Looking Back to Move Forward with Intention

by Heather Mason (with notes from Bob Luitweiler)

“Little by little I discovered the wholeness of the global human family, its inspiring aspects and its depressing ones and its total interdependence.” –Bob Luitweiler, Seeds of Servas 1999

Anyone who ever met Bob probably has heard a Bob story. In my year of working with Bob, the last year of his life, I heard a lot of versions of lots of his stories. Though the telling might change, the themes always had a way of staying constant. And themes of creating family and community, self-exploration and personal passion, are what I will always remember about Bob’s stories. These are what I chose to draw upon when asked to discuss the future of Servas... because I believe that to move forward with intention is, especially now more than ever, of the utmost importance.

Ask yourself Why

Often we can become caught up in the familiarity of repetition, the comfort of structure, and forget to examine our intentions. And as Bob would tell you, why is often the most important question we can ask. We can talk about what we want and don’t want continuously, forever, but if we don’t deeply ponder why we want, and moreover need to do, we risk losing ourselves in action without intention. So, I won’t tell you why you want to be a part of Servas, but do ask you to examine and then re-examine your own why... Why did you join Servas in the first place? And more importantly, why have you continued?

“I believe we should ask every potential Servas traveler to select at least one special subject that is close to their interests and then make this part of the focus for their trip. The questions studied, chosen by the traveler, not the interviewer, can greatly enrich their travel experience, even bring life changing insights without lessening the enjoyment of sight seeing.”

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Interviewers

**Interviewers are our first contact with Servas:** Interviewers are seasoned hosts and travelers who are trained to help potential members decide whether Servas is the right choice for them. Our interviewers are also a wealth of information on finding hosts, being a good host and traveler, and they have information about all of the available resources to new and continuing Servas members. They also promote Servas through outreach in their communities.

We deeply appreciate the contributions of the following volunteer interviewers who have been active in the past and are either retiring or taking a break.

- Allan Anderman of Southern California
- Dianne Shiner of Washington state
- Kate Soukonnikov of Montana
- Judy Crawford of North Carolina
- Maureen Mortenson of Georgia
- Dwight Call of Ohio
- Bert & Lois Spiegel of Utah

We also welcome and appreciate the following new interviewers

- Carol Hotaling of Freeport, ME
- Sharon Victor of Seattle, WA
- Dee Vickers of Memphis, TN
- Jan Schmidt of Laurinburg, NC
- Sara Intriligator of Seattle, WA
- Rebecca Laszlo of Seattle, WA
- Gabrielle Dahms of San Francisco, CA
- Dione Christensen of San Rafael, CA
- Wayne Lechner of San Rafael, CA

**Announcing Vicky and Mike Wason, new Area Representatives for the Salt Lake City, UT area**

If you have experienced the “Magic of Servas” and have some time to contribute, consider becoming an interviewer. All you need is to be a Servas host (Day hosting counts!) and a commitment to promoting the Servas experience in your community. Contact the office if you want to know more.
Some Alternatives to Two-Night Hosting

By Evelyn Wolf

After many years of travel, hosting, and interviewing as an avid and active member of Servas, I have been considering additional ways to set Servas apart from other travel clubs and organizations and lure more members. Many travelers who like the idea of Servas shy away from having “perfect strangers” lodge in their homes as well as lodging in homes of others. There are travelers where cost is not an issue, who would be keen on either traveling solo or with spouse or partner if they could feel more comfortable going to foreign places.

Here are several thoughts on how to effect some change.

Day Hosting:
Many people enjoy meeting international travelers but, for one reason or another, are not disposed to overnight accommodation. Why not become a Servas day host? It’s free and it can introduce new hosts to the organization and give them a “taste” of what hosting is like? It’s also a great option for longtime hosts who have “downsized” or people who work full time and don’t have space or time for houseguests. If you are a Day Host, you can spend a day or just a couple of hours with a traveler. Day hosting could include a quick tour of your favorite local spot, an introduction to your favorite local hike or just a cup of coffee and a conversation with someone new.

I always encourage traveler interviewees to take breaks from Servas stays. Being in someone’s home can become tiring and there may be a need for private time. During such breaks, a traveler can take advantage of Day Host members.

The great thing about Servas travel memberships is that people can travel and never feel alone. There is almost always a Servas member that can be approached. DAY HOSTS are great resources because they enjoy meeting and assisting internationals and being tour guides. Day Hosts can serve as Servas Ambassadors that would give Day Hosts a special and appealing designation.

Host Sharing:
Some Servas members are active and busy people, who do not necessarily always have time to entertain their traveler guests, and others shy away from overnight hosting because of the commitment of space that overnight accommodations require. Consider working with another local host to share responsibilities. This would reduce time necessary to devote to visitors and give travelers an opportunity to experience more than one host’s perspective. In addition and importantly, it would create contact between members, something that is not done enough, especially in person. Host Sharing can remind members that we belong to a great big international family.

Tips for Hosts:
Check the travelers’ Letter of Introduction—if it’s expired or seems “wrong” please do not accept the guest. Call the office and we can find out whether the person is a legitimate traveler. If you have a bad experience with a traveler, let us know promptly so it can be investigated and dealt with properly. Remember that it’s OK to tell a person requesting a visit that it’s not a convenient time.
“UN Corner”

**New Representatives:** 2 US Servas members have become Servas International Representatives at the UN in NYC, where they join **Fanny Bello** who continues her long-time commitment to Servas and the UN.

**Radha B. Radhakrishna** has been a US Servas host and member since 1990. He is a visiting professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and also manages a financial consultancy. He has enjoyed hosting Servas members from many countries. He feels blessed that this gave him the opportunity to teach his children about many cultures from around the world. He has also had many thrilling experiences as a traveler and is keen to spread the Servas message of peace through friendship and open doors. “My interests are in global sustainable development, and education (especially financial literacy). As a UN representative I hope to pursue opportunities to develop and promote these ideas.”

**Sedef Piker** is also a Servas US host and a traveler. She is an art historian, interested in urbanization, cultural heritage and the role of culture and heritage in contributing to social cohesion and the UN's sustainable development goals. At the United Nations, Sedef has been attending meetings addressing the New Urban Agenda and Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants to find out how we, as individuals and as Servas, can make a positive contribution to the current world crises.

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**Leave a Legacy**

By including US Servas in your will, trust, retirement account or life insurance policy you can leave a lasting legacy of Peace, Cultural Exchange and Love of Travel.

You'll be supporting our efforts to keep current with technology and attract more youthful members to share in the values of US Servas. Your legacy will make a powerful difference.

If you would like to speak to someone about making a gift please contact the office and speak to Tracy or email her at tracy@usservas.org
Travel and Learn a Language: Servas Youth Language Experience

Are you between 18 and 30-something? Would you like to improve your foreign language skills outside of a classroom? Would you like to have a meaningful cultural exchange? Do you have a month or more to commit to the unique learning experience that can only be found in travel? The SYLE program is free with Servas membership (travel expenses, of course, are the responsibility of the participant) and is seeking participants. SYLE (Servas Youth Language Experience) is a program designed for young Servas members to learn a language through a Servas cultural exchange during one month in a foreign country. Through SYLE we also hope to strengthen the integration of national local groups, as well as promote the participation of young people in Servas.

US Servas is proud to present the Dennis Mogerman Youth Scholarship fund!!! Dennis Mogerman, long time Servas member and traveler, is now generously offering Servas Youth from the US the financial assistance you may need to make your dreams of travel a reality.

Two $1,000 scholarships available for individuals who plan to participate in a SYLE. They are awarded twice a year based on demonstrated financial need and a commitment to the promotion of Servas among youth. For more information on SYLE and Servas Youth, see www.servasyouth.org

In Memoriam

Eunice Ordman died at home in Memphis on April 16, 2016. A well-known interfaith activist and co-founder of the Memphis Inter-Religious Group, she was active in Balmoral Presbyterian Church and Temple Israel, and frequently attended events at Masjid As-Salaam and other houses of worship. Her interfaith work was honored by Muslims in Memphis in 2008 and the University of Memphis Association of Retirees in 2012. Nationally she was active in The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, the Society for Values in Higher Education, and US Servas. She believed strongly in helping people to help themselves, especially through education and micro-lending. In lieu of flowers she suggests donations to local charities such as Facing History, the Emmanuel Center, MIFA, Bridges, and Porter-Leath.

Richard (Dick) George of Macon, GA died after a lengthy period of decline. He was also an Air Force Reservist who served in key public affairs posts, including the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force in the Pentagon and Strategic Air Command headquarters at Offutt AFB, Nebr. He retired as a colonel in 1985 and was awarded the Legion of Merit. George backpacked more than two thirds of the Appalachian Trail. He and his sons built and donated an official trail shelter, George’s Geodesic Dome, on their Virginia property which is now in the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. George served as a national director of US Servas.

He and his wife Mary hosted exchange students for 11 consecutive years. A lifetime ardent traveler, George visited more than 50 countries, many in depth. Following his retirement, they rented their house and traveled globally for more than three years. In 2014 he donated 13 acres of the George family estate, including the acclaimed Quinta del Sol Gardens, to the Ocmulgee Land Trust.
Parvin Baharloo of Lopez Island, WA, (from her husband Jack Pedigo)

My life’s partner Kanoomeh (Ms) Parvin Baharloo died in June from a brain tumor. She was an organizer extraordinaire and area coordinator for Servas. In 2009 she organized the Servas convention at Ft. Worden in Port Townsend, WA. This year Servas asked her to be a regional coordinator, which she accepted. However, beside the physical tumor she saw another form of cancer, which has crept into the organization. Parvin cringed whenever she saw religious proselytizing in this obviously secular movement. She called a halt to any prayers being offered at Servas events. Unfortunately, too many in the organization unthinkingly offered her prayers, which she took as an insult. At one time a card was sent full of religious sayings and many signatures many of whom offered prayers. She pointed at me and wiggled her fingers, meaning to write or say something.

Parvin’s death, like herself, was unique and awe inspiring. Her brain tumor only affected her speech and reading abilities. She was never in pain nor unaware of her surroundings. She signed up for the state’s Death with Dignity program and when she went to our doctor for the re-evaluation of her mental state he said she was the sanest person in the room (of which there were several including a medical student). She was born in Iran of moderate Moslem parents but was encouraged to question everything. She was a lifelong freethinker (atheist) and could never understand the hold of religion: until she saw what it did to her country during the revolution. In the end she signed up for the willed body program for the Univ. of Wash. There were numerous ceremonies and at her memorial of which over 120 were in attendance. At the memorial she had wished her belongings be auctioned off for our local domestic violence group of which she was a board member. The group netted over $2,900.

During our last convention in Oregon we were surrounded with religious iconography and talk. We were often trapped at meal times to offer songs to an invisible force. This made me uncomfortable. Often, in our community people ask, “What would Parvin do”? I think I know and it’s too bad she did not attend the conference. It would have been interesting.

Right now our country is being torn apart. Religious fundamentalism is a prime source of the polarization. How can we have peace in the world when we can’t even get it in our homeland not to mention our own organization? Religion is always divisive and Servas needs to understand that basic fact and spread the word. We have to be a model for what we preach. Religious proselytizing does not foster cultural harmony.

I am staying on as host. We (our community) live on one of the ferry served islands of which there are some 175 named in the archipelago. This does not include the Gulf Islands in BC of which 5 are ferry served. I am the only host and we do get visitors. This county is one of the most visited in the state and unique in the country. It is well worth a visit.

Parvin was determined to send messages to the end. There was a party the previous Sunday and, at one time, over 68 people were counted. Given this was Fathers Day and there was a large wedding on [the island] that day it is remarkable. The weather was nice and we were outside with a lot of food. Parvin was alert and having fun. At one time she even sang happy birthday (the tumor affected her speech center but the music part is in some other part. One group Parvin strongly supported was DVSAS Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault - San Juans. She was on the board, did a lot of fundraising and was totally committed. We have asked that donations be given to the Org. in her name…some of her things will be auctioned to support DVSAS.
Carl Chatfield and Susan Anderson of Arcata, CA were long time Servas hosts and interviewers—worked hard to bring Servas to Arcata in 2006. Locally known activists, Carl and Susan are remembered for music, culinary expertise, art, and hospitality. They also enjoyed traveling, both to visit friends and family in the US and internationally. The valiantly battled cancer together and only a few months before their passing enjoyed a glorious one-month vacation in Australia - a wonderful last hurrah down under. A large Arcata area community of friends will continue to be inspired by their many contributions.

– Bob Luitweiler, Seeds of Servas (1999) pg 17

Building Peace from the Ground Up (continued from page 1)
In the last years of Bob’s life (though really for most of it) he was working to pull together a program that he referred to as “peacebuilders teams.” Some of you may recognize this term as his original name for Servas, which he wisely decided against because he didn't want the title of the organization to be in English.

Some of you may also know that Bob had largely lost hope in his organization, calling it a “bureaucratic nightmare.” He felt many members active in formal positions at the international level had lost their why, becoming caught up instead in telling the rest of the world how. Peacebuilder’s teams were his attempt to create a new, grassroots organization that would be more closely aligned with member’s own passions, created for and driven by personal interests, strengths, and abilities. Grassroots, it would focus on community action. It would take place first largely at the local level and work by sharing actions and inspiring one-another by sharing stories of experiences with other groups.

Around the world, Servas members are doing amazing things to create community. South Korean members organize a bike trip. Malawi members organize and host community service projects for their guests. Members in Poland meet for dinner and drinks. Why? Well, you’ll have to ask them when you visit…
Timely Tips When Requesting Visits

By Alice Diamond

The Complaints Resolution Committee has considered a few cases recently, which have suggested the usefulness of again discussing communication between host and traveler in anticipation of a visit.

Servas visits are first and foremost about intercultural dialogue. They are not simply a way to lower your cost of accommodations. And that means there has to be time scheduled within your trip to engage in conversation with your host. So, if you are planning to have a Servas visit while attending a conference, please be sure that you inform your host of that, perhaps stating something to the effect that “This would not be a normal Servas visit because I’m committed to the International Society of Tap Dancers (or whatever the event might be) and will have very limited time to spend with you.” It would be helpful if you went on to say whether you could enjoy breakfast together until a certain time, and whether you will have commitments in the evening.

This approach puts the decision whether to host clearly in the hands of the host, where it should be. For example, they may have some interest in the seminar/workshop you are attending, so they might then inquire whether there are any public sessions. Remember, most of the burden of your visit rests on the host. And even though you might feel that you are no bother and the host will barely even know you are there, it is the host who has to wash the sheets and towels and prepare meals if they provide them!

Clear communication is especially important especially when dealing with people of different cultures, backgrounds, and even countrywide norms relating to Servas. Be sure that even as a host, you allow adequate time for interaction during a visit. If that will not be possible, please lay that out in advance and see whether it is satisfactory to both parties. Speaking personally, sometimes we will host even when we have events both evenings for which we could not include our guest. But other times, particularly if we have had several guests lately, we may decide that we don’t wish to take on the extra chores required by hosting, since we don’t anticipate having much time for interaction and dialogue. It is up to both parties to reveal and discuss, with the caveat that the host gets the final say.

And finally, please be sure in your requests to hosts to say something about why you selected that family for a visit. It is not all about you, but also should include some ideas of where your two worlds intersect or what you would like to learn from your host. Remember, that the more your host looks forward to your visit, the more satisfying it will be for both. It helps to remember that your relationship begins the moment you make a request, so be sure to personalize your request and begin a meaningful conversation from the first step.
Making Connections Projects

By Mary Jane Mikuriya and Chris-Ann Lauria

US Servas, originally known as Peacebuilders or Open Doors, was founded in 1948 by Bob Luitweiler, who believed it was possible to build stronger foundations for world peace by helping people around the world meet and learn from each other in their homes. In his book, Seeds of Servas, Bob wrote,

“If every one of the some 15,000 hosts organized regular intercultural parties...we could reach in a years’ time thirteen million people and help them discover how beautiful the human family can be when we appreciate each other’s rich cultures”.

The name Servas, which means “we serve” in Esperanto, was adopted at the first international meeting in 1952 to denote the spirit of international mutual service in the cause of peace. Its establishment was primarily based on three fundamental components: Peace Activism, Travel with Home Stays, and Work Camps. As we approach our 70th anniversary, the Servas International community is reflecting on Bob’s vision for the organization and encouraging Servas members to rekindle the spirit of making human connections. Furthermore, Servas International General Secretary Ann Greenough is calling members to become involved in Making Connections projects. This is an international initiative to develop and implement regional and international projects, programs, and activities, in which Servas members around the world can participate.

To date, US Servas offers a variety of programs in addition to traveling and hosting opportunities. Making Connections initiatives includes the Servas Youth Language Experience (SYLE), Diversity Dinners, Campus Connections with Servas, and Annual National Conferences.

SYLE is a program approved for Servas members between 18 and 30 years old, and is aimed at improving conversational English and increasing understanding of the local culture. Servas hosts offer one month home stay visits for SYLE participants.

Diversity Dinners foster cross-cultural communication and understanding through collaborative hospitality. Groups of 10 gather in members’ homes for dinner and conversation.

Campus Connections with Servas aids and enhances academic travelers’ experiences. Faculty and students coming to the US from abroad can greatly enrich their experiences by joining US Servas. Additionally, US Servas extends an open invitation to attend the Annual Conferences to all Servas members, as well as anyone interested in Servas.

Making Connections project participants have the opportunity to work with individuals from over 100 countries, building bridges of understanding between people. Projects can be initiated.
anywhere: big cities, suburbs, or rural areas. *Making Connections* projects are also a great way for Servas members who receive few travelers to attract more of them. Ideas for work projects or activities can spring from social issues such as political or religious intolerance, human rights abuses, racism, indigenous peoples’ rights, extreme poverty and the exploitation of labor and the environment. Alternatively, they can be leisure activities such as mountain hikes, waterfall tours, paddling trips, birding, or fishing excursions. Servas projects can also be organized in collaboration with other groups, such as our NGO partners or with other organizations, such as Volunteers for Peace.

*Making Connection* projects are open to ALL Servas members. If either individuals or groups are interested in organizing an activity or project, contact the US Servas office. Provide the name of your event or project, the mission, the date & time, the maximum number of participants, requests for host families, and contact information. The event can be publicized on the US Servas website and also on the new Servas International website.

“As each experience took me deeper, the disorganized piece of the jigsaw puzzle began to create a picture. I began to realize how totally interconnected everything is - how social, economic, political and personal relations not only fit together into a complex world, but how every little happening sends a ripple through the whole ocean of humanity. Everything has a cause and an effect. Nothing happens in isolation. Little by little I discovered the wholeness of the global human family, its inspiring aspects and its depressing ones, and its total interdependence”. Bob Luitweiler
2017 Annual Conference

Making a Difference

Friday July 21

3:20 Tour of the Capitol Building

5 – 9 p.m. Opening reception on Capitol Hill in the Gold Room of the Rayburn Building room 2168. (sponsored by Rep Barbara Lee, Oakland, OR). Meal catered by Capitol Host Catering

Saturday July 22

9 am – 4:30 p.m. Speakers/workshops* at the Friends Meeting of Washington – catered lunch served

6 – 8 p.m. 9th Annual Korean War Armistice Day Peace Concert & Vigil at the Lincoln Memorial

Sunday July 23

9 – 1:30 Speakers/workshops* at Capitol Skyline Hotel (10 I street SW Washington, DC)

2:00 Free tour of Washington DC led by Servas host, Hayden Wetzel (professional tour guide)

*Speakers/workshops:

- Legacy International Representative - an international capacity building organization specializing in peace-building, social entrepreneurs, leadership training, and dialogue.
- Presentation on Azerbaijan political prisoners Tamara Grigoryeva of Freedom House
- Servas and the UN: Jeanne Devine, Mary Jane Mikuriya, Earlene Cruz plus Rachel Bowen Pittman of UNA-USA
- Youth for Understanding international exchange program
- Eating and Dancing Around the World -- Earlene Cruz about dance in Uganda and Whole Foods support of third world entrepreneurs
- Street Sense representative -- a DC newspaper written and sold by DC homeless
- Annual Membership meeting including financial report from the Treasurer and announcement of election results for Board of Directors
- Election of Nominating Committee for 2018

Lodging

- A block of rooms has been reserved at the Tysons Corner Marriott (near Dulles airport and the metro) Rooms are $89 plus tax. To reserve a room at this rate tell them you are with US Servas. Website: Tysons Corner Marriott

- Local Servas hosts

- Other – local family or friends, vacation rentals, B&B, other hotels, hostels [Washington DC hostels]
US Servas is Online

Follow us on Twitter
twitter.com/USServas

Send us your latest travel and hosting stories
info@usservas.org

Visit our Website
www.usservas.org

Our new website has launched!
Take a look if you haven’t checked in lately. All members will be asked to set up a new password at their first log in. Feedback welcome. 707-825-1714. Call for assistance or a guided tour!