

NENY RPCV Meeting Notes
Wednesday, Aug 01, 2006

Agenda items:

- Berry good evening
- Treasurer report
 - Calendars
 - Garage sale
 - Dues
- Webmaster wanted
- Help with 501c3 status
- Summer party, Aug 19th
- Film anyone?
- Next meeting, Sept 4th
- Presenter: Yvonne on Nepal

Food & Formalities:

Lured by the promise of plump blueberries, a half dozen hearty soles braved the heat to kick off reap the fruits of summer. Fortunately, the berry patch was just beyond John & Barbara's back door. Inside awaited 18 folks with salads, deserts and main meals (and beer & wine, of course). Thanks for our blueberry-growing host & hostess for a cool & comfy meeting in their home.

Treasurer's Report:

While Steve Gottlieb gave a precise accounting of our economic status last month, this month, Jeanette Gottlieb simply stated that we have some money, but need to raise more. We anticipate bringing in money on calendars, the garage sale and dues.

Calendars: Calendars can be purchased for \$10. They make great gifts, so you can buy a few yourself, but if you think you can sell them at work or some other place, talk to Jeanette about the cash arrangement. sgott@albanylaw.edu

Garage sale: Our ever successful spring garage sale was postponed because of Jeanette's foot cast. But it's in the works for sometime in September. Bring your garage sale items to next month's meeting (which will conveniently be at the Gottlieb's home). If you can't come to the meeting, contact Jeanette. sgott@albanylaw.edu

Dues: Reminder... the local chapter gets kickbacks* on dues to National. Terry will bring National RPCV applications next month for those of us who can never remember to pay dues. If you can't come to the meeting, contact Terry (who's email I don't have, so either contact the webmaster at tc8050@albany.edu or go to the membership website here <http://www.rpcv-neny.org/membership.htm>).

*a percentage goes to local chapters

Webmaster:

We are looking for someone to volunteer to update the website. The job comprises of an evening or two each month to update events and next meeting specifics and pressing the "approve" button when someone requests to join the mailing list. Tim will train you if need be. tc8050@albany.edu

Help needed: Seeking experience with 501c3 start-up
Harry & Joan Thornhill are trying to help an (African?) school attain 501c3 status so the school can take tax-free donations. Harry & Joan can do the paperwork and footwork, but need some guidance. Please contact them at thorn@nycap.rr.com.

Summer Party: Saturday, August 19th, starting at 2pm.
Tim and Tracy will host the summer party on August 19th at their home. A map will be posted at <http://www.rpcv-neny.org/>

Film: Bill Batt has the documentary film "Power of Community – How Cuba Survived Peak Oil." The website gives lots of info & nice pictures, and there are plenty of reviews of the film on the web as well <http://www.communitysolution.org/cuba.html>, Contact Bill if interested in watching it. hwbatt@yahoo.com

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 4th
Presenter will be ??? Kathy on her experience in India ???

Program: Yvonne went to Nepal on a USAID funded program called "Farmer to Farmer" which is administered through WinRock International <http://www.winrock.org/>. Her slide show should be on the web soon.

Why should the USDA's NY State Plant Health Director go to Nepal?

Aside from seemingly being a huge adventure, a cooperative of nearly 2000 farmers in Nepal grow vegetables for export to India. Nepal specializes in winter crops, which can be grown in the summer due to the cool climate. But Nepalese farmers need to be in compliance with India's import regulations in order to bring their crops to India's warm-climate markets. India wants pest risk assessments on all imports, but Nepalese farmers can't afford technical tests. Yvonne has spent much of her career dealing with import/export regulations and plant pest mitigation ...making her the perfect candidate for this project.

Yvonne visited farms and border sites and addressed the problem on two fronts. She gave a 3-day training program on export and quarantine to local farmers and she advised the Nepalese government on things she saw that could be improved upon in order to facilitate product exportability.

She stayed at a research station that had fields at every climate at every elevation all the way up the mountain. She had a translator who was a PhD plant pathologist (Nepalese trained in the UK) and a driver who could navigate the windy roads bordered by steep cliffs (horns are common).

But what's the real story?

Yvonne visited temples and gardens and enjoyed the local food and culture. She got a quick glimpse of the Himalayas here and there when the clouds cleared briefly.

She pointed out some of the dichotomies of developing nations...

- Roads are poor, but everyone electricity, cell phones and the internet were everywhere.
- Nepal is remote, but even small villages are familiar with western culture – educated people are trained in India or Europe.

- Nepal is the 13th poorest country in the world, but children were dressed in perfectly pressed white school uniforms.
- Women traditionally stand behind thickly shuttered windows to hide them from men in the outside world, but women seem to play a crucial role in the work force. There were plenty of women in agriculture and many hold jobs in visible sectors, such as road works.

But, the most fascinating take-home message is...

- She went to advise the farmers and the government on improving the exportability of their crops, but really...
...whether your product gets through the border is all about bribery!