

Palo Alto Friends Meeting El Salvador Projects — June 2014 —

www.pafmelsalvadorprojects.org

From the Director, Robert Broz

Dear friends and supporters,

You may find the opening section of this Director's Report surprisingly personal. Some of you have known my mother, Carmen Broz, for many years. Others are not as well acquainted with her, or are familiar with my mother only through the articles you've seen in our newsletters and from what I've told you about her during my periodic visits to the U.S., but I think you'll all be glad to know what Carmen's life is like now in the group home to which she moved in March, 2014. I was fortunate to have relaxed, quality time with my mother during a three-week trip to the U.S. in March for the first real vacation I've had in years – but I returned from that happy trip with an illness that worsened rapidly to the point where it could easily have claimed my life. With much less energy than usual and trailing a long tube attached to an oxygen concentrator, I am writing to you from my home in Suchitoto, El Salvador. I'll follow my account of my mother's new way of life with the story of my hospitalization and my progress toward recovery, including adaptations of my work style that I am now confident will allow me to maintain my effectiveness as Director of the El Salvador Projects and to continue the tour and restaurant/ hostel services I offer with my wife, Tita.

I will go on to the kind of information you usually expect to find in my reports. I will summarize the difficult decisions we've had to make about how many students we can support in the year ahead, which applicants we could approve, and which we had to reluctantly decline to stay within our budget. I will introduce the three new university students we've added, and update your knowledge of the other work we are doing in our communities with your contributions. My report will conclude with my "in-country" perspective on the recent national elections and the current situation in El Salvador, topics that I know are of great interest to



Carmen, now 90, and her son, Robert Broz, March 2014

many of you.

Three months after her 90th birthday, my mother moved from her small house with the garden she loves so much to a small assisted care home in Santa Rosa, California. For those who wish to visit, write, or call, her new address is Carmen Broz, C/O Mountain View Care Home, 939 Baird Rd, Santa Rosa, CA, 95409. Her telephone is 707-537-0108.

It was a joy for us both that my rare visit to the U.S. for vacation and family time coincided with Mother's move. I found her much as she was two years ago – still physically in good shape, but with signs that her memory is less reliable. I spent hours with her during several days, talking about everything from my family to conditions in El Salvador and the Projects. We laughed and laughed about stories of the past, and about my mother's failing memory, too! One morning Carmen looked me in the eyes and ask caringly, "Do you know where Robert is?" When I saw that she had realized her mistake, I responded "Mom, if I don't know where Robert is then I am in pretty bad shape, too!" We both laughed until the tears were flowing. Another morning after I had answered the same questions numerous times, my mother said " Perhaps I have already asked you this...." I stopped her and said "Mom, I am sure you have, but go ahead and ask. I will answer you again, just as lovingly as I have every day."

As I spent unhurried time with my mother, I realized that one has to enter a special mindset to be able to spend the precious time we have on this planet with those we love, as best we



Carmen enjoys photos in Santa Rosa, March 2014

can – something that I believe being a Quaker has helped me learn to do as I grow older. This is what I most want you to know: even though my mother feels old and “ready to go,” as she often says, she is comfortable and she enjoys her days with her new house mates (three others when I was there), and also the people who run the home. They are a Mexican-American mother and daughter who treat all the guests with love, and care for them as if they were their own mothers and fathers. Please keep Carmen in the light as she continues to deal with growing older day by day. If you can write to her, call her, or even visit, she’ll be delighted – and please don’t be dismayed if she doesn’t remember you or the history you’ve shared with her.

Just before I returned to El Salvador on March 20th, I came down with what seemed to be a bad cold or flu. Back in Suchitoto, when I did not get better a local doctor put me on antibiotics. Two weeks later, with no improvement despite two separate antibiotic treatments, I saw a pulmonologist in San Salvador. I was admitted to an emergency hospital that same day, because my blood oxygen level was critically low. After five days of hospitalization, I was released to finish a third course of antibiotics and to begin treatment for congestive obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), which was the initial diagnosis from my doctor in San Salvador. Now, just over a month after returning from my trip to the U.S., I am learning to cope with reliance on an oxygen concentrator, a new and improved diet, and reducing my activities to conserve oxygen. I am required to live at a much slower and healthier pace. I still have many tests to

do before I will know just how advanced the COPD is, but after fearing that I might be severely limited and even housebound I now feel confident that I will be able to live a long and productive life. I am adapting! I use oxygen constantly when I am at home. On tours, I hire drivers to conserve my energy – and I’ve found that this gives me new freedom to put my full attention on my clients. In the future, I will probably use a portable oxygen supply so that I can stay out longer in the field. I feel that a dark shadow has passed and I am emerging into a new way of life.

I am especially thankful that my loving family and friends have come forward to aid me with great generosity, as I have no health insurance. Although medical care is inexpensive in El Salvador compared to the United States, my medical costs have been far above what I can afford on my own. Thanks to all who have been so caring and supportive during my illness!



Robert in the hospital

New students receiving support in 2014

Because donations in 2013 were lower than in the past few years, our local committee in El Salvador and our overseeing committee in Palo Alto realized that we would have to reduce the number of university students we could support in

2014. Both committees labored with the selection challenges. After much discussion by our local committee, we decided not to renew support for two continuing students –one of whom did not meet our project academic requirements and did not reapply for support, and one who had requested six months of support for her practical hours (something we normally do not support). I am glad to tell you that both of these students have found ways to continue on their own.

We decided that we could add only three new students from the 14 who had applied for 2014. The selection of the three new students was very difficult. Among the 14 applicants were six whom we all felt fully deserved financial support. [NOTE: At the end of this newsletter, our usual request for your contributions includes an inside view of this very personal decision process. We want you to know how we take each individual’s ability, goals, and circumstances into account.]

Milton Palma is from the community of La Ciudadela. He is the younger of two siblings. His sister is in her second year at the National University, supported by a U.S. group known as Santa Cruz El Salvador; they have a new program that is very similar to our own, with a similar condition that only one sibling from a family can receive support at the same time. Milton was top in his graduating high school class at the K-12 school in the community of La Ciudadela. He was accepted in the first round of testing at the National University of El Salvador and in the Faculty Of Medicine, one of the hardest to get into. Milton and his sister now live in the student



Milton Palma

house that we rent jointly with Santa Cruz El Salvador, the municipality of Suchitoto, and two other groups working in education in Suchitoto. The jointly financed coed student house is conveniently located just five blocks from the National University.

I have as yet no way to assess his academic progress, as he is in his first semester, but I have full confidence that he will do well.

Keiry Alejandra comes from a small village just a few kilometers from Suchitoto, where I live. She studied high school (called bachillerato here) at the National Institute of Suchitoto, one of the country’s best public high schools. Like Milton, Keiry was accepted by the National University in the first round of entrance exams in the Faculty of Law. In her application, she wrote that her goals are to help uphold the laws, help people in need, and make El Salvador a better country. Keiry is living with an aunt in the capital so that she won’t have to travel from Suchitoto each day. As with Milton, I am confident that Keiry will prove to be an excellent student at the National University.



Keiry Alejandra

Our third new student in 2014, **Darlim Irene**, graduated from the K-12 school in El Barío. She is from the community of Valle Verde. Like Milton and Keiry, Irene was accepted by the National University in the first round of entrance exams in the Faculty of Economics. Some of you may recall that my mother, Carmen, left El Salvador in 1942 intending to study economics so she could come back and improve her country. Similarly, Irene wrote in her application that she wants to study economics to work for better economic development of her country, while looking for solutions that will strengthen self-respect for all the inhabitants of El Salvador. Irene will also be living with relatives in the capital, saving her time and money. Irene’s acceptance by the National



Darlim Irene with mother

University in the first round shows that she has the skills and motivation to achieve her goals. The economics curriculum includes many advanced math courses, so I expect Irene to face some challenges in her first year.

Please hold all our students in the light – especially our new students – as they continue their studies and adapt to life in San Salvador, with all the problems of a large city and many changes from the way of life they have known in small villages and in a small town like Suchitoto.

This year we are able to support only 17 university students, down from 21 in 2013. We hope that in 2014 donations will return to previous levels, so that in 2015 we will be able to support more deserving young people from rural El Salvador as they strive to gain an education, improve the quality of life for themselves and their families, and work for a better future for their country. In addition to our university scholarship/loan program, our programs continue to support other work in El Salvador. We pay the salaries of two women who work as librarians at the school in El Barío. Three events for elders will be organized by local youth groups in the communities of El Barío near Suchitoto, El Gigante near Perquín, and Apulo just outside of San Salvador. We hope to again support Friends Peace teams, offering AVP (Alternatives to Violence) workshops in Suchitoto. Your continued generous support makes all of this possible.

Thank you!

2014 Presidential Elections, Gangs, Social Changes, and Education

As you have most likely heard, El Salvador held its presidential elections on February 2, 2014, with five candidates in the first round. Salvadoran electoral law requires a majority of 50% plus 1 for a president to be elected, so when more than two candidates run there is usually a second-round election between the two principal parties. This is what occurred on February 2nd when the FMLN (the party of the political left) received 48.93% of

the vote, ARENA (the major party of the political right) in second place had 38.96%, and ex President Tony Saca running under a coalition (of the political right) received 11.44%. The two small parties (the Salvadoran Progressive Party and the Salvadoran Patriot Fraternity) each received less than 0.5% of the votes. Of the 4,955,107 registered voters, 2,723,246



Darlim Irene and her family

(54.96%) cast their votes on February 2nd. Most people think that if Tony Saca had not run the FMLN would have won the presidential seat in the first round election, but because no candidate received more than 50% of the votes a second election was held on March 9th. Voter turnout increased by some 281,599, and a historic record of 60.64% of the registered voters cast their votes as the contest to elect a new president from one of the two main parties became tense and even violent at some polling centers.

This was a drastic change from the primaries on February 2nd, which I found to be the calmest and most peaceful elections in my almost 20 years in El Salvador. On March 9th, tensions increased as early results showed the FMLN with a minimum lead. In the final results, the FMLN had



Presidential candidates Tony Saca, Sanchez Cerén, and Norman Quijano (Photo: Luterano Blog Spot)

gained 50.11% of the votes to ARENA's 49.89%, a difference of fewer than 7000 of the 3,004,845 votes cast. Our president-elect, ex-FMLN commander Sanchez Cerén, received the most votes of any presidential candidate in Salvadoran history. On the evening of the second round of elections, with nearly final results showing an FMLN win, ARENA's presidential candidate Norman Quijano said in a televised interview that the ARENA party would not accept the results and that they had people in the military and in the streets that would support them against what he called "fraudulent elections".

International election supervisors, the United Nations, and Spain promptly made declarations congratulating the new FMLN president, and approving the democratic electoral process and elections that they had supervised that day. The end result is that the FMLN will continue to govern the country for another five years, aiming to make good on part of their campaign slogan, "El Cambio Sigue," or "The change continues".

Our outgoing President, Mauricio Funes, has dealt with some problems similar to those Obama faced in the US – a failing economy and a government almost in bankruptcy. There were also other problems specific to El Salvador, such as 20 years of politically motivated violence by the ARENA Party that controlled the government in the past, and Salvadoran gangs developing into internationally organized crime groups. Many of the Funes programs that will be continued by Sanchez Cerén, being sworn in on June 1st, have been designed for long-term solutions to many of El Salvador's social problems, notably growing violence by Salvadoran gangs even though a "Truce" between the gangs was signed in March of 2012.

The truce between two of the main gangs in El Salvador, the Mara Salvatrucha and Mara 18 gangs, initially brought gang killings down from an average of 12-14 daily to an average of 4-5. This

held true until 2014, when violent gang killings rose in the first quarter and now average 8-10 daily. Many of the cliques within each gang do not favor or respect the truce. Recently the police and military have been targets of gangs in some parts of the country. Like the rest of the country, Suchitoto has been divided into areas of control by the Mara Salvatrucha and Mara 18 gangs.

We have had several gang-related killings this year in my town of Suchitoto, which has been considered one of the few untouched by crime and gangs. I still feel safe, as most of the violence in El Salvador and little Suchitoto is between gang members, and I tell that to travelers and tourists who visit. Still, I worry for my son, now 16, who walks to high school.

Government programs and a reform making education mandatory for youth through the age of 17 or high school are now being implemented. The new "Ley Lepina" has no legal enforcement but is being adapted around the country with support from a new national institution (CONNA) to help schools, cities, communal associations, and parents find ways to keep children and youth in school. The *Ley Lepina*, along with a pilot program being implemented in 2014 in 1500 schools around the country (including six schools in Suchitoto) aimed at bringing back the full school day, are thought to be important longterm approaches to keeping youth out of the gang circles and promoting their educational development.



Safe Schools, aimed at bringing back the full school day, are thought to be important longterm approaches to keeping youth out of the gang circles and promoting their educational development. (Photo: La Prensa Gráfica)

Escuelas Seguras (Safe Schools) is another program in many schools around the country intended to recover some educational institutions that have been taken over by gang members in recent years, as well as to keep other at-risk schools safe from nearby gang-ridden communities. This program uses our police to protect schools and the communities where they are located. In some cities a safe corridor is formed, using police and military to insure that students can come and go to school freely.

Other FMLN programs like “*Ciudad Mujer*” (city of women) were even supported by right-wing candidates Tony Saca and Norman Quijano in their campaigning. These programs, started by our First lady Vanda Pignato four years ago, are aimed at providing free services such as medical clinics, day care centers, legal aid, vocational training, and entrepreneurial skills to women from around the country. These women’s centers are such a huge success that politicians from around Latin America have come to El Salvador to visit and see how they might be implemented in their own countries.



The First Lady Vanda Pignato presents a document for a women center. (Photo Credit Diario CoLatino)

As you can see, the FMLN is trying to make changes. Perhaps during the next five years, under President Sanchez Cerén, encouraging results will start to be seen. Having lived in El Salvador for almost 20 years, I remember clearly how two of the past ARENA presidents, Francisco Flores and Tony Saca, implemented first the “Hard-handed law” and then a few years later the “Super Hard-handed

law.” In many cases, suspected gang members are locked up for very minor things like having tattoos or gathering on a corner. These simple-minded laws did nothing more than fill up local police stations, which are used as holding cells until suspected criminals are sentenced or released, a process that can sometimes take months. In some cases actual crimes were committed that could be proven and prosecuted, but even these did little more than fill to the point of over-saturation our few and small prisons.

From 1993 through 2009 and under central governments dominated by the right-wing ARENA party, no specific, permanent, or ongoing programs aimed at the roots of the problems – such as limited access to education at all levels, lack of job opportunities, and a growing lower class – had ever been implemented or supported. I see these new, progressive, and inclusive FMLN programs as a start to the solution of many of El Salvador’s social and economical problems, but they may take years to improve the situation. It is very positive that these programs have put the country on a promising path to more just social development. For almost 25 years our work in the El Salvador Projects of Palo Alto Friends Meeting has been largely to support educating youth in El Salvador. Now there are numerous groups, including the Salvadoran government, that know that the key to social and economic development is education.

Thanks once again for continuing to make our pioneering work here possible through your generous and ongoing support.

—Robert Broz
Suchitoto, El Salvador





Hulda Bithia Muaka

A LETTER FROM OUR CLERK

Carmen Broz, the founder of the Palo Alto El Salvador Projects, ***we salute you!***

Carmen came to this country at age 20 with a vision of bettering her life and then going back to El Salvador, her birth country, and changing the lives of her people for the better. Her heart went for the disadvantaged in the society. Most resources received for the El Salvador Projects she founded now support education, which she says, "... is the quickest way to lift people out of poverty."

Her aspirations have been fulfilled by you all who have chipped in, in cash and in kind. A lot has been achieved in the field of education, but there is more to be done.

As Carmen turned 90 in December last year, the El Salvador Committee embarked on preparing a certificate with the names of those who contributed during her ninetieth year. This is to show her that her vision and mission are being kept alive by those who know her personally, and by those who know her only by reputation and from this newsletter. You'll see an image of the certificate on the next page.

Robert Broz, our Field Director and Carmen's son, has done a tremendous job of working on the ground in El Salvador, and so being in direct contact with the situation there. He is currently challenged health-wise, but still pushing his limits to ensure that we continue to be informed of the progress of the students we support, and of the political and social context of their lives and our work in El Salvador.

American youth and young-at-heart adults have also benefitted from the teen trips that the El Salvador Committee organizes yearly. Although we have not been able to offer a service-learning trip in the past two years, we hope to resume this unique opportunity soon. Previous travelers have told us that direct experience and new friendships in this tiny third-world country have been eye-opening and enriching for their lives.

This newsletter brings you a personal account of Carmen Broz's move to a new home and the health crisis from which Robert Broz is emerging, a summary of our selection decisions with introductions to students who are newly receiving support this year, Robert's commentary on social and political conditions in El Salvador, and an image of the certificate presented to Carmen to honor her 90th birthday.

We thank you very much for your continued support in the ongoing challenge of changing lives in El Salvador.

"La lucha continua!" (The struggle continues!)

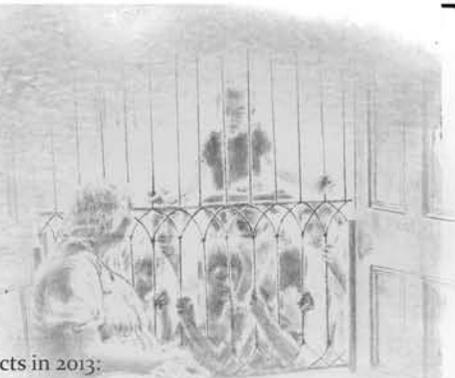
—**Hulda Bithia Muaka**

One of Carman's many birthday wishes read,

"Planet Earth is God's huge, round school house and experimental station where humans learn the essence of how to lead a good and decent life. After graduating, if I must return for additional lessons, I hope to follow in the footsteps of Carmen Broz. She is the exemplar, the Valedictorian of human decency and goodness for all of us. HAPPY BIRTHDAY CARMEN. May you continue to provide the example for many years to come. Your friend, Wayne Cogswell"

To Carmen Broz,

with love and appreciation for your life of courageous service. From your accompaniment of refugees returning to their land in El Barrio to providing medical care in remote villages, from founding child care centers to finding grants to construct schools, from supporting high school education and then university loans for Salvadoran youth from poor families, your example and inspiration continue in the commitment and financial support to the El Salvador Projects of Palo Alto Friends Meeting by a community of contributors who have given through the years.



All those listed below contributed to the Projects in 2013:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
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| Stephen Leeds | San Francisco | Elaine Yarbrough | Boulder, CO |
| Janet Leslie & James Anderson | Chico | James Zimmerman | Santa Clara |

Dear Friends,

May we give you an insider's view of the dilemmas we faced as we considered applications for college loans from a group of promising students early this year? We think it will help you understand how we try to use your contributions wisely, and why we ask you to give generously to the El Salvador Projects.

Each year our committee, with much help from Field Director Robert Broz and the local committee in El Salvador, must make difficult choices about which students we can support through our university loan program and which students we cannot. We always try to maintain support for each approved student through a full academic program. This year, with 14 continuing students who rely on our assistance, we had an exceptionally fine group of new applicants. Although our budget limited us to support for just two additional students, 14 had applied. Four of these were especially well qualified. One of the hardest parts of our job is to tell a bright student that we simply don't have enough money to help him or her go to college. These four students wanted to major in Medicine, Law, Economics, and Law respectively. We told the first two that we would offer them financial help. We struggled deeply about whether we could responsibly offer the third student financial aid this year. Would future contributions enable us to support her through her whole degree program? In the end, we decided to go out on a limb and offer her the same financial aid as the first two. This is risky, and we certainly can't make such a decision every year. Sadly, we had to decline the fourth applicant, explaining that we just did not have the needed funds.

As we make these decisions, we know that you are with us. We act in faith that supporters who share our vision and commitment will rise to the challenge each year, enabling the El Salvador Projects to assist capable students whose education and determination will help them to raise their families and their communities out of poverty.

We ask each of you who receive this newsletter to give what you can to make it possible for another student to pursue his or her dream. Every gift is important.



Yes! I want to help Salvadorans improve their lives!

Mail donations to: Palo Alto Friends Meeting - El Salvador Projects, 957 Colorado Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94303

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- \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 other_____
- Check here if you want your gift to support a college student.
(Please specify on your check memo line "College Loans.")

Donations under \$250 will normally be used for General Programs, and donations of \$250 or more will be used for university student loans (unless you state another preference). Contribution checks should be made to PAFM - E.S. Projects. Your contribution is tax-deductible.

F R I E N D U S O N F A C E B O O K ! Search on: Palo-Alto-Friends-Meeting-El-Salvador-Projects

HOW TO DONATE READING GLASSES AND LAPTOP COMPUTERS:

We need reading glasses (any magnification) to expand life opportunities for elderly people and others with visual impairments. For student use, we need laptop computers (Windows PC with Pentium 4 CPU or better - in working order except that a defective keyboard or display is acceptable). Please send glasses and laptops to: David Hinson (Tel. 650-857-0232), 3298 Ramona, Palo Alto, CA 94306.



June 2014 Newsletter

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- * **Certificate for Carmen Broz**

**Palo Alto Friends Meeting
El Salvador Projects
957 Colorado Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94303
USA**

Address correction requested