

Servas Canada

Newsletter 7 - March 2003

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We are sure you have been waiting impatiently for this latest issue of the Servas Canada newsletter, and wondering why it hasn't turned up in your mailbox sooner! The reason for the delay has been a few changes in the personal and professional life of your Newsletter Editor which have prevented me, until now, from assembling the Servas news that has been accumulating over the last few months.

So we hope you are now even more eager to learn of goings-on in your Servas world. Please continue to send news, ideas, comments and suggestions to

Jamie Syer

R.R. 2, Sundre, AB T0M 1X0

NEW NATIONAL SECRETARY: PENNY PATTISON

In December 2002, Penny Pattison of Victoria, BC took over the role of National Secretary for Servas Canada, after the resignation of Gerry Staring.

Penny has been a Servas traveller since 1983, and host since 1985. She quickly fell in love with the Servas goals and ideals, and has had some unforgettable experiences as a traveller and a host.

One particularly special travel experience was in Brazil in the late 1980s, with a host whose hometown was not even on most maps! After 3 years on the host list, Joao had not been contacted by a Servas traveller until Penny called. To get there involved a 9 hour overnight

bus ride. Joao met her and welcomed her into his family and life. In the next couple of days, they celebrated Mother's Day with Joao's family, attended 2 weddings, toured a coffee plantation, painted signs for Joao's architectural projects, and chatted for hours about all sorts of things. Joao even drove Penny on to her next destination. A life-long friendship was born!

Penny became the Vancouver Island Coordinator in 1999, after serving as backup to John Walker for many years. She also joined the Servas Canada Board in that same year.

Penny believes that Servas should continue to concentrate on what we do well: fostering peace through individual contacts. She will work closely with the strong and dedicated Servas Canada Board, and strive to maintain the wonderful organization that we have here in Canada and around the world. Penny is also our purveyor of famous Servas Mugs. To order yours, contact her at canada@servas.org

TALKING PEACE IN A TIME OF WAR

MESSAGES FROM SERVAS INTERNATIONAL AND SERVAS BRITAIN

Esteemed Servas Friends everywhere,

As Servas International Peace Secretary, I'm sharing with you some thoughts about acting towards reducing the present danger of war between the USA and Iraq. Globally, thousands of Servas members are individually working every day, in many ways, as each of them deems best: building Peace. Through its constant efforts to attract global peace and understanding for humankind through effective meetings between travelers and hosts, Servas is extremely useful in preventing war, and, copied by many, has been proactive in this way for over half a century: 50 long years of spreading peace and understanding. Servas and the United Nations were born at about the same time, with a similar purpose. Global peace is unavoidable!, and the more we do to attract peace, the sooner we'll reach it. In addition to the thousands of constant peacebuilding dialogues between Servas hosts and travelers, Servas International uses its consultative status with the United Nations, as well as its many contacts with other Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations to build peace and understanding among the peoples of the earth. Let's redouble our efforts in one of the most effective Servas ways: by increasing the number of Servas hosts and travelers! Let's remind those who need to hear it that in a war there are only losers and no winners.

In Servas,
Marco Kappenberger

Dear Friends in Servas,

At a recent national meeting of Servas Britain, we shared views, feelings and comments about the worsening international situation and the increasing possibility of war between the United States of America and Iraq. We were very conscious of the peace origins of Servas and felt that the threat of war requires more active involvement of Servas members in raising concerns and fostering sharing among people on all sides.

I was asked to write to you as representatives of Servas in the countries most closely affected by the possible conflict. Servas Britain would like to know what views are being

shared among Servas members in your country and what action is the organisation or other affiliated ones taking in the light of this threat? Also what steps might be possible for you to approach Servas members or the organisation in other countries to share experiences and promote understanding?

In these days and in such times all contact (even a simple e-mail) will contribute to building peace. Please send us some news of Servas peace work and let us know what more we can do to prevent this war and build peace.

Yours in peace.

Peter Woodall

Peace Secretary Servas Britain

CORRESPONDENCE

FROM SERVAS HOSTS IN CANADA AND ABROAD

from **Jo Hauser:**

Thought it might be useful to send you my comments about meals for Servas guests. Our Servas guests join our family for the duration of their stay. If we have a meal, our guests will join us for that meal if they are at home. As we lead busy lives we are often not at home at supper time, we tell our guests this before they arrive and review the meals that we will be home for when they do arrive. If we are not home for a meal we tell our guests that they can eat anything in the fridge if they want; most eat out. We certainly always offer breakfast, it's what we eat for breakfast - nothing fancy, cereal, toast and coffee or tea. We feel that Servas guests should experience life in Canada the way we live it, so we don't change our planned activities when the guests are with us, and we invite them to join us when we can.

from **Livette Ouellet:**

As a member of Servas since 1998, I have had the pleasure of travelling across Canada, and the south of France, on my own. For me, because each person is unique, every time the door opens at the house of a new Servas friend, I marvel again at how we are all different, yet at the same time, all the same. What a beautiful opportunity this gives us in this era of such fragile peace.

from **Alice Davies:**

I have never travelled with Servas. I've always been a host. It has been a great experience over a long time (more than 30 years). I wish Servas the best and I pass my literature on to friends who might become members. Servas is a quiet antidote to the mostly trashy and ill guided daily "news". What would happen if Servas and the countless and effective NGOs would become news even for one day a week? It might better unite those of good will and peace.

from **Carl and Roseann Branston:**

London/Kitchener area hosts along with Windsor hosts participated in a fall gathering on Saturday, October 5th at Neil & Norma Downies' in Chatham, Ontario. We were pleased to

welcome hosts Gwen & Leon Gregg of Brisbane, Australia to join in the fun. We were invited to attend Canada's only 19th-century 'Pleasure Faire' plus a re-enactment of an 1812 battle; followed by a pot luck at the Downies'. Elizabeth Sebestyen gave us an update on the news from Servas Canada board. Michael Johnson spoke on his role with Servas and shared information from Servas International.

from **Olanrewaju A. Akinlolu** (Nigeria):

It gives me great pleasure to make Servas contact and write to you from Nigeria. I'm a youth and belongs to a servas host family here in Nigeria.

How are your activities in Servas Canada? My Servas experience has continue to give me a hunch to learn about places and events that is unique to an average African and far away from home. I read about the Winter Canival in Quebec Canada and would want to read from someone who have attended the Carnival. Perhaps you may know some one who will be willing to share his or her experience with me. I am always excited about hearing other people's culture, this opportunity Servas has provided.

Many thanks for your kind attention. Looking forward to hear from you.

In peace, **Olanrewaju A. Akinlolu**.

BOOK REVIEW

A book review by **Jennifer Harrison**, Servas host and traveller since the 1970's

It was last Christmas when I came across a book entitled NO PLASTER SAINT, The Life of Mildred Osterhous Fahrni, by Nancy Nickerbocker, Talonbooks, 2001. I had known Mildred Fahrni briefly as a Servas host and peace activist when I was living in Vancouver in the late 1970's. My husband and I had been BC coordinators of Servas for two years and Mildred had come to our home for two annual Servas host gatherings, and we had been invited to hers to hear more of her interests. At the time she was about 80 years old, still hosting Servas travellers, as well as quietly pursuing other peace activities, and writing her memoirs. But I really had no idea how much she had fought for a peaceable world . I found the book to be a very interesting documentary of Mildred's life, and to realize what one person can do in the pursuit of peace and multiculturalism. She had connections with many social activists such as J.S. Woodsworth, Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and others. Mildred was a "crusading socialist and an absolute pacifist who lived her beliefs in word and deed. She travelled the world and found that peace begins at home". I feel that Mildred's life and accomplishments are an example of what one person with dedication and courage can do to promote peace and social justice in our present world. Her biography is definitely worth reading as an inspiration for us all!

REPORT FROM THE SERVAS CANADA BOARD MEETING

The Servas Canada Board meets face-to-face every three years. The most recent meeting was in Montreal in November 2002. The agenda covered both domestic and international

topics, and went on for a full 2 days. Here are a few highlights:

- After receiving much positive feedback, the Board agreed to fund the mailing of a Canada host list to every host again next year. We will also continue the policy of allowing Canadian hosts to travel without a Letter of Introduction within Canada. Hosts would refer to their listing in the host book to identify themselves. Michael Johnson reminded us that it is strictly against Servas rules to use host email addresses for other organizational activities and causes.
- The Board approved a plan to promote more youth involvement in Servas, targetting people up to age 26. Julie Dotsch will fill the role of Youth Coordinator, and has also joined the Board. Servas Canada is in the fortunate position of operating with a surplus of funds in most years. This is basically because we keep our expenses quite low, and have a good number of travellers each year. A few years ago, the Board agreed that we would systematically reduce our surplus by funding various worthwhile initiatives. This year, we agreed to support the following causes:
 1. A directed donation through the Development Fund Committee (DFC) for the SI Info Comm Team, who requested funds for infrastructure costs to support their work.
 2. Funds to the DFC for use at their discretion.
 3. Support for a Canadian pilot project to have two Servas hosts from "poorer" Servas nations spend 2-3 weeks visiting hosts on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The pilot idea grew from memories of wonderful visits that the Vancouver Island hosts had experienced in other countries, and their wish to 'return the favour' to long time hosts who would not normally be able to travel to Canada with Servas.
 4. Servas Canada donates 3% of our previous year's gross revenue to a worthwhile cause. Our Peace Secretary recommended several excellent projects, and this year we chose to donate to Interpares, a 27 year old Canadian-founded organization that cooperates with other organizations working at the grass roots level.
 5. Depending on future funds, additional donations to the DFC are anticipated.

PROPOSED CANADA-USA JOINT MEETING IN 2005

The US Servas Board has approached Servas Canada suggesting that we hold a joint meeting in the summer of 2005. US Servas has an annual conference each year in different cities around the USA. By contrast, Servas Canada has never had meetings annually. The concept would be to have a 2-day meeting with a combination of speakers and other events, along with plenty of opportunity for interaction among attendees.

We would look for a university campus in the summer, to allow us to find reasonably priced accommodations for those attending. We would also look at setting up some related activities that could be enjoyed either before or after the conference itself. At some time during the conference, the US would hold their Annual General Meeting, and we would take

the opportunity to hold a separate Canadian meeting.

All Canadian and US hosts would be welcome to attend the conference. Before we commit time, effort and money to a joint meeting, we'd like to know if Canadian Servas hosts would be interested in attending a Canada-USA conference in 2005. Specifically, would you attend such a meeting:

- in the Vancouver/Seattle area
- in some other location
- during the summer
- at some other time
- under any other conditions?

Please send your comments to:

Penny Pattison

1442 Brooke St., Victoria BC V8S 1M3.

YOUR SERVAS TEAM: KEY CONTACTS

Penny Pattison, National Secretary

Benny Beattie, Assistant National Secretary

Elizabeth Sebestyen, Treasurer

Sandy Yudin, Foreign Host Lists

Lesley Regnier, Peace Secretary

Michael Johnson, Area Coordinator

Sylvia Krogh, Past Assistant National Secretary

Julie Dotsch, Youth Coordinator

Other key people:

Jim Leask, Host List Database

Robert Dar-Woon, Newsletter Editor

Gerry Staring, Past National Secretary, and 2003 Host List producer