



# DIRECCIONES

Newsletter of the Arkansas-East Bolivia Partners of the Americas

Bob Frans, Ed., 1366 W. Altheimer Dr., Fayetteville AR 72704-6898

Phone 479-575-3978 or 443-5403, , [rfrans@uark.edu](mailto:rfrans@uark.edu)

[www.partners.net](http://www.partners.net) (national); [www.uark.edu/misc/partners](http://www.uark.edu/misc/partners) (Arkansas)

Partners Blog: <http://partners-intercom.blogspot.com/>

Fall 2008 (No. 55)

## President's Message

Annual meetings are special occasions. Ours is/was no exception. Editor Bob Frans tells us of highlights of fun (and serious) parts the event after my little report. I'll try to cover some other aspects of the meeting.

**Greetings from Santa Cruz POA President Jorge.** I'll start by sharing more of the thoughts sent by our friend and president of our counterpart Santa Cruz Partners of the Americas (POA) chapter, Dr. Jorge Ibarregaray. (Jorge is now a happy grandfather of a baby girl, born while he was visiting his daughter in Philadelphia. We had some concern about his return to Santa Cruz because American Airlines was not serving Bolivia for a time because of the political and social problems, but it got up and running there in time for his return.)

*Conditions as seen from the Santa Cruz.* Jorge's message described the situation as he sees it. "Bolivia is a beautiful country, as you know. But we cannot be happy for now because we are living in a difficult social and political situation.

"It is hard to express in few words what is happening here. We have a government that knows very well how to use democracy for its convenience. But, in reality, it wants to install a socialist government and uses authoritarian and totalitarian ways.

"In Pando, there have been many people killed. All (the trouble) was planned by the government and the leaders are saying that everything was the fault of the governor, who is now in prison.

"The situation in Santa Cruz and Beni (our other counterpart POA chapter) is uncertain. The government, which has a majority in the Congress,

is trying to approve the new constitution that will change the country. There is also a plan for military and paramilitary forces—with the help of Cuban and Venezuelan paramilitary forces to take control of all of the oriente (east) part of Bolivia."

He continues, "There is no American ambassador now, and most of the people in the American embassy have left the country. There is no Peace Corps or USAID work in Bolivia now."

*Some hopeful notes from Jorge.* He sounded with a hopeful note about the future, writing, "We wish you the best results in your meeting and we hope that in future meetings some of us could be present to participate, and to express our feelings and the truth about our country. I think that we should continue with our planning and work together. Let's be positive, looking forward to the future, expecting better days."

Appropriately, he concluded with these words, "Kind regards to all Partners. God bless you."

**Some observations from Past President Steven Neuse.** Steven Neuse is a political scientist and long-time observer of events in Bolivia, as well as other politically interesting countries of Latin America and the world.

He gave attendees at our annual meeting a well-organized and thoughtful presentation about current conditions in Bolivia. He grounded his presentation in the context of Bolivia's economy (poorest country in South America); steps the Morales administration has taken towards centralized government and control of many of the means of production; and government direction of social policies.

Two of the most controversial proposals of the Morales government are: Supporting a new constitution that mandates extensive land reform throughout the country (a fly in this ointment is that

Argentiniens and Brazilians have bought up much land in Bolivia); and wanting to replace religious instruction with Aymara language instruction in all schools, both public and private.

Steven pointed out that the four eastern departments (states), including Santa Cruz and Beni, would like greater autonomy so they can retain more of their gas revenues and have more control of government appointments. (The government often appoints indigenous Morales supporters who are not qualified for the important posts.)

*Recent developments:* Bolivia expelled US Ambassador Philip Goldberg last month; expelled Drug Enforcement Administration officials and prohibited anti-drug flights in Bolivian airspace; sealed a \$4.5 billion deal with Gazprom (Russia) and Total (France) for gas production; and is buying Russian helicopters and planning a visit to Moscow.

#### **Jorge sends a report on Miguel Cortez's health.**

Jorge Ibarnegaray, president of our Santa Cruz chapter, just e-mailed the following message about the health of our friend. "Miguel Cortez's health situation is very complicated. Miguel is in the intensive care unit of the Clinica Incor. I think that it is very important to give him and his family all the spiritual support that they need.

"Our prayers are very important now. I told Miguel and Martha that I was going to get in touch with you. They love you very much and she told me that she wants you to know of Miguel's real situation."

Jorge closes with this important contact information: "Martha's cell phone: 591 3 72603383 / home 591 3 3430301

"My cell phone: 591 3 72111800 / home 521 3 3423879."

Miguel was president of the Santa Cruz chapter for several years and faithfully helped many of us ), plan our trip, make arrangements for our appointments, meetings, and interviews, manage our stay, and serve as interpreter—and, with his wife, Martha, take care of any other of our needs during our time in Santa Cruz.

**Wayne Swegle**

---

## **Annual Meeting**

The Arkansas-East Bolivia Partners Annual Meeting was held in Fayetteville on October 10 and 11, and a grand time was held by all! Regional vice

President **Margaret Clark** was in charge and she did a great job in planning, executing, and just making sure everything ran smoothly.

She started things off Friday evening with a Latin-flavored musical event she termed "Musica y Baile." The program was preceded by a brief cocktail hour (all this at Clarion Inn) followed by a great sit-down dinner. The program opened with a couple of numbers from two of the town's leading jazz musicians **Claudia Burson** on piano and **Jim Greeson** on guitar, both faculty members in the Music Department at U of A. This was followed by a fiery merengue and salsa dance by two young and energetic dance teachers, **Jocelyn Pruna** and **Luis Vital** (oh for a back as limber as theirs!). Then we were treated to another instrumental duo of guitar and flute by **William Reyes** (guitarist) and **Nathan McLeod** (flutist), again in the Latin vein. Then a young Venezuelan girl, **Lumita Benchimol** gave an interpretive dreamy dance sequence which was absolutely beautiful. The musical evening concluded by an a capella voice presentation by a young California girl (parents from Mexico) **Sandra Vasquez**, with a strong, compelling voice. All-in-all it was a stirring and well-received musical festival. Not only was Margaret able to persuade many of our Partners, both from Fayetteville as well as Little Rock, to attend, she also managed to interest several Fayetteville towns people in this event. It certainly was good advertising for Partners.

During the program, **Regina Justianino de Bordes** was recognized as the 2008 Maria Teresa Villanueva de Frans scholarship winner. It should be noted that 20% of the tickets for the program were designated for the scholarship fund

The actual Annual Meeting was held on Saturday atop beautiful Mt. Sequoyah, which favored us with an absolutely gorgeous fall Ozark day. Margaret also managed to persuade our International President from Washington, **Stephen Vetter** to attend. He was accompanied by **Elizabeth Auciello**, who is the Program Officer for the Youth Ambassador program for Partners. Both Steve and Elizabeth added greatly to our discussions, bringing a flavor of the international office as well as happenings with our South American counterparts.

The program, again as conceived by Margaret, was most interesting and relevant. Past President **Steven Neuse** gave us an up-to-date look at the political situation in Bolivia, which engendered considerable discussion. Just that morning he had been in touch

with **Phil Serafini** in Santa Cruz, so his information was not only timely, but also pertinent. Then Steve Vetter talked at length on Partners today and their relevance in the Western Hemispheric affairs. He used, as one of his examples, the in-state tuition program at the University of Arkansas and its impact on Bolivia. He had visited Santa Cruz recently and noted a rash of red Razorback tee-shirts while he was there!

We took our catered lunch in an adjacent out-of-doors pavilion in the balmy Ozark air. After eating we were treated to a presentation from former U of A Chancellor, **Dan Ferritor**. He had addressed a CBA-sponsored conference in Santa Cruz in July. His lively comments recalled the beginnings of the in-state tuition program in 1996 and his part in approving it. Interestingly, he seemed to have no regrets in initiating the program and continued to be enthusiastic about its continued impact.

Back inside the conference room we were honored with a panel presentation by five Bolivian students, both past and present. They were: **Amilcar Medina, Jaime Barrenechea, Marcello Fernandez, Pamela Phillipsborn, and Zoe Moralli**. Pamela is the current president of the International Bolivian Organization on the U of A campus, and both Pamela and Zoe are nursing students. Marcello is a masters degree student and Amilcar is a doctoral student. Jaime works for Tyson Foods. Each talked of their experiences while students at the University, their hopes for the future, and of the situation in Bolivia. While they admitted that the politics of Bolivian affairs was grim at present, they all expressed hope for the future and a great love for their country. They were also most appreciative for the scholarship tuition program. They agreed that there were about 60 students on campus at the present time.

Finally, Elizabeth concluded the formal program with an overview of the Youth Ambassadors program as well as plans for 2009, which will include East Bolivia-Arkansas once again. She emphasized the visit of East Bolivia students to Arkansas and Washington this past year, and indicated that the program was having a great impact on those students. In turn, they had a great impact on us as well!

In conclusion, Steve Vetter indicated that he hoped to have feedback as a result of this meeting. It was indicated that the Partners blog, initiated by **Bill Millager**, was up and running and that it should be

used for such comments. The address for the blog is in the masthead of this newsletter. Facebook was also mentioned as a new and relevant means of keeping in touch - even for those with a little grey hair!

The quarterly meeting of the Arkansas Partners was held immediately after the close of the Annual Meeting. Because of time constraints it was considerably abbreviated. Several items were discussed including the resignation of **Jo Ann Kaminsky** as Chair of the Culture Committee. President Swegle is looking for her replacement. The election of Officers and Board members was also reported. For 2009, they are as follows:

President - **Wayne Swegle**

Vice President - **George Vena**

Regional Vice President (NW) - **Margaret**

**Clark**

Regional Vice President (CA) - **Thecia**

**Taylor**

Secretary - **Karla Bradley**

Treasurer - **Paul Noland**

Past President - **Steven Neuse**

Director-at-Large - **Leah Wilkinson**

Director-at-Large - **Rosario Keele**

Director-at-Large - **Sandra Swegle**

Director -at-Large - **Cynthia Lenk**

And after a long day, we adjourned.

---

## **Kudos to Hank**

We understand that **Hank Kaminsky** received an Individual Artist Fellowship Award from the Arkansas Arts Council at the 2008 Governor's Arts Award on Tuesday, October 21, at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock. The Arts Council is an agency of the department of Arkansas Heritage. Congratulations, Hank!

---

## **John Goodwin**

We have learned that John Goodwin, long-time member of Arkansas-East Bolivia Partners, died on October 25. John was a native of Oklahoma, a graduate of Oklahoma Panhandle State University, with graduate degrees from Oklahoma State University. He was an administrator with the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service in Washington D.C., Vice President for Agriculture



at the University of Arkansas, and President of Oklahoma Panhandle State University from 1995 to 2002, retiring with his wife, Phoebe, to Fayetteville after that service. John served our chapter as Chair for Agriculture and

had traveled to Santa Cruz on more than one occasion, improving marketing strategies for Bolivian farmers. A memorial to John will be held at the Poultry Science Auditorium (A211) in the John W. Tyson Building, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville campus, from 2-4 p.m. Saturday, November 15.

#### **Some Comments on John's death**

Matt Clausen - sincerest condolences on behalf of all Partners

Wayne Swegle - condolences to his family and friends

Steve Vetter - sincere condolences to John's family

---

### **Sandy's Column**

At our Annual Meeting, Sandra Swegle volunteered to write an article for *Direcciones* from a woman's perspective. We're glad she did and this is her contribution:

Our friend, Elizabeth Auciello, who directs the Youth Ambassadors program of Partners, Inc., was a speaker at our Arkansas Partners of the Americas annual meeting at Mt. Sequoyah and mingled freely with our members. I noted that she asked several women why and how they joined Partners--and what they were getting out of their membership. So I asked her if she would share with us some of her observations and answers she received.

Elizabeth wrote, "Some answers I received were from people that had joined through their spouses or friends. They were encouraged to join for different reasons. But I got a sense that they all joined Partners because they believed in the mission to help make a positive difference in the lives of others. And it just so happens that Arkansas, where everyone lives, works together with Eastern Bolivia.

"What I admire is just the desire for people to open their hearts to the Bolivians and become immediately engaged in different ways of how to be involved. Many of you didn't really have any ties to Bolivia in the beginning but just through the partnership developed a love for the culture, the people, and their lives.

"I really enjoyed **Tammy Peterson's** story in particular (Tammy is a new member of Partners, living in Lowell, and is both a teacher and a student). She was involved with the Paraguay-Kansas partnership several years ago and her program exchange experience made such a difference that, when she later left Kansas, she was dead set on finding Partners in her new community. She is engaging full speed ahead in Arkansas.

"Hers is definitely a story of commitment to Partners and a love for volunteerism as well as a sincere interest in this region of the world. Tammy demonstrates that desire to be involved with service in Latin America no matter where it is, just as long as she can 'roll up her sleeves' and contribute to the best of her ability. And contribute she does!"

Elizabeth concluded with this personal message, "I do hope this helps a little. Thanks so much again for your genuine concern for the people in Bolivia and for your tender heart."

---

### **Board meeting**

President Swegle announces that the next meeting of the Board will be January 17, 10:00 am at the Italian Gardens restaurant, Russellville.