BURKINA CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

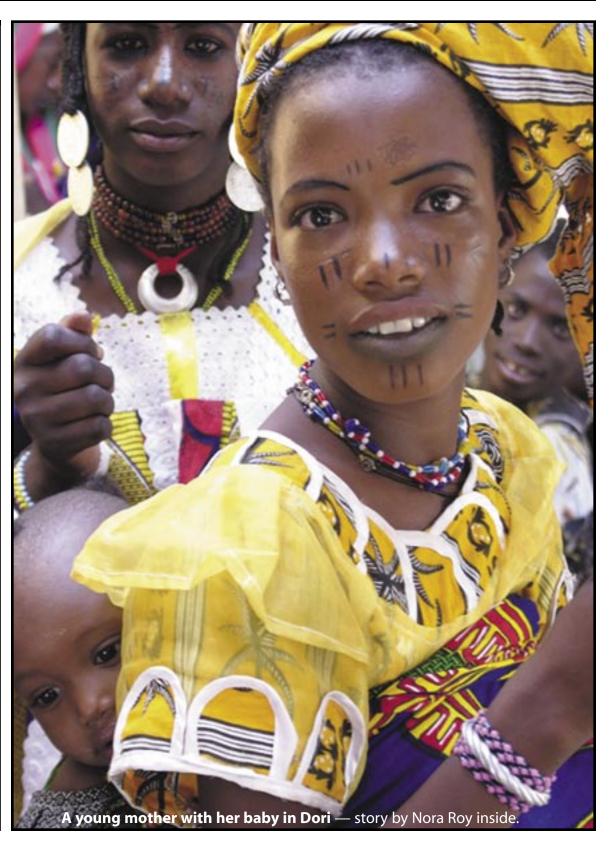
2005 - NO. 1



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Molly Chambers '99-'01

HE PRESIDENT'S YIR



hat do you think of the color in this issue? With some creative streamlining, we were able to print with some color and cut costs at the same time. The Board wants to ensure we have enough money from member dues to cover newsletter expenses. We had many contributions to the Projects Fund last year, but considerably fewer people contributed their annual \$15 dues. These dues are used for the admin-

istrative costs of mailing newsletters, buying our bulk mail permit, maintaining our nonprofit status, and staying affiliated with NPCA.

Our policy has been not to use any project contributions for administrative purposes. But we have been draining our funds. So we decided to launch a **membership drive**. We have a planned two-tiered approach that began with a mem-

bership mailing. If you did not receive your membership letter, please download a copy from our website: http://fbf.tamu.edu. The letter contains our proposed budget along with information about dues received.

This campaign will be followed up with a telephone campaign organized by John Sneed. So far the campaign has raised \$1,530. We are 30 percent of the way to our goal. Please send in those \$15 membership dues!

Suzanne Plopper successfully led us through reinstating the organization's nonprofit status. Then she, Rachel Zerbo, and John Dickey spent countless hours getting our mailings addressed and sent out to you.

Guy Fipps and Dave Flahive have been busy taking care of our website. You can download forms for our latest batch of FBF T-Shirts, or read descriptions of the projects that we are supporting in Burkina.

You can also sign up to receive the Burkina Connection newsletter via e-mail—Get it immediately and save FBF the postage costs. Just click on "Members" at the bottom right hand corner of the page. Then, enter your last name and FBF Member Number (found on your mailing label). If you have any questions you may e-mail us from the "About Us" link.

John and Rachel have been accepting dues and donations. John is also getting reports ready for the IRS. Mike O'Sullivan has been finalizing our NPCA reaffiliation and updat-

> ing our membership database. We need individuals who would be able to work on the database. Does anyone want to volunteer to work on the database? Want some database experience on

your resumé? The Membership and Projects committees both need some assistance. So if you'd like to lend a hand, please send me an e-mail at mollychambers@yahoo.com. Tom Vollrath wrote a similar plea in a newsletter moons ago. That's how I became involved in FBF. And I'm sure glad I did because we have a great bunch of dedicated people working to keep this organization afloat!

I'd like to thank everyone who is contributing to Friends of Burkina Faso. What continually humbles me is the generosity of our members and their continuing dedication and service to Burkina!

Kudos to all of you. —Molly





Maintains a network of RPCVs and friends of Burkina Faso

Provides funding and assistance to support projects in Burkina Faso

"We are 30 percent

of the way to

our goal."

- Improves social interaction, communication, and information exchange
- Educates others about the country and culture of Burkina Faso

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Learn more about us at http://fbf.tamu.edu



Le Pensionat Notre-Dame-des-Anges in Montreal, Quebec, raised \$900 for the *Mouton-Ecole* project. With "Diner de la faim," the children gave up their lunch in return for contributions.



NEEED's "*Mouton-Ecole*" sign goes up at the FBFfunded intermediate school near Ouahigouya.



PCV Lars Wensel reports that the water pump at the school "works like a charm."







Burkina Connection 3



Tom Vollrath, '67-'70, Projects Chair

PROGRESS REPORT



Burkina Connection 4 n the last *Burkina Connection*, we reported that FBF agreed to fund construction of a *collège* (junior high school) just outside of Ouahigouya. Many of the girls who will be enrolling in this school, when it opens its doors for the first time this next September, will be graduates of **NEEED's** *mouton-ecole* program—which FBF has been supporting for the past three years.

Construction is nearly complete, as you can see from the photos on the previous page.

We have been receiving monthly reports and photos of the progress building this *collège*. To date, the well and pump are installed,

the latrines are nearly complete, the cement-brick wall surrounding the courtyard is going up, the classroom buildings have their chalkboards ready, and the administration building lacks only cement floors, ceiling panels, and a final coat of paint.

Lars Wensel, the PCV overseeing the construction, writes that he is "extremely impressed with the speed and the quality of the work being done." NEEED hopes to achieve even more in the future. Its grand vision includes constructing a library, study hall, computer room, and small infirmary.

Patti Thomas, our Projects Committee member living in Quebec, reports that the primary school in Montreal, **Le Pensionnat Notre-Dame Des Anges**, seized the initiative to launch a second fund-raising campaign for NEEED's *mouton-ecole* project this year! One of several fund-raising activities was called the *"diner de la faim"*—a program whereby the children gave up their lunch in return for money contributed to enable young girls to attend primary schools in the Ouahigouya area. A very generous sum of \$900 Canadian was collected this year.

Congratulations to all who made this event happen in Montreal! We hope *Le Pensionnat Notre-Dame Des Anges* will continue to support this program in the years to come, and that the sister-type relationship they have established will be long lasting!

Contributors to FBF projects can be very proud of their efforts to promote the education of young girls in Burkina. UNICEF Director Carol Bellamy, speaking at U.N. headquarters, said recently,

"It is my most central conviction from 10 years at UNICEF that nothing will turn the tide against poverty the way that education can, especially for girls. There is no more sure an investment for nations than investment in a quality basic education for all boys and girls. With girls especially, the returns, with respect to the next generation of children, are striking."

In addition to supporting education this past year, Friends of Burkina has contributed funds

"There is no more sure an investment . . . than a quality basic education . . . " to the *Bureau-des-Artisan/ Peace Corps* (BA/PC) program, designed to support micro-level entrepreneurial activities.

A special fund called *Fond Alloue aux Artisans Agrees par les Volontaires Americains* (FAAVA) has been created.

FAAAVA provides resources, enabling groups of entrepreneurs in various communities throughout Burkina to participate in technical training courses taught by Burkinabè personnel at the *Bureau des Artisans*, with oversight coming from Small-Enterprise-Development (SED) Volunteers. Hopefully, the skills that villagers learn in these *formations* will be used to earn extra income, providing a means for them to improve their quality of life. Training will occur in areas that hold commercial and income-generation potential, such as soapmaking, weaving, large engine repair, preparation of *soumbala*, and preparation of shea butter.

Michael Kolber, PCV, recently wrote us about the progress achieved to date: Three *formations* have already been completed and have secured loans from local microfinance organizations to help them continue their work. Moreover, five additional *formations* are on the drawing boards. These initatives are ambitious, and the developments sound exciting. FBF wishes good fortune to all involved! ur trip to Burkina Faso in December was terrific. My husband, Chris, and I spent two weeks there, primarily up north in Dori, where we attended a multinational conference on *elevage*, or livestock raising. The attendees included many Fulbe and some Tuareg and some others—all members of the *Association pour la Promotion de l'Elevage dans le Sahel et la Savane* (APESS). Our attendance was for the purpose of meeting Fulbe people, to document dress, dance, music and visual culture.

We met a lot of people from Burkina, Niger, Mali, Chad, and the Central African Republic. During the day, we visited communities and markets in the area, filmed Fulbe and Bella music and dance, learned some phrases in Fulfulde, enjoyed Fulbe cuisine,

met some wonderful people, including new PCVs Andy and Laura in Gorom Gorom. At night Dori came alive with music and dance during the week of the conference.

We had not been up north in several decades. It was astonishing to see how much Dori and Gorom Gorom have grown. Both communities now have electricity. The mayor of Dori even has satellite TV. Andy and Laura have the use of a neighbor's telephone and internet access at a local cafe. Boy, is that ever different from the way things were back in the '70s, when mail took weeks to get home, and weeks to get from the USA to us.

I have to admit that Ouagadougou is a tough place in many ways. It is growing at a very fast rate without the infrastructure to keep things working well. The *quartier* next to the airport has recently been flattened to make room for new housing. This has displaced a lot of families and one wonders which families will return to the area after new housing has been put in. And will it still be affordable???

The central market building burned some months ago and is still standing, but is unsafe for use, so it is empty and all locked up. Other markets in neighborhoods now provide all of Ouaga's market goods. Unfortunately it



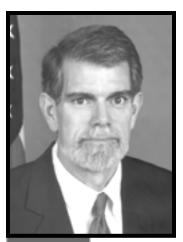
RPCV Nora Roy, '70-'72, with APESS members in Dori.

reminds me of the kind of urban decay and suburban sprawl that has blighted America.

I shouldn't end this on a down note. On the plus side: arts, crafts, music, and dance are thriving in Burkina's northern region. We would heartily recommend a visit to the north for any RPCVs. By the way, Chris now has DVDs about art and culture in Burkina Faso, and they can be seen in preview on the Art and Life in Africa website. He recently finished a DVD about making dolo, which I imagine will bring smiles and memories to a lot of RPCVs. Or, if anyone has never seen dolo being made, it truly is an enjoyable film to watch and the process is fascinating. Find them at http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart. All PCVs and RPCVs should use the HAW2DLYE discount code to get \$5 off on your DVDs.

P.S.— Age definitely has its benefits. As "elders" we get so much respect now that it is a joy to be older!!!! It probably helps that we have friends, we speak moderately decent Moore, fluent French, a smattering of Fulfulde, and kind of know our way in Burkina's cultures. If you don't get enough respect as an oldster here in the States, just get yourself back to Burkina and experience the pleasures of being a "*nikiema*"!

Wend na kod nyindaare. — Nora Roy



Tony Holmes, U.S. Ambasador to Burkina

TONY'S FAREWELI



Burkina Connection 6 In writing this, my final FBF newsletter column, I look back over my now slightly more than two and a half years in Ouaga with a lot of satisfaction at the marked, almost profound, improvement in U.S./Burkina relations. Literally every aspect of our relationship has deepened, which I'm pleased to say reflects the progress that this country and government have made virtually across the board.

When I arrived in 2002, the U.S. view was dominated by Burkina's role in regional events, particularly the crises in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the arms-for-diamonds trade. Burkina was

committed to improving its image in the region, but the litmus test of its new policy was initially its restraint in Cote d'Ivoire, and then its support for implementation of the U.N.-backed peace agreement there. Even die-hard skeptics came

to view Burkina as working hard to moderate the Ivoirian rebels and to promote peace. The country's refusal to aid the deposed dictator of Liberia, Charles Taylor, also helped change long-held negative views. While Burkina still has a few implacable enemies in the region, it has made impressive progress in the past few years toward rehabilitating its standing.

Politically, Burkina Faso will have a presidential election in November 2005. There now seems to be a consensus that constitutional term limits do not apply retroactively to President Compaoré. So the political heat is beginning to rise and it appears six months in advance that there could be from 8-10 candidates in the first round. Everyone is working hard to ensure that this election is at least as successful as the May 2002 parliamentary elections, in which the opposition won almost half the seats. So far, the democratic process has been remarkably transparent and fair. More generally, the human rights/rule of law situation has also been improving steadily in recent years. There is still quite some way to go, but the trend is decidedly positive. On the economic front, the country has not

only survived the threats posed by the Ivoirian crisis, but has continued to grow and develop at an impressive pace. During my tenure I've met perhaps half a dozen former Peace Corps volunteers who have returned, invariably with spouses and children, to show them the country. They have been astounded by the (mostly positive) changes. If you've been away for more than a decade, you simply would not recognize Ouaga.

Burkina Faso has become tremendously popular with the donor community, having maintained an unbroken track record of positive performance since 1991. You can now add the United States to that group too. After four years of delay, albeit largely for political reasons, we accorded Burkina eli-

"U.S. / Burkina Faso relations have never been better . . . " gibility for the duty-free trade benefits of the *African Growth and Opportunity Act* (AGOA) late last year. Shortly thereafter we made it a "threshold" country for the *Millennium Challenge Account* (MCA). This means

that we have access to funding for projects in areas where Burkina Faso is far behind comparable countries, and we are very far along in developing a \$12 million girls' primary education project. If progress in this area can get BF over the threshold stage and fully into the MCA—and we're optimistic that it will because the country compares so favorably on the most important criterion, relative lack of corruption—then sustained, serious amounts of U.S. assistance could follow.

All the progress noted above has allowed us to normalize our military-to-military relations, and we recently conducted a large seminar here on the role of the military in a democracy. Burkina Faso is now an active contributor of forces to international peacekeeping operations, including most recently to Sudan. Former Amcit residents would be shocked to even notice regular positive articles about the United States in the local press.

So, all in all, as I prepare to depart shortly after the July 4th holiday, I can honestly say that U.S./Burkina Faso relations have never been better and there is no reason to think they won't continue that way. Friends of Burkina Faso newsletter as Country Director, though I am by no means severing ties with Friends of Burkina—indeed I have just completed my NPCA affiliate group membership.

I will be leaving Ouagadougou after two and a half years (and Peace Corps after seven years) at the end of June. So this is a time of great reflection as I prepare to COS yet again.

Peace Corps Burkina Faso has gone through tremendous change over the past two and a half years. Some of these changes came as a result of my endeavors but most the result of external forces.

Since my arrival in January 2003 we have:

• moved office buildings (RSO denied security clearance to the old building—and given the state of the building and particularly the odors on the top floor, this was probably a blessing)

• migrated computer platforms (yes, Peace Corps no longer uses Macs)

• changed the financial management system (Oracle-based system now)

• successfully added one new project (Small Business Development)

• begun the process of adding a second (Girls Education and Empowerment)

• changed PST paradigms (we now run a community-based training model—no more center)

• changed training sites (from Bobo to Kaya to Gourcy)

• nearly doubled the size of the Volunteer corps in Burkina Faso (from 65 in January 2003 to over 100 today—and 120 PCVs projected within one year)

We have added new staff to help support the new systems—administrative staff, programming staff, and a full time training position. It has been a bit of a wild ride, and yet, like all good things, it is coming to an end.

As much as things have changed, I think the core of our program has remained untouched:

• Health and Education remain the cornerstones of our program—a stand-alone Girls' Education project will strengthen that core, as has the Small Business project.

• Our staff remain as committed and dedicated as they ever were—by far the strongest staff I have worked with in my seven years with the Peace Corps.

• The volunteers remain hard working and inspirational. They

"I have enjoyed the

support of Friends of

Burkina Faso over

the years."

are a constant reminder of why we are here and why we have spent so much of our lives working with this organization.

 The communities remain the real Peace Corps (as opposed to the office in Ouagadougou, or the headquarters in D.C.), the place where both the work of Peace Corps is accomplished, and the heart of Peace Corps lives. In Burkina those communities are among the best in the world for Volunteers—safe, welcoming, and hard working.

I leave Peace Corps Burkina Faso at a difficult time. The Girls Education project is just beginning, and so much remains to be done. The changes to training are showing promising signs but institutionalization is necessary to create lasting improvements.

The country, and the region, is facing potentially difficult years ahead—last year much of the country experienced poor rainfall bordering on drought. The northern regions saw a return of the locust last year, which has many of us nervous about the coming rains (small juvenile locust swarms were spotted 20 kilometers from Ouagadougou just weeks ago).

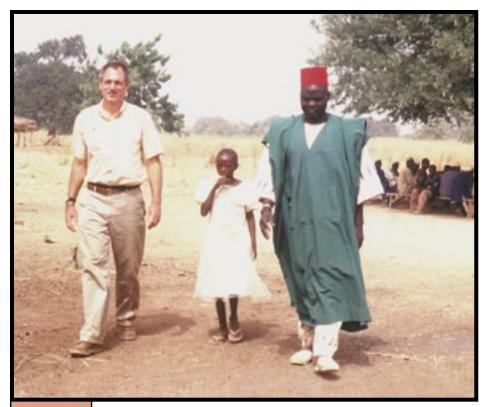
So it is a difficult time to say goodbye. I have enjoyed the support of Friends of Burkina Faso over the years. I am hopeful that Peace Corps and FBF will continue to collaborate on projects and initiatives in the future. Thank you all for your continued commitment to this great country.

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Peace Corps Country Director

JULIE'S FAREWELL





RPCV Dave Knopp. '80-'83, walks with friends Saidou and Lati Soulgo through Bonam in December 2004.

hanks in part to this newsletter's stories over the years about returned Peace Corps Volunteers who made trips to visit their friends and former posts in Burkina Faso, I was motivated to do the same at the end of 2004.

While stationed there from 1980-83 as a Peace Corps forester, we established a regional tree nursery in Boulsa, east of Ouagadougou on the road between Pouytenga and Kaya.

Early on during my Peace Corps years a British man advised I would never be more than a "*nasara*" to any African acquaintances, no matter how much I might wish it were otherwise.

The friendship maintained for a quarter century now with Abdoulaye Sandouidi, one of my nursery coworkers, has proven otherwise. My recent visit was based in Ouagadougou with Abdoulaye, his wife, Rose, and their three children.

We traveled to Boulsa, where I was happy to see the nursery still functioning. Seeing old friends and neighbors—sometimes taking a moment to recognize each other—was a thrill that brought smiles and even tears. Many new acquaintances were made too, including Marcel Tiono, the dynamic administrator of a private secondary school near Ouaga, and traditional healer Saïdou Bikienga of Nagreongo, whose skills were being observed by a visiting team of French doctors.

A bit north of Boulsa in Bonam I also met Lati Soulgo, the 9-year-old girl for whom I became a Childreach sponsor four years ago. Standing tall near their school were rows and rows of neem and eucalyptus trees that had come out of the Boulsa nursery in its early years.

Back in Ouaga, Abdoulaye and I spent time with a mutual friend, Clémentine Kaboré, a merchant of cotton products and a mother of four. During my Peace Corps days, she was like a little sister to me.

One day we all visited Tiassere Guire, a sculptor of bronze, whose popularity was surging in the 1980s when I bought a piece from him of a man returning from the field with a daba over his shoulder and his right hand held high to wave.

Tiassere now has to his credit a life-size statue in the middle of a Ouaga thoroughfare, depicting the once-familiar scene of a young boy using a stick to lead an old man afflicted with river blindness.

"Plus Jamais Ça," states the inscription on the statue, which commemorates the eradication of river blindness in Burkina Faso and other West African countries in 2002.

I highly recommend making the trip back. My round-trip plane ticket from Chicago was \$1,500. I was gone a total of 16 days, took one small backpack, brought \$3,500 in traveler's checks and donated about \$2,000 of it to various projects and families, using the rest for expenses and souvenirs. And that included my layovers in Paris.

Abdoulaye's wife, Rose, has since written to my wife, Sarah, and my 13-year old daughter, Sage, encouraging us to all get together in the near future. I think it will happen within five years. The Burkina connection only grows stronger.

FBF INVESTMENTS IN TIME AND MONEY

Many thanks to all who contributed their time and money making the Fall Fund-raising Campaign such a success. One-fifth of our membership made contributions specifically earmarked to support FBF projects! A total of \$26,383 was received from 103 donors between December 1, 2004 and April 30, 2005. The average contribution was \$256 per household, 2½ times the average contribution received during the first 11 months of 2004! Special thanks to Anastasia Hopkinson and Tom Fox who headed up this effort.

Currently, the Projects Committee is looking for a new project accountant. Rachel Zerbo, our current accountant, would like to "pass the baton" to someone else in the not distant future because of added responsibilities—both at home with her new baby, and at work with her new job. Rachel has graciously agreed to continue serving as our accountant until the launch of our next fund-raising campaign.

Please consider volunteering to make FBF projects more successful. We continue to seek individuals who are willing and able to serve on the Projects Committee in various capacities and/or to assume leadership shepherding incoming proposals, monitoring and evaluating on-going FBF projects, and deepening our relationships with Burkinabè and in-country organizations with whom we have collaborated in the past to tap latent potential not yet fully realized. For those of you thinking about making such a commitment, keep in mind that your participation may require a significant investment in time and energy. Also bear in mind that the payoffs are very rewarding — as all who are involved can surely attest.

BURKINAPHILE by Mike O'Sullivan, '01-'03

A summary of news from and about Le Faso

• In a report released in February on world population trends, the U.N. Population Division projected that **Burkina Faso's population will triple** from 13.2 million in 2005 to 39.1 million in the year 2050. The report also noted that 47.2% of the country's current population is under the age of 16.

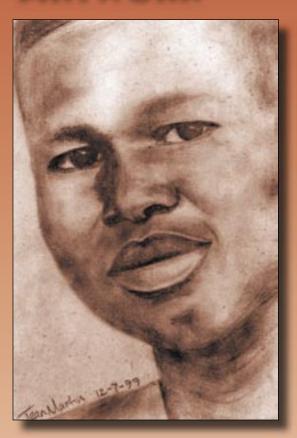
• In February, Ouagadougou played host to the **2005 FESPACO Film Festival**, the premier film festival in Africa. The South African film *Drum* beat out 19 other entrants to win the festival's top prize—the Yennenga Stallion Award.

• Acclaimed director Gaston Kaboré, whose 1997 film *Buud Yam* won FESPACO's top prize, recently opened a **training school for filmmakers** in Ouagadougou. Kaboré told BBC News that he opened the training academy, known as "Imagine," to address the need for film schools on the African continent. The Burkinabè director paid for the school with his own funds.

• Burkina Faso plans to **hold presidential elections in November of 2005**. President Blaise Campaoré is expected to run again in *la Présidentielle*, which is tentatively scheduled to take place on November 13, 2005. Burkina's constitution was amended in 2000 to allow for five-year presidential terms that can be renewed once.

• In December 2004, the U.S.A. announced that Burkina Faso would join 36 other Sub-Saharan African countries **eligible for trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)**. AGOA membership offers tariff-free access to the U.S. market for certain African goods, such as textiles, apparel, and some agricultural products. That same month, Côte d'Ivoire was removed from the list of AGOA-eligible countries. Total bilateral trade between the United States and Burkina amounted to roughly \$22 million in 2004—still a small amount relative to overall U.S.-African trade.

ARTWORK by Katherine Reed, '99-'01



"JEAN MARTIN AS A YOUNG MAN"

Jean Martin, my next-door neighbor in Zambo, was a jolly grandpa, proud of his many grandchildren. He always wore a red Marlboro hat. He died during my service. The original of this drawing was hung, amidst many of his prized possessions, on his funeral altar, while the village danced around it.



"FIFI"

Fifi lived in my "family's" compound in Bobo during *stage*. She was warm and smart, very funny too. She sat still while I did her portrait, and that was really the day we became friends.



Friends of Burkina Faso was conceived and created in 1987, inspired by the 25th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Peace Corps, and the 20th anniversary of Peace Corps in Burkina Faso. The desire to remain connected to Burkina and her people, embedded in the values of Peace Corps service, set in motion a grass roots effort that has been sustained for 18 years. With the election of a new Board of Directors in 2004, and growing energy around project sponsorship in Burkina, the founding ideals continue to thrive. Among the first founders, FBF owes a special thanks to **Holland McKenna**, treasurer, and **Dick Dietz**, membership chair, board members for many years. Those two positions, at times, were all that held the organization together. The efforts of **Bob Osborne** in reviving FBF in 1997 were crucial to our survival. Many others have made significant contributions along the way in the continuing story of Friends of Burkina Faso.



John Sneed, '67-'69

Friends of Burkina Faso — Historical Timeline

•1967 Peace Corps enters Upper Volta in agriculture, public health, and wells. Director Tom Fox, Associate Directors Reg Petty and Dick Spencer, Physician Eli Newberger •1986 Peace Corps leaves Burkina Faso at request of Sankara government •September 1986 Peace Corps 25th Anniversary — Friends of Burkina Faso born •December 1986 Friends of Burkina Faso holds first meeting •May 1987 "Burkina Connection" begins publication — Tom Jansen editor •April 1987 Friends of Burkina Faso incorporated in DC — First Board: John Sneed, Bob Peterson, William Johnstone, Leslie Berger •June 1987 First FBF Reunion and Conference in Washington, DC •September 1987 FBF reaches 100 members •October 15, 1987 Thomas Sankara assassinated — Blaise Compaoré takes reins •July 1988 FBF receives NPCA grant to produce videos of Peace Corps experience •June 1988 FBF publishes membership directory with 240 members •December 1989 Awarded NPCA grant for Priscilla Hinckley video, Chantal's Choice •April 1990 FBF/Amb. Kaboré host Idrissa Ouédraogo film Yaaba at Baltimore Film Fest •August 1991 30th Anniversary of Peace Corps — FBF conference — Ambassador's reception, Minister of Foreign Affairs, films by Taale Laafi Rosellini, Gaston Kaboré •December 1991 Adoption of FBF logo — beginning of FBF t-shirt sales •December 1992 Formal recognition of FBF by the government of Burkina Faso in a Presidential Proclamation •February 1993 FBF delegation to Burkina: John Sneed, Holland McKenna, and Dana Francis meet with President Compaoré to encourage Peace Corps return • June 1994 Peace Corps invited back to Burkina Faso by Compaoré government •November 1994 FBF group trip to Burkina with 14 members — Dedicated new Save the Children school in Saponé funded by Charles Rodgers '67-'69 and wife Fran •Fall 1997 Bob Osborne becomes president. FBF gets tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status •Fall 1999 Denny FitzPatrick becomes editor of award-winning Burkina Connection •February 2001 FBF group trip to Burkina with 9 members and families increases FBF relationships with embassies and Peace Corps Ouaga •March 2001 FBF website launch, and membership reaches 500 •September 2001 Large FBF reunion in DC despite 9/11 events •May 2002 FBF Projects Committee formed •June 2002 40th Anniversary of Peace Corps in DC—FBF reception with Amb. Zongo •September 2002 First FBF projects funded in Burkina •Spring 2004 New FBF board elected — Molly Chambers, President •January 2005 FBF launches membership drive

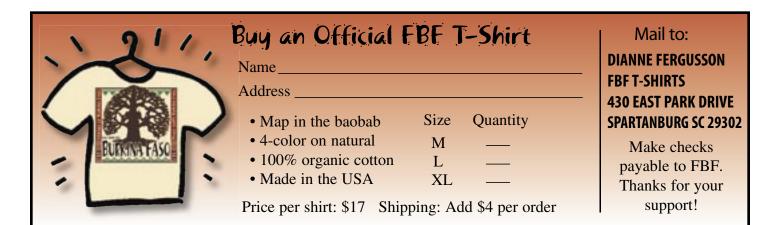




* Renew Your Membershin

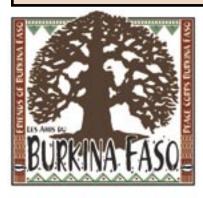
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BURKINA CONNECTION

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