

Information from an RPCV living in Conroe. He felt other Malaysia RPCVs might be interested.

Dear Fellow Malaysia RPCVs,

Selamat Sejahtera dan Apa Khabar!

We are writing to you on behalf of Friends of Malaysia (FoM)—the association of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who served in Malaysia. Many of you are already familiar with FoM and are members, but just to recap our history:

- Founded by 30 Malaysia RPCVs attending a National Peace Corps Association (the national organization of RPCVs) conference in 1989 at Kent State University who wanted to stay in contact with each other and to promote the third goal of the Peace Corps—RPCVs continuing a life of service. The initial group set out to find kindred spirits to join them by mailing the [first Friends of Malaysia newsletter](#) to 300 addresses cobbled together from their friendship networks.
- The newsletter soon became [Apa Khabar](#), an award-winning quarterly newsletter that continues to this day with memorable stories by Malaysia RPCVs, news of political and social events in Malaysia, and updates on current projects sponsored by FoM,
- Friends of Malaysia has contributed more than \$20,000 to Malaysian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) serving the public good in Malaysia, especially those supporting low-income populations and promoting environmental preservation ([recent FoM donations](#))
- [Advocacy for the continuing mission of the Peace Corps](#), including engaging RPCVs to meet with their Congressional representatives to urge support for the Peace Corps,
- Organizing [events and reunions of Malaysia RPCVs](#) at Peace Corps anniversary celebrations, Malaysian Embassy programs, and other venues.

News of these activities, however, has not reached most Malaysia RPCVs. The number of dues paying FoM members has been relatively small, never more than a few hundred of the thousands of PCVs who served in Malaysia. With the realization that the demographic clock is ticking on the aging base of Malaysia RPCVs, the FoM Board of Directors has decided to undertake a major project to connect with all Malaysia RPCVs before the Grim Reaper takes us all in the next few decades. The initial steps have included: eliminating FoM membership dues, sprucing up our website, and this initial communication.

Membership dues were only \$15, but any cost might have been a barrier for some. Following the example of the National Peace Corps Association, FoM has eliminated the collection of membership dues. If you are currently a member, you do not need to renew your membership. If you are not a member, please go to the [website](#) or click on [this link](#) to join. It appears that our hope of supporting FoM with voluntary contributions is working. More funds are coming in through contributions in the last few months than would have been collected from dues.

FoM has a new website at our old internet address <https://www.friendsofmalaysia.net> Although the technology behind the new website does not allow for comments and exchanges (though the [Peace Corps Malaysia FaceBook](#) page does), the new FoM website is a virtual smorgasbord of the history of the Peace Corps in Malaysia and the amazing achievements of Malaysia RPCVs. We are trying to collect all the old issues of *Pokok-Pokok* (the quarterly magazine written and produced by Malaysia PCVs from 1965 to 1983) and *Apa Khabar* (the FoM quarterly newsletter) but reading those that are already posted will keep you enthralled for many hours. We also want to honor the lives of Malaysia RPCVs who are no longer with us. On the [Obituaries page](#), we have confirmed the passing of about 270 among our fellow RPCVs and have added a link to published obituaries, whenever possible. We suspect that there are hundreds more of our colleagues who are deceased. If you know of someone whose memory should be added, please send their name and a link to an online obituary, if available. Remembrances of their lives by friends and colleagues will also be posted.

There are several videos on the website about PCVs in Malaysia and Peace Corps training in Hawaii. Perhaps of most interest is the list of the more than 100 Peace Corps training groups on the [Training Groups page](#). We are slowly adding training group picture books as well as essays/articles about training and Peace Corps service. On the [Malaysiana page](#), we invite everyone to send suggestions of your favorite Malaysian books, movies, blogs, cookbooks—anything that would be of interest to other RPCVs. Also, we can post your Malaysia photos (links to albums in Google Photos or other photo sharing sites work best). The philosophy behind the FoM website is that it is a shared library (sort of like a book locker) to which all Malaysia RPCVs can contribute, reminisce, and enjoy.

Finally, we have plans for one last collective Malaysia RPCV project—to leave a written record of what we did in Malaysia and how the experience influenced our post-Peace Corps lives. In the coming months—probably in early 2024—Friends of Malaysia will ask every RPCV to respond to a few open-ended questions in a short electronic survey. The responses will be posted on the website (for as long as FoM exists), and we intend to share this website and RPCV comments with the American Embassy in Malaysia, universities in the U.S. and Malaysia, and Peace Corps archives, so that our service in Malaysia will not be forgotten.

To gear up for this project, we have been creating a Malaysia RPCV Directory. You can see the current status of the Directory and all the work that went into it on this [page of the website](#). There are currently about 3,300 names of Malaysia PCVs in the Directory listed alphabetically by year of entry into the Peace Corps. At present, we have only about 1,000 email addresses and many of these are from 10 or 20 years ago. With some luck and support from other Volunteers, we hope to contact everyone who is still alive and interested. Do join Friends of Malaysia—you will find a connection to the kenangan-kenangan of your Peace Corps days and also a meaningful opportunity to continue your life of service.

Yang benar,

Charlie

Charles Hirschman

RPCV Malaysia IX, 1965-67

FoM OFFICERS AND Board of Directors

Thaine Allison Jr, VP/Programs, Bandau/Kudat, Sabah, 1962-64

Paul Murphy, Treasurer/Membership, Johor Bahru, Johor, 1971-73

Ruth (Mueller) Zwirner, Secretary, Kuching, Sarawak, 1969-71

Frank Catania, Bentong, Pahang, 1970-73

Nancy Gallant, Debak, Sarawak, 1969-71, Newsletter Editor

Marjorie Harrison, Selangor, 1974-76

Charles Hirschman, Baling, Kedah, 1965-67

Lynn Juhl, Kroh, Perak, 1967-69

Don Lovett, KL & Puchong/Serdang, Selangor, 1978-81

Karen Flolid McClay, Sarawak, 1965-68

Michael Saba, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, 1965-68

Ken Shuey, Kanowit, Sarawak, 1963-65

Paul Thompson, Sabah, 1970-73

Rodman Zwirner, Sarawak, 1964-67