

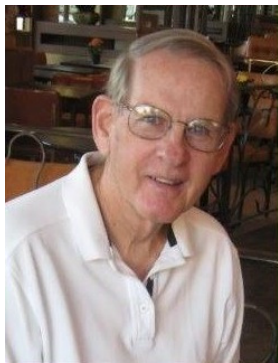


# THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF GREATER ATLANTA NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER • DECEMBER • 2014

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER:



### Where Is Friendship Force International Headed?

The Strategic Plan for 2015-2018

An open discussion of that question was held at our annual meeting October 19. I gave a brief report in an email News Flash, but the liveliness of that discussion leads me to think you want to know more. None of us need reminding that we are getting older. In a memo in September to Club Presidents and "leadership", FFI Board Chairman Jack Mullen described our situation this way, "*The aging of our network and the decline in hosting capacity are undermining our growth while demand for new programs and new ways of doing things is changing our organization.*" He goes on to present statistical tables and graphs. From 2012 to this year, the number of international club-to-club ambassadors has dropped 12%, from 3,772 to 3,322. Meanwhile domestic exchange participants have increased 70%, from 436 to 744. FFI cruise participants have gone from 21 to 300, but the cruise operator has cancelled its involvement with FFI.

Friendship Force depends on the fees paid by ambassadors. A graph accompanying the memo illustrates that about half of the club-to-club exchanges had only 15 or fewer ambassadors. Forty new clubs were formed during this period, but most need to build their hosting capacity. More ambassadors are needed, preferably 20 in each exchange. That of course requires more hosting capacity. FFI suggests non-members should be invited to host.

With a view toward completing the FFI Strategic Plan for 2015-2018 Chairman Mullen asked club presidents to complete a survey. The first question is "*Is your club willing to endorse a proposed fill-the-seat policy?*" The essence of this policy is that exchanges that aren't filled 100 days before the departure date would be advertised in FFI's catalog, thus opening up the exchange to members of other clubs, friends of members and other non-members.

We have had members of other clubs participate in our outbound exchanges, and everything went smoothly. On the other hand, we could be opening our exchanges to anyone worldwide. At our annual meeting this possibility triggered fears about who might apply. My survey answer was a qualified *Yes*. There must be ways to vet applicants and assure ourselves of the safety of our group.

The memo then led into a commentary on the board's thinking as it relates specifically to e-memberships. It paralleled the comments at our annual meeting. The next survey question was "*Does your club agree with that approach (e-memberships) in order to increase FFI's visibility around the world and increase participation in exchanges in clubs?*" It occurred to me that that is an awful lot to expect from simply opening Friendship Force to e-memberships. Once again I answered with a qualified *Yes*.

*(Continued)*

What then can we take away from this? First, the number of exchanges may continue to decline, but they will be working to improve their revenue by filling 20 hosting slots on as many exchanges as possible. This probably also means more Americans will break away from their home clubs and visit the destinations they want by joining other clubs' exchanges. There will likely be more non-traditional trips, and those will have more educational content. No doubt they will seek a new arrangement with a different cruise line.

But what's missing here? It is obvious we need younger members. It appears they have not addressed some of the issues we knew about from the outset of this strategic planning process. How do you attract adults in younger age cohorts? How do you run cost-effective exchanges for people who have limited vacation time? How do you continue to have programs that appeal to the over-65 set? It seems to me they are making assumptions that they haven't spelled out for the rest of us. The questions I would like to start with are, "Who is our target customer?" and "What does he/she want?"

In friendship,

*Harvey*

[mbrickley@bellsouth.net](mailto:mbrickley@bellsouth.net)

**Editor's Note:** *Please see information regarding the FFI Global Membership Survey later in this Newsletter.*

## 2014 FFGA ANNUAL MEETING: 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷

### **John Wilhelm Receives the Wayne Smith Award at Mimi's Café during the FFGA Annual Meeting.**



John and Glenda Wilhelm pose with the medallion and certificate of the Wayne Smith Award which was presented to John during FFGA's recent Annual General Membership meeting. This worldwide prestigious award is named for the founder of the Friendship Force and is only bestowed upon a club's most outstanding member.

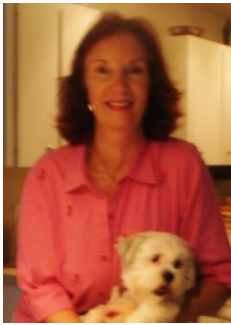
The Wilhelm's joined Friendship Force in the year 2000. Since that time John has been instrumental in furthering the mission and ideals of the organization at a multitude of levels. He has served as Exchange Director on many occasions and mentored several others. He has also acted as the coordinator and exchange director for several Open World Leadership programs. During these exchanges he has been able to use his great knowledge of Atlanta and its notable leaders and organizations to enhance the experiences of delegates from several foreign countries. Mr. Wilhelm has served as both Vice President and President of the Friendship Force of Greater Atlanta, and as Friendship Force International's Field Representative for the Southeastern Region of the United States. He has consistently supported every effort of the club to increase its membership and has been responsible for recruiting several new members. Mr. Wilhelm co-founded a program to home host military officers attending courses at Fort Benning, Georgia over a period of three years. The officers represented 76 foreign countries and spent a weekend with their Atlanta hosts. This resulted in knowledge of the Friendship Force in many nations that were unaware of its existence and resulted in several international one-on-one friendships that endure to this date.

John Wilhelm and his wife Glenda are gracious hosts, well-mannered and considerate of others. They have frequently shared their home and their table on behalf of the Friendship Force on numerous social and business occasions. We may rest assured that they will continue to give selflessly of their time and efforts to make ours a more effective organization as it too promotes the ideals of the Friendship Force.

### **Election of the 2015 FFGA Board of Directors.**

The Nominating Committee consisting of Cynthia Williams, Eunice Luke and Kent Vickers presented the following slate of members who have consented to stand for election to the 2015 Board of Directors. No other nominations from the FFGA members present were noted, and a vote was taken and passed electing the following members to the board: **President** Harvey Brickley; **Vice President** Sue Mills; **Treasurer** Bonnie Evans; **Secretary** Beverly McCray. All of the officers elected were incumbents from the 2014 board except Sue Mills, who replaced Eunice Luke as Vice President. Eunice retires, with thanks, after serving for the past two years. Please see a brief profile of Sue Mills on the next page. To view the profiles of the other board members, please see the Newsletter for Jan-Feb 2014 by clicking on this link: <http://sdrv.ms/K0sCpc>.

## Meet Susan Mills, your new FFGA Vice President for 2015.



Susan Mills was born in New York City but lived the majority of her life in Iowa, where she worked at Iowa State University, in Ames. During her career she was employed as a college/university program administrator and states she loved every moment of it. Some of the positions in which she worked were: admissions, financial aid, housing, disability services, academic advising, and teacher certification. Sue, (as she prefers to be called), retired in the fall of 2011 from the community college/state college system in the state of Florida and moved to the Atlanta area to be near her two grown daughters and her grandchildren, ages three and five years. She currently resides in the city of Alpharetta and shares her abode with Presley, a ten-year-old Lhasa Apso and with a calico cat named Alley that is fifteen years old and has been with her since her days living in Iowa.

Ms. Mills has traveled extensively, including a period during which she taught English as a foreign language in Colombia, South America. She also lived in Glasgow, Scotland for a month as part of a university staff exchange program and has visited Ireland twice. Many of her vacations have been spent in the eastern Caribbean.

Since joining FFGA early in 2012 Sue has been the epitome of the ideal Friendship Force member. She has home hosted a representative from Australia and has led a group to that country as Exchange Director; She has assisted the Atlanta E.D. during the 2013 inbound Ukrainian exchange; has volunteered during World Friendship Day at the MedShare facility; has participated in two Decorator Show House events with the club; has attended several of the club's social activities, and last but not least, accepted a nomination to the Board of Directors as Vice President. Sue is looking forward to more travel with the Friendship Force and participating in its drive to expand the membership of FFGA.

### GETTING TO KNOW YOU:



**Mary Brickley** - A First-Person Article by Harvey Brickley:



Mary grew up in a rural community near Rochester, New York. Therefore she learned a lot about snow. When an offer to move south came along, she jumped at the opportunity, even though marrying me was a part of the bargain. We met in Boston, where I was in graduate school, having earned a B. S. in Biology at Skidmore College. Mary was working for Gillette in as a laboratory technician. Once we moved to Atlanta her career moved into the healthcare field. Her first Atlanta job was in a blood processing lab at the American Red Cross. Later Mary worked for commercial medical labs and for two different medical practices.

Work at the Red Cross ended with the birth of our daughter, Christina (or Tina). Brother Charley arrived 23 months later. For the twenty or so years after Tina's arrival our lives largely evolved around the lives of our children. I will spare you most of the details, but like the youth in Lake Wobegon, they are above average. As you know, children tend to beget more children, and today Mary's focus is on her grandchildren. Our daughter has two sons (11 and 8), and our son has two daughters (13 and 11). They all live within a half hour of our home in Atlanta, and each one is pursuing at least one athletic endeavor.

The one activity of Mary's that has been constant though most of our 49 years together is music. She has been a member of the choir at All Saints Episcopal Church for more than 47 years. It is an accomplished choir that has performed in Washington D.C. at the National Cathedral and in New York City at the Cathedral of St. John the Devine and Carnegie Hall. We also attend five or six concerts by the Atlanta Symphony each year.

Earlier this year Mary marked the 20th anniversary of her being a breast cancer survivor. She has served on the Board of the Atlanta chapter of the Susan G. Komen Foundation, as has our daughter.

In early 1977 Mary was listening to a new phenomenon in Atlanta radio programming: talk radio. The station was WRNG (Ring radio). They were talking about a new organization named the Friendship Force. It had the endorsement of Jimmy Carter, recently inaugurated President. Mary decided we wanted to participate and we did so by hosting a couple from Newcastle-Upon-Tyne beginning July 4, 1977. The following June we stayed with them in Newcastle. Thus began our on-and-off life of adventure with The Friendship Force. Other countries to which we have traveled to as Friendship Force ambassadors include Russia, Belgium, Germany, New Zealand and Costa Rica.



## THE SPICE OF LIFE

By Anne Earle



We Friendship Force members are seasoned travelers and generally "When in Rome," we eat what the Romans offer us. Sometimes we regret this. Sometimes we discover a new tasty delight that we are glad we were adventurous enough to try. Sometimes we like it until we find out what it is. At least we have a food story to tell back home. Your inquisitive reporter asked several members at the annual meeting about what – memorable -- disgusting -- embarrassing and/or amusing stories about food they have had on their travels, and here they are for your amusement and edification.

### Things That Look Like Chicken

Janet Martin reported that when in Australia she asked her hostess to serve kangaroo. "She went to the local Aldi's food market, bought some and grilled it on the "barbie". It tastes like chicken, looks like beef and was surprisingly good."

Kent Vickers told his hosts in Rostov-on-Don in no uncertain terms that "I CANNOT EAT SEAFOOD!" He was served cubes of meat in a bowl of soup containing what looked like chicken. After biting into it he discovered it was sturgeon. He then had to immediately leave the table.

Marilyn Darmody was repeatedly served something that looked like chicken in China, but she and Bill suspected it was dog. "We thought we'd better not ask."

### Things You Eat to be a Good Sport

Cynthia Williams was in Siberia about to take a boat trip on Lake Baikal, when she participated in a traditional ceremony designed to appease the god of the lake. A shaman served everyone fish jerky which she reports "was the worst stuff I've ever put in my mouth. It was like chewing sawdust, and kept getting bigger and there was nothing to wash it down with but vodka!" Her sacrifice was worth it because they had a safe trip on the lake.

Sue Mills was served shark in Ireland with "Black Death," a locally made whiskey with which to wash it down. Fortunately, she survived.

Well-known adventuress Joyce Mell only shook her head and grimaced as she described the fish she ate in Iceland. The locals proudly explained they had caught it, sliced it, buried it for three months, and then hung it outside for six months to age to perfection.

Pat Holt and her hosts in Japan collected grasshoppers from the rice fields and put them in sacks. At home they were fried in teriyaki sauce. "They had a candied taste that I liked, except for the legs that would stick out of your mouth," she said.

Glenda Wilhelm was innocently riding on a bus in Georgia when the driver spied a fisherman on a river and pulled over. "He asked for some fish about yea long ("yea" was about 3 inches). We were to eat these on the spot, uncooked and whole." When asked how they tasted, she looked incredulous, and replied "Do you think I was really stupid enough to eat them?"

**Editor's Note:** *Please keep an eye out for future comedic commentary from columnist Anne Earle regarding randomly selected FFGA related items that you may enjoy reading about in the Newsletter.*





**The 37<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Friendship Force International:** Apparently the conference in Auckland New Zealand was once again a success enjoyed by many of the worldwide members with one notable exception. The only folks from the Atlanta area were all the FFI staff personnel. Granted that New Zealand is a long way further than New Orleans was last year, I am sure that was the reason none of us attended this year. Maybe we can do a little better representing our area next year for the 38th World Conference, to be held August 28 thru 30 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. If you would like to view the happenings at the latest conference please visit the Friendship Force home page at <http://www.thefriendshipforce.org>.

One of the major presentations at this year's conference dealt with the development of the strategic plan for the onward progress of the Friendship Force during the years 2015 through 2018 – a work still being polished to fruition. The crux of this plan is based on the replies to a global membership survey conducted by email last summer to gauge the opinions, experiences and possible willingness to help grow the organization. The results of that survey are very interesting, and a statistical review may be found by clicking on the following link for a view of the portable document file (PDF): <http://1drv.ms/1pZCO5s>. It is a bit lengthy, so be sure to allow some time for it to download to your computer.



**Minutes of the FFGA Board of Directors meetings:** To review the FFGA Board of Directors minutes from the October 2014 board meeting, the Annual General Membership meeting held on October 19th and the board meeting held on November 9th please use the links provided below:

- October Board Meeting – <http://1drv.ms/1AJhDZG>
- Annual General Membership Meeting – <http://1drv.ms/1AJjwFI>
- November Board Meeting – <http://1drv.ms/1vmZi1L>

Please remember to depress and hold down the "Ctrl" key on your keyboard while clicking on the links. If they do not open, copy the link individually into the address bar of your internet browser. Allow time for the link to open.



**New Memberships:** The Friendship Force of Greater Atlanta is pleased to welcome the following new member to our club and is looking forward to having her join us during future social activities and on exchanges yet to come:

Marva Jennings, who resides in Newnan, Georgia and is a friend of FFGA Secretary Beverly McCray.



**Just a reminder:** Dues for the 2015 membership year are due by no later than December 31st. If you have not yet renewed, please do so as soon as possible so that Membership Chair Anne Earle can finish producing the club directory as soon after January 1st as she can.

Although club dues have increased this year, compared to the \$50 to \$75 dollars other U.S. clubs are paying, FFGA's dues are still a bargain. They are only \$30 for an individual and \$40 for a family membership (two or more people at the same address).

You may renew your membership with Mrs. Earle at the Annual Holiday Party at the Georgian Club on December 6th or you may remit your dues by mailing your personal check, made payable to FFGA, to Anne at the following address: **Mrs. Anne Earle / 715 Clairemont Avenue / Decatur, GA 30030**



**Please Join Us:** The holiday party is just a few days away, and your Social Planning Committee has pulled out all of the stops to present one of the best Annual Holiday Parties that the club has ever had. This year we will return to the beautiful Georgian Club. The view from the towering 17th floor is gorgeous, the cuisine is fabulous and the holiday cheer and friendliness is marvelous. See the attached flyer for full details. Please remember that this is a classy location and attire for those attending is "Business": - Men Coat & Tie / Women Dress or Pant Suit.

## EXCHANGE INFORMATION:



**The Inbound Exchange from Trujillo, Peru**, tentatively scheduled for March 2015 to visit both the Atlanta and the Central Arizona FF clubs, has now been canceled. FFGA President Harvey Brickley has sent the following message: "With the blessing of Laura Romero (Program Services coordinator) at FFI I have withdrawn our participation in the hosting of Trujillo, Peru. The Peruvian exchange director has been unable or unwilling to specify the dates for our participation. The closest we came to having a date was "early March." They could not say whether they would go to Phoenix first or come to Atlanta first. We are now about 108 days from March 1, and that is not sufficient time to pull a good exchange together. All in all, they never acted as if they wanted to come here. After the first of the year I'll see whether we can create an outbound exchange for our club in 2015".



**While we deal with the Polar Vortexes this winter**, FFGA Ex-President Cynthia Williams and members Stan and Wanda Bokoski will be soaking up rays and "parlez-voing" (sic), with French speaking natives on the sunny Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe. There they will be taking part in one of FFI's relatively new Foreign Language Immersion Exchanges. For a period of two weeks in February they will experience life in the islands as French speakers. If you have a fairly good skill speaking a foreign language you might enjoy one of many fascinating exchanges available in the FFI catalog for 2015. Check it out!



**Selection of Exchange Destinations for 2016:** In FFGA Newsflash 14-07, dated 20 October 2014, President Brickley requested that the membership make their selections of outbound destinations they would be willing to travel to, on an exchange in the year 2016. He asked the members to name three foreign and three domestic destinations, in order of preference that they would be willing to travel to, and email their selections to him.

The response was minimal, and there were only eight members voting. Following are the results from those who did send an email to him: Of the foreign destinations there were 18 votes cast; all but three of those votes were for a wide variety of European countries. The top vote getter (with 5 votes) was Switzerland, where there is only one club (in Solothurn, population about 17,000) with 28 members. At the Annual Meeting we had 22 people sign up as interested in participating in a reciprocal exchange to Braunschweig-Peine, Germany. (This was a destination that we selected for 2015 but it was rejected because they already had agreed to host London, England for that year). Therefore President Brickley has submitted these three destinations, in order of preference to FFI: #1 Braunschweig-Peine, Germany, #2 Solothurn, Switzerland and #3 Europe at large.

Regarding domestic exchanges; Seven voters came up with 15 different destinations, and one did not submit any. Cheyenne, Wyoming led the selections with just 4 votes. President Brickley believes we need to discuss domestic possibilities further early next year and negotiate with other U.S. FF clubs to better weigh our prospects directly.

**One final Editor's Note:** As was mentioned in the President's Corner of the previous FFGA Newsletter, I have decided to step down from the committee position of FFGA News Editor on the Board of Directors as of the 31st of December. I have served in various committee positions for the last ten years, and although it has been rewarding in many ways, I believe it is time for someone else to step forward and take my current place. I also believe that if a person joins a club, they should be willing to perform some duty to advance its well-being and to aid in its progress. I am not physically going anywhere, and I will still be an active member of our club. So if any of you members are at all interested in being the editor and communicator for our club, I am more than willing to assist you in any way you feel is necessary. Just let President Brickley know. His phone number is 404-351-2033 and his email address is [mbrickley@bellsouth.net](mailto:mbrickley@bellsouth.net).



THE END

In Friendship,

Kent G. Vickers  
FFGA News Editor