

Buralarda

The Newsletter of Arkadaşlar, Friends of Turkey



Number 34, October 2011

A Time to Remember

Turkey Peace Corps Reunion 2011

By Peggy Hanson (T-1)



Photo from Sunday's March of the Flags
By Steve Poppick (T-10)

A few months ago, no one dreamed that more than 300 Arkadaşlar would sign up for the Peace Corps 50th global reunion. The last volunteer left Turkey in 1970! But they did, and the weekend of September 22-25 was a powerful coming-together of people who had not seen each other for years – in some cases, nearly 50 years.

Registration at the Virginian Suites in Arlington kicked things off. "Oh, it's you!" could be heard on all sides. "Remember when...?" As usual, Linda Scheffer (T-8) and Sandy Anderson (T-13) carried the ball, preparing the necessary mountains of paper and name tags, and collecting the money. The volunteer spirit was alive and well within the hordes registering, and many other people helped once they got there.

The Turkish Embassy reception Friday night at the most beautiful of ambassadorial residences could not help being a highlight. Our hosts were gracious, the food delicious, the surroundings breathtaking – and the residence has the added historical footnote of having been the home of Ahmet Ertegun and his brother, long before Ahmet became a multi-millionaire in the recording industry in Hollywood. Their ambassador

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father allowed them to hold jazz fests every week, inviting musicians who because of their race were not allowed into many Washington establishments. The same building had been the Embassy in 1962 when Turkey I was invited prior to leaving for Ankara.

Following the Embassy reception, many RPCVs attended the elegant staff reception at the National Building Museum, painstakingly organized by Arkadaşlar's own Ken Hill (T-9). Others attended parties of their respective groups.

The group coordinators, headed and organized by Sandy Anderson, did a masterful job of arranging meetings and dinners for each group. The group gatherings on Friday and Saturday nights were most poignant and meaningful, as people shared the funny times, the hard times, the good times of our tours of duty in Turkey. With each reunion, a group grows closer and we realize what those two years long ago did for entwining us with each other. We also can't help remembering those who are no longer with us. On Friday morning the Peace Corps held a



Plenary Session Panelists Jim Hanson, Rauf Denктаş,
Heath Lowry & Jim Merz

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A Time to Remember

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roundtable of several "I" volunteers, including our own Steve Allen (T-1). Sargent Shriver had played a major role in recruitment in the early days – Steve first met him in a bar!

The big Plenary Session on Saturday afternoon, chaired by Mike Jewell (T-1), was the source of much information as well as being a major shopping opportunity for items from one of our sponsored organizations, Anatolian Artisans, headed by Yıldız Yağcı. Jim Hanson, a long-time development economist, outlined the amazing progress Turkey has made since the Peace Corps arrived there 49 years ago. Turkey's GDP is now the 17th largest in the world; compared to 1962, GDP per capita has grown from 7% to 20% of US, exports are 300 times larger, and foreign direct investment is over 100 times larger.

Jim Merz from the State Department outlined the US view of areas of mutual interest and disagreement, emphasizing the position that the US and Turkey have increasingly close bonds as allies and friends and are able to discuss issues with mutual respect. This was emphasized by the meeting of Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Obama in New York that very week at the UN. Rauf Alp Denктаş (III), grandson of the famed Cypriot leader, gave the Turkish point of view on the bilateral relationship. He, too, felt that things are going very well in spite of highly-publicized disparity of views on things like Palestine and Israel.

Princeton University professor, Heath Lowry (T-5), gave a compelling, possibly controversial, speech about how effective the current government in Turkey has been in several ways: avoiding mistakes of the past, giving the bulk of the Turkish population what it wants (respect for Islam and widespread development) and in its relationships with other countries, particularly in becoming a model for much of the Middle East and North Africa.

Mike took the opportunity of the Plenary Session to make a special presentation to "Amca" Dave Weinman, and award Peace Corps medals to Linda Scheffer and Sandy Anderson, without any of whom Arkadaşlar would not be what it is today.

After a short video of Turkey I and Turkey in 1962, İzmir University Professor Zafer Parlak gave a lively rundown of answers he has received in the course of his research on the effects of the Peace Corps in Turkey. He learned from Turks that

Sayın Arkadaşlar

By Mike Jewell



The reunion is over but I still feel a warm glow from seeing so many people again and some disappointment with having missed seeing others. More than one embassy staffer expressed astonishment to me at how much fun it was to party with us, and how knowledgeable we remain regarding Turkey. More than one said "the best reception this year." (Most of them there that night have only been here about a year)

I attribute their reaction to the fact that basically you are the same remarkably bright, committed, fun loving people that rolled into Turkey 40-50 years ago. Thanks so much for coming and sizleri yine bekleriz!

volunteers were not quite the spies and missionaries some had thought – in fact, lasting impressions were made on both Turks and volunteers.

He learned from RPCVs that their experience had been profound and life-changing. Before the group broke up, Bob Olson (T-2), presented his views on the Kurdish question in Turkey. Following the Plenary Session most participants headed out to wonderful dinners at local Turkish restaurants.

On Sunday, many of the RPCVs donned their classy shirts designed by Allan Gall (T-1), walked from President Kennedy's grave at Arlington and carried the Turkish flag across Memorial Bridge to the Lincoln Memorial. With pride in our hearts on a grey day we hoisted the flag of our "ikinci memleket."



Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery

Memories of the Arkadaşlar Reunion



Prof. Zafer Parlak



Full Ballroom



Prof. Heath Lowry



Mike & Linda



Judith Howe White (T-8) & Linda



Sandy & Dave

To see many more Great Reunion Photos visit the website: www.arkadaslar.info/

CUMHURIYET BAYRAM DINNERS - 2011

Please contact your local coordinator or TurkeyDost@aol.com to get information about gatherings

MASSACHUSETTS/NEW ENGLAND: Sunday, October 30, 1:00, Brookline Family Restaurant, 305 Washington Street, Brookline, 617-277-4466. No formal luncheon (since we've just had the BIG 50TH REUNION), but Lynn, Suzanne & Margaret are planning to have lunch, so just stop by if you'd like to join us. Lynn Maichle, Suzanne Rom, and Margaret Fearey.

NEW YORK CITY: Sunday, October 30, 12:00-3:00. Restaurant details will be available at a later date. Please contact Steve Poppick.

FLORIDA: October 28 or 29 and Location (in Orlando?) undetermined at this point. Those who wish to attend a Cumhuriyet celebration should contact Paul Kirwan or Lynda Özgür.

OREGON/CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON: Sunday, November 6, 5:00, potluck. Melissa Stewart.

WASHINGTON STATE: Please contact Dale & Ruth Hultengren.

WISCONSIN: Details will be available at a later date. Please contact Russ Whitesel or Ephraim Frankel.



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Visit us at:

www.arkadaslar.info/

Arkadaşlar Reunion September 22-25, 2011

*"Buralarda" means "hereabouts" or "somewhere around here" in Turkish.
It comes from an early dialogue in some of our Turkish language lessons:*

"Buralarda bir benzinci var mı?"

("Is there a gas station somewhere around here?")