



Friends of Sierra Leone Newsletter

July 2012



From left to right: Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Jim Hanson (77-79), John O'Connor (64-66), Jim Sheahan (61-63) and Peggy Murrah (78-80) present a \$3,000 Friends of Sierra Leone check to Clint Fluker (Tony Blair Faith Foundation Fellow) and Dave Pass (Chief Advancement Officer for MedShare).

This \$3,000 gift, combined with other funding, will be used to procure, prepare and ship medical supplies and equipment to Sierra Leone. MedShare is a small organization with a big vision of ensuring that all people have access to basic medical treatment. MedShare partners with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation to advance the United Nations Millennium Development goals and combat malaria. Included in this forty foot container were insecticide-treated bed nets.

Farewell from Country Co-Directors Gale Metcalf and Joel Wallach

It is time for us to bid farewell to Peace Corps and Sierra Leone. We are proud to have played a part in re-establishing Peace Corps in this beautiful, yet challenging, country. We appreciate the dedicated staff and PCVs who work so hard to make a difference.

We are reminded of a university study from a few years back where the researcher asked a large number of RPCVs to identify the most significant events in their lives (without clueing them in that Peace Corps was the subject of the study). Not surprisingly, meeting their spouse and having a child ranked as either number one or two. What was interesting was that more than 60% of RPCVs then ranked their Peace Corps experience as number three. This is esteemed company to be in and we are thankful that we had the opportunity to play a part in making this experience as

positive and productive as possible for the newest Volunteers in Sierra Leone.

We'll not say "goodbye," as our experience over many years has shown that people of like mind keep on meeting. Instead, we have wished our COSing PCVs safe travels and happy landing at their next life adventure, our PCVs continuing in service a productive and fulfilling second year and, for our newest arrivals, the fortitude and commitment to get through the hardest period and to know that the best is yet to come.

We finish on July 16th and then plan on visiting with our son in Geneva, followed by a lap around America visiting friends and family. We will then return to our home in Malaysia where we hope to engage in consulting and cross-cultural training.

Welcome to new Country Director, Valerie Staats

Peace Corps in Sierra Leone has a new Country Director. Valerie arrived in Sierra Leone On July 8 and takes over from Joel Wallach and Gale Metcalf. Valerie is an experienced Peace Corps Country Director who comes to Sierra Leone with lots of passion about Peace Corps and its mission, as well as professional expertise. Here is what she wrote about herself:

"I served as Peace Corps/Country Director in Cape Verde (2011-12) and in Niger (2010-2011). Prior to becoming a Country Director I was Executive Director of four non-governmental organizations in the USA, most recently the International Book Bank in Baltimore. I found my Peace Corps Volunteer service in Morocco (1983-1985, University

teacher of English as a foreign language, Centre Pedagogique Regional) to be a formative life experience, and am honored to be a Country Director now.

"I hold a PhD in public and international affairs from the University of Pittsburgh and an MA in English from the University of Iowa. I speak French, Spanish, and some Moroccan Arabic. I am a member of the Ambassador's Circle of Books for Africa. I read constantly and I am an avid birder and whale watcher and a trained harmony singer. I am a proud 11th generation West Virginian, and I am devoted to my Big Brothers Big Sisters mentee since 1998, Corey, who I hope will visit Salone."

Paperless Newsletter

We are trying out a paperless newsletter for those who choose to receive their copy that way. If you haven't already notified Lisa Forbes, our membership chair, that you prefer to get an electronic copy of the newsletter, you may do that now by sending her an email at lmichelleforbes@gmail.com. If you received this by mail and want to continue receiving a hardcopy newsletter, don't do anything.

Solar Chargers Success Story

By Peggy Murrah

Solar chargers are small electronic tools that use sunlight to charge cell phones and other devices. They can be particularly useful in places like Sierra Leone, where electricity is expensive and unreliable. Thanks to the assistance from International Medical Corps and Josephine Garnem, Friends of Sierra Leone was able to distribute almost 100 solar chargers during a visit by board members in May. Peggy Murrah traveled to Kenema Blango for the Friends of Sierra Leone sponsored school opening. Judy Figi and Gary Schulze went for a school opening sponsored by The Magic Penny.

Through the assistance of a wonderful Sierra Leonean woman and the International Medical Corps, Peggy received 100 solar chargers to take with her and share with appropriate and needy recipients in Salone. Judy, Gary, Lucy Somner and Peggy split the chargers among them to hand out to appropriate recipients.

The idea was to give them to people who could use them to earn money charging cell phones. Because the chargers take several hours to charge and then are depleted after charging one phone, many individuals received more than one. The most successful story reported so far is from a current Peace Corps Volunteer who gave 7 of them to a woman in her village. The following snippet appeared in a recent Peace Corps Sierra Leone newsletter:

"PCV Liz Clark shares the following learning: Communication is important and difficult in Sierra Leone. In my

village, like many small villages, there is no way for people to charge phones. With the help of Friends of Sierra Leone and Meghan Welsh, we were able to start a small solar power program in my village. We gave seven solar chargers to a friend of mine with a small business and she established the first means of charging phones in the Chiefdom. Although the program has its difficulties, especially in the rainy season, it has turned out to be quite successful. In the first week, when it was raining half the time, she made Le24,000 - quite a lot in my village. I would highly recommend this program to other PCVs in small villages where there are no other means of charging."

Another use for the chargers was to give them to people in areas that had no electricity at all, but needed cell phones for serious issues — such as health workers. So we did give some to be used for that and not intended to generate income. One or two were given to people in neither category, just because they needed one.

Friends of Sierra Leone thanks Josephine Garnem and the International Medical Corps for making this experimental project possible. We will be trying to follow up on whether the chargers were successfully used to raise money by some of the entrepreneurs who received them.

Projects

by Jim Hanson

On June 8, the Friends of Sierra Leone Board of Directors approved four projects for funding; two were granted full funding and two were partially funded.

MedShare, an organization that ships surplus medical supplies around the world to people in need, was granted \$3,000. This money went toward shipping costs for a 40-foot container of medical supplies bound for Moyamba Hospital. Our faithful treasurer, Mark Hager, quickly dispatched a check for the send-off ceremony on June 15 in Atlanta, which was presented to MedShare by Peggy Murrah, Jim Sheahan and I.

A water project at the Ebert Kakua School for the Deaf in Bo also was fully funded at \$2,373. These funds will be used for a pump, a 1000 liter overhead tank, and four standpipes placed around the schoolyard. The hand-dug well at the school also serves the surrounding community in the New York section of Bo.

Partial funding of \$1,250 was awarded to The Magic Penny for the primary school in Bompehtoke, Bonthé District. The grant will be used for paving an area around the school, which is located near the beach, to keep the classrooms free of sand and mud.

Also partially funded is a solar project for a primary school in Western Freetown. A student-run organization at the University of Maryland, Maryland Sustainability Engineering, received \$1,000 for solar panels, batteries, and electric lights for the Calaba Town Primary School. The group will be in Sierra Leone in July to install the system. It will light four classrooms for night study and community functions, as well as provide a charging station for cell-phones and power a laptop computer for school use.

Your contributions make it possible for Friends of Sierra Leone to touch the lives of hundreds of people. Thank you for your continued support of our projects fund.

A View from a Proud Mom of a Peace Corps Volunteer

By Kathy Kuehlwein

My level of information isn't one of expertise, but one of observation and experience. A year ago our daughter and son-in-law embarked on a journey that most people only think of. After graduating college with degrees, a rough economy and a desire to see the world they applied to the Peace Corps. Their placement: teachers in Sierra Leone, Africa. The worry, concern, and void I was about to experience seemed more than I could bear. There were buckets of tears, sleepless nights and thousands of "how am I going to be strong enough for this" thoughts. Hundreds of hours reading everything I could get my hands on about the Peace Corp and Sierra Leone took the place of other daily routines. Some might even say I was obsessive. Their airport departure was one of the most difficult I have experienced. As the months passed tears finally gave way to pride, the phone conversations found her excited, healthy and safe.

In April we took the opportunity to visit them. While packing we found ourselves wanting to charter a plane to take all of America to Salone. It seemed impossible to decide "the important" things to take. After months of preparation and anticipation we embarked on the journey of our lifetime with four overflowing suitcases and two small carry ons. Our adventure began with the landing at the Lungi Airport and connecting with our daughter. We spent a few days in Freetown in a lovely guest house getting reacquainted and catching up. It took only minutes to find

our daughter the same but different. There, we had the chance to see the Peace Corp hostel and meet the people that oversee the well being of our beloved family members. We were greeted with hugs, smiles and reassurances.

We then moved to her village, Mokanji, where Ashley and Dan's lives are in full swing. I couldn't wait to meet the people that have taken such good care of our prized daughter. The village embraced us and helped us to understand why and how visitors are so taken with Salone. Their genuine kindness, gratitude, and admiration of the work the Peace Corps Volunteers are doing in their community can only be experienced and not explained. Our goal was to experience the life our daughter has chosen for a small piece of her life. The people there greeted us with smiles, questions and thanks. As the days followed it became clear that their ingenuity, kindness, pride, humor and generosity overpower poverty and lack of material items. We observed transactions at the market, teachings in the school, conversations in Krio, bartering for a better price, children bursting with giggles and the desire to play and learn and some interesting modes of transportation.

In the stories they tell, there is such pride while they explain progress. To outsiders it seems not much has been done to recover from the war, but listening to locals and being shown around it is clear that much has been done. They do not want all of

America; they only have the desire to learn the methods that can make their country a more educated and self-sustaining one. They are grateful to those who can contribute to their knowledge in this area and, of course, monetary contributions from outsiders are helpful.

Wherever we went it was clear: the people of Salone have an appreciation for what the Peace Corps Volunteers and others have given up to help rebuild infrastructures that have been destroyed. The safety, happiness, health and well-being of Peace Corps Volunteers are first and foremost. We were, repeatedly, thanked for blessing them with a piece of our family. We, in turn, thanked them for looking after our kids..

I come home at such peace. Oh, there are still tears, but they are now those of bursting pride and awe. Though I miss the physi-

cal presence of our daughter, I understand why this mission has become so important to her. I feel confident in saying these Peace Corps Volunteers are resilient, accepting, hard working and truly loved in their communities. I know there are voids in our families with them gone, but I have no doubt they will leave HUGE voids when they depart — they are making such a difference. Those of you that are unable to visit Salone and your loved one(s), please trust that the Peace Corps, the country and the community members around your son/daughter are taking a great deal of time and energy watching after them. We were so blessed to see our daughter and hope that our visit can be of comfort to others. God Bless our children and everyone they impact along the way! We were blessed with their presence for 20+ years, it seems only right that others experience the privilege and honor of knowing them.

Impressions of Sue Pease, another proud parent of a Peace Corps Volunteer visiting her daughter in Sierra Leone:

I want to experience Salone as much as possible.

- ◆ I get my hair planted (plaited).
- ◆ I carry a baby tied on my back.
- ◆ I pound cassava.
- ◆ I drink beer at the local pub
- ◆ I dance with the rest of the town the day before a wedding.
- ◆ I eat local food.
- ◆ I see how they get palm oil from palm kernels.

I loved finally seeing Amanda's home for the past 16 months and I was impressed with the two day Girl's Conference organized by the Peace Corps Volunteers.

Everything Works Out by Brandon Brown, PCV

Nothing works, but everything works out. It's a phrase we Peace Corps Volunteers of Sierra Leone have adopted to make some sense of things around here. In early September 2011, after another year of increased enrollment at St. Peter's Secondary School Bauya, the principal, bursar, chiefdom youth leader, and I sat down and discussed the state of the school. In terms of infrastructure challenges, the most pressing was a lack of furniture. Some students were bringing chairs from home, many were sitting in broken chairs, the rest were sitting three to a desk.

Two months later, the St. Peter's Development Committee had approved a furniture building project written by my principal and I sent it to Friends of Sierra Leone, who also approved it. We faced the near impossibility

of finding boards in Bauya, but through the hard work of Project Coordinator and school bursar, Samuel Tucker, we pieced them together one at a time. By late February, we had all the materials and were ready to build. Three weeks later the carpenter broke his finger. The following month, Mr. Tucker's son died. Another death in the village followed, and then the carpenter got malaria. But the work continued, and we finished on schedule at end of June, with a budget surplus that will allow us to build three more tables for our library. Nothing works, but everything works out.

Thanks to Friends of Sierra Leone, the school gained a critical tool in our daily fight to keep our kids in school.

Safe Haven Children Care Center Project Update

by Aiah Fanday

Safe Haven Children Care Center embarked on building a 30x60 foot activity center, thanks in part to a grant of \$3,000 from Friends of Sierra Leone. Construction on the building started in November of 2011. This building will house the hall, a storage room, two toilets, and shower stalls. The hall will be utilized for the computer center in line with the aims and objectives of the organization. Safe Haven Children Care Center is a Christian nonprofit organization of The Universal Church of God and one of its objectives is to care for the disadvantaged in the society, deprived, orphans, homeless, hungry and destitute children.

Nell's Primary School by Peggy Murrah

In 2004 when Friends of Sierra Leone had its first annual meeting in Freetown, Jim Hanson and I were approached by Richard Kamara, a friend of Jim's who had been his Sierra Leonean co-worker when Jim was a Peace Corps Volunteer. Richard told us about Kenema Blango, a small, remote village about 25 miles from Bo that had no school building and was conducting classes for some 300 students in a tiny court barie. Richard asked if we could find some way to send one of the untrained, unqualified teachers to teacher training college so the village had a certified teacher. Along with Dr. Bettye Ray (my school superintendent at my school in Georgia), Jim and I sent Alieu Jalloh to college for the three year course.

In 2006, my daughter and I visited Kenema Blango to discuss the village's support of Mr. Jalloh. We left with me promising I would try to find the money to build them a school. When we visited again in 2008, the village had set aside 10 acres and had started gathering stones needed for the construction. We still had no money.

By 2010 we had gotten enough donations to build three classrooms, a teacher's workroom, three latrines and a well. The school was half built, but we went ahead and opened that building. We were joined by Joel Wallach, one of the Peace Corps country directors, and several of the Peace Corps Volunteers from the first group that returned in 2010.

Then toward the end of 2011, we learned we would be given most of the money needed to finish the school and build the remaining three rooms and a workroom or storage area. We applied to the Sierra Leone Village Partnerships, (www.slv.org) for

funding for the roof and the additional furniture for the new classrooms. SLVP has funded the roof and committed to furniture in the near future.

In May, I attended the official opening of the complete school along with a friend who had helped with the project and His Excellency Ambassador Michael Owen, the US Ambassador to Sierra Leone. It was wonderful to see Friends of Sierra Leone's first school building project completed. During the ceremony, we thanked three people who had been instrumental in assisting us with the project since 2004 when we started on the road toward a school. First was Richard Kamara who brought the village to our attention in 2004. Next was Alieu Jalloh who has kept his word and stayed in the village after completing his college training and has taken on a vital leadership role in the community and school as headmaster. Finally, Emmanuel Gborie spent untold hours assisting us with all the planning and overseeing of the project. None of these men received anything more than our heartfelt thanks, a certificate, or a plaque to thank them for their work.

Ambassador Owen brought a gift of a box of books for the school. I took books and some other gifts as well. We are hopeful that we will find a way to send another of the untrained teachers to college. For those who helped make this dream a reality for the people of Kenema Blango, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you to the Sierra Leone Village Partnerships for their assistance. I wish everyone could have attended the celebration for the opening of the school. We will be showing a video of the opening at the annual meeting in August.

Here is another story by Michael O'Neill . The first was published in the January 2012 issue of this newsletter, which you can find on the Friends of Sierra Leone website. Michael lived in Sierra Leone from 1978 to 1992, first as a Peace Corps Volunteer and then as an employee for several non-governmental organizations.

Hinda a wa hinda

(Something Brings Something)

A teenaged girl named Mariama once lived in a small Mende village in southern Sierra Leone along a tributary of the Sewa River. She stayed in a neat mud house with a thatched roof (just like the other houses in the village) with her widowed mother and younger twin brothers. She and her mother had struggled mightily — raising the twins, tending their farm, repairing their house, repaying old debts — since the lethal venom of a black mamba took her father's life two years earlier. Mariama was praised by all as a dutiful daughter and earnest student. She did what she could to help her mother with the household chores and to rear the twins.

One early morning as the dawn mist rose in ghostly wisps from the Sewa River's dark waters, Mariama knelt beside the *brukking* rock to launder the family's clothes. Unseen birds twittered and chirruped among the dense forest that overhung the river's banks. A family of white-tailed monkeys gamboled noisily in the feathery forest canopy overhead. A cascade of delicate leaves, disturbed by their antics, fluttered toward the river like confetti, illumined for a moment as they floated through shafts of broken sunlight, and borne away on the river's unperturbed current. Mariama's thoughts played among the branches, flitted amidst the falling leaves, and sailed atop the receding river sworls. Her hands nimbly kneaded cotton *lappas* of red and blue, yellow and green. Each time her arms thrust downward driving her palms into the gathered clothes and onto the flat, black *brukking* rock,

the soapy foam shot out with a resounding whoosh.

Mariama worked away, musing absent-mindedly. While rinsing her mother's precious tie-dyed headwrap (a gift from her late husband), the garment somehow slipped from Mariama's grasp and snaked away on the river's current. Mariama instinctively lunged forward, concerned more for her mother's sorrow should the headwrap be lost than for her own well-being, for she could not swim. She lost her balance and toppled into the forbidding waters. Tumbling through the fearful depths and the muffled roar beneath the river's surface, she flailed furiously, futilely, until, at last, she lost consciousness.

Mariama awoke in a dimly lit chamber, exhausted but otherwise unharmed. The room was empty except for a wooden trunk squatting somberly in the shadows nearby. As her eyes grew accustomed to the muted light, she made out the faint outlines of a doorway across the room. Much as she tried she could not will herself to move toward the door. Fear held her firmly. Mariama closed her eyes as fatigue and distress overwhelmed her. When she opened them again, she beheld an old woman, bent nearly double with age, limping toward her from the doorway.

"Well, well. It appears we have a stranger," the old hag crooned as if to someone else present but unseen. Gnarled hands and knobby feet poked out from her timeworn gown. An intricate

net of criss-crossing lines etched her craggy face, a scribbled map on withered brown parchment. She let out a dull groan as she bent over the stricken girl.

"Good m-morning, ma'am." Mariama offered hesitantly for she was sure neither of the time nor the day. "I...er....I don't know where I am, or even how I got here," Mariama managed. "Please excuse me. I am very confused."

"So you are, my dear. You just rest now for a moment," the old woman soothed; her cold, inanimate hand lightly touched the girl's brow.

As Mariama tried to gather her wits, bits and pieces of the events that had landed her in that place recurred in a hodgepodge of disjointed images. Swaying trees, swirling eddies, shimmering leaves, the eerie, muffled blackness. The realization struck her like a blow. "Oh, I have lost my mother's favorite headtie!" she lamented. "Whatever will I do? Mother will heartbroken."

"Now, now Dearie. Be calm. Do you think for a moment that your mother is worried about an ordinary piece of cloth when her only daughter has vanished beneath the waters of the Sewa?" The crone helped Mariama to her feet and guided her to the trunk where Mariama sat down.

"But where am I? And how do you know I am my mother's only daughter?" pleaded Mariama.

"Hush, now. All in due time, my dear. First I want you to do something for me," said the old woman, ignoring the frightened girl's plea. She raised the hem of her long skirt to reveal a putrid, suppurating ulcer in the scaly, gray flesh of her lower right leg. "I need you to clean and dress this wound for me, child. It pains me so," the old hag intoned with a gri-

mace.

Mariama hesitated only briefly. For in that fleeting moment, her repulsion and abject fear were negated by the tenets of her strict upbringing that compelled her to respect any woman of her grandmother's rank. She took the cotton wool, disinfectant and gauze bandages that the old woman produced by some sleight of hand from the folds of her skirt. Applying skilled, deft hands she proceeded to cleanse and neatly dress the offensive wound.

Mariama had no sooner completed this act of mercy when a transformation took place in the old woman. Where once the wizened, withered hag had stood, stooped by age and infirmity, a radiant, luminescent visage appeared. Mariama beheld a most beautiful woman with long hair, dark and shiny as kelp, and smooth skin with the pale translucence of the most delicate china. In her penetrating amber eyes Mariama recognized the untold power of the *jinni*, Mami Wata.

"Fear not, child, for you have done me a great kindness. So, you shall be rewarded." The *jinni's* mellifluous voice enveloped Mariama like a warm tide. She was soothed and filled with a blessed calmness: her apprehensions washed away.

"Thank you, ma'am. for your kindness. But I desire nothing, except to return to my family," Mariama drawled as if in a dream.

"And so you shall." The jinni stood back from where Mariama sat atop the wooden box, spread open her arms like the wings of a rising Phoenix and began to sing a siren's lullaby.

The eerie melody carried Mariama into a nether world of soft pastels and meditative melodies! Her consciousness unfolded languidly like

pink hibiscus blooming, as she rose to the river's surface. She came to upon the sandy bank of the quiet river. Her laundered clothes, neatly folded, sat upon the *jinni's* wooden trunk several yards away. She hoisted the trunk upon her head with unfamiliar strength and returned with it to her mother's house.

Mariama described for her astonished mother all that had passed. When she had completed her tale, the girl and her mother went over to the *jinni's* trunk and together lifted the lid. Inside they discovered a trove of fine cottons and silks, precious jewelry, and valuable coins. Praise be to God, they prayed, their struggles had been rewarded at last!

Peering through the window, unseen by Mariama and her mother, a neighbor girl, Fatmata, overheard Mariama's tale and witnessed her good fortune. She sped home on the wings of avarice and related in excited gasps to her aunt what she had heard and seen. Fatmata and her aunt schemed gleefully to change their own miserable fortune. Fatmata would re-enact Mariama's fateful accident, they decided, certain that they, too, would enjoy great wealth. Unlike Mariama though, Fatmata was a covetous and disrespectful girl. Her aunt was one of those people who strove to undermine others as a means of getting ahead. The girl and her aunt argued frequently, for their similar vices often conflicted. On this occasion, they agreed without rancor.

So the next morning, as Fatmata toted her laundry down to the *brukking* rock, she ran through the plan in her mind. She would kneel beside the river, toss a ragged headtie into the water (no use risking anything of value), and then dive in after it. She expected to emerge in the *jinni's* lair, get her treasure and return to the surface. Burning greed so consumed Fatmata that she never reckoned with the possibility that she just might drown, for she, like Mariama, could not swim. At the waterside Fatmata, without pretense, put the plan into action. As the moth-

eaten kerchief disappeared down the river, she leapt into the molten, moving waters of the Sewa.

Down, down, down she tumbled through the murky depths, caught in the maelstrom of her own folly. She struggled against a rising panic as darkness closed around her.

Fatmata awoke in the place she recognized from Mariama's description. The same diffused light, the wooden trunk, and there, barely visible across the room from where she sprawled on the dank, dirt floor she could just make out the faint outline of a doorway. Fatmata grew weary waiting for the old woman to appear. Only dire warnings from her aunt kept her from seizing the trunk and its fabulous contents. Then, in that briefest moment, while her attention had been diverted, or perhaps she had nodded off, the old woman unexpectedly appeared beside her.

Hunched over as if collapsing in upon herself, the wizened hag cooed, "Well, well. It appears we have a stranger. Fatmata felt so repulsed by the grotesque creature that leaned over her that she cringed and fought against a rising nausea. She averted her eyes from the shriveled flesh, the searing gaze, the broken, kola-stained teeth. The carefully planned script she had practiced escaped her, set free by her loathing of the old woman. "I, um, I mean...Oh, I have come for the treasure," she blurted out in exasperation. "Let me have it and I'll be on my way."

"Indeed you shall, my dear. But first I want you to do something for me." The old woman raised the hem of her skirt to reveal the weeping sore on her shin. "I need you to clean and dress this wound for me, child. It pains me so."

Fatmata recoiled at the sight of the gaping lesion. "Ugh! Get away from me!" she wheezed as nausea pressed upon her. "I c-can't — I won't do

it! Just send me back home," she demanded pan-ic-stricken.

"And the treasure? Is that not what you came for?" queried the old woman, her soft voice be-lying the menacing gleam that flashed across her stern countenance.

Fatmata's disgust gave way to growing impatience and lingering greed, "Yes. Yes. And the treas-ure, too," she replied curtly.

"So be it. Seat yourself upon the trunk and close your eyes."

Fatmata did as she was instructed. No sooner had she sat atop the trunk than a discordant ca-cophony of strained chords and crashing cymbals stung her ears as she ascended through rancid, gelatinous ooze. She soon found herself among the river rocks sputtering and teary, covered in filth. But there on the shore sat the *jinni's*

trunk. Bounding over the treacherous stones, she grabbed the weighty trunk and dragged it to her aunt's house, for it was too heavy to lift.

Immediately the girl and her aunt fell to arguing over the disposition of their anticipated booty. With most vile references, they cursed and in-sulted each other. When the tirade finally sub-sided they turned their greedy eyes to the trunk. Not wishing to allow the other an ad-vantage they approached their treasure foot-to-foot. Fatmata flung open the lid while her aunt looked on in great anticipation. Their ravenous hopes were unceremoniously dashed by what they discovered.

"Rocks!" the aunt hissed. "You bloody fool You brought me a box of useless rocks."

By the time either of them saw the coiled black mambas among the stones, they'd already suf-fered the deadly prick of venomous fangs.

Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting

The 2012 annual meeting is being held at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina from August 2nd through August 5th. More details are available on the Friends of Sierra Leone website, www.fosalone.org.

Activities at the meeting will include our regular business meet-ing, country update, workshops, films and speakers. Meghan Welsh, a current Peace Corps Volunteer who just extended for a third year, will speak to us about the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone. Wilson Moran, son of Mary Moran who was one of the central figures in *The Lan-guage You Cry In*, will speak to us about the ongoing struggle for the descendants of West African slaves to reclaim the land taken from them by the federal government during World War II. We will also have a special dinner on the last night of the meeting. There will be many activities available at the Penn Center and the surrounding area.

2013 Calendars!

The **2013 International Calendar** produced by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin is available through Friends of Sierra Leone. This year the calendar celebrates its 25th anniversary. In addition to volunteers' 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 proceeds will go toward Friends of Sierra Leone activities. Make your check to Friends of Sierra Leone.

Use this form or go to the Friends of Sierra Leone website (www.fosalone.org) and order via PayPal.

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

Contribution to Projects \$ _____

Overseas Mail (add \$10) \$ _____

Membership in *National Peace Corps Association* (\$35) \$ _____

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. →

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