted**

- Both Friends of Sierra Leone and the National Peace Corps Association have discontinued the household membership category.
- Membership dues support operations for Friends of Sierra Leone, including meetings, newsletter, and the website. All other contributions 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.

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**Need a calendar? See page 10**

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