

*June 5 –
Stonewall
Regatta*

*April/May, 2004
Steering
Committee
Snapshot:*

- *Cash balance end of April '04: \$75 K.*
- *Women's Locally Competitive Sweep Team presented letter soliciting tax-deductible donations to purchase a new boat.*
- *Women's 5-day competitive sweep had collected \$3K in donations for boat purchase.*
- *End of season party aka "rowing prom" will be held at Mark Center Hilton. Details will follow.*
- *SC is reviewing the number of*

Women Paddle Way Back From Cancer Diagnosis

Breast Cancer Survivors Try New Sport

POSTED: 2:58 pm EDT April 30, 2004

UPDATED: 2:51 pm EDT May 10, 2004

BOSTON -- Once a week, a group of women take to the Charles in Newton, Mass. They are not athletes, but they are learning to be strong again after battling a fierce competitor.

Video



Rhonda Mann Reports On Program

RESOURCES

[Find Out More About Row As One](#)
[Visit www.ryka.com](http://www.ryka.com)

[Download Photo Gallery](#)

NewsCenter 5's Rhonda Mann reported that the group of women is paddling their way back from a breast cancer diagnosis.

"It requires full body coordination. The very fact that I could do it, and the fact that my body was functioning again, was a high for me," Kearney Kirby said.

The program is called We Can Row. It is headed by Olympic rower Holly Metcalf, who was inspired after a former student was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"Being in a 60-foot long shell held together in the same limited space, there's a building strength and blending strength mentally and physically that requires a strong sense of self but an ability to reach out to others," Metcalf said.

Rowing is a somewhat controversial exercise for those who have had breast surgery where lymph nodes are removed. Some doctors worry repetitive motion like rowing may lead to chronic swelling called lymphodema.

"Doctors will tend to be cautious and say don't lift anything with that arm, either for the rest of your life depending on how cautious a physician is, or they might say you need to build very carefully back into it," Metcalf said.

The Dana Farber Cancer Institute is tracking these participants as part of a research study on the effects of rowing on breast cancer recovery.

Before getting onto the water, each woman needs her doctor's OK, then spends weeks indoors with physical therapists, gradually increasing arm flexibility and strength.

"I started rowing less than a month after radiation. I didn't have any energy at all, but it's a team for survivors, so I'm learning a whole new sport, thanks to cancer," rower Tia Cross said.

"I got out there the first night, and it was a beautiful evening, and there was a great sunset and all these women who had been through what I had been through and it was really cool," rower Jeanette Millard said.

<http://www.thebostonchannel.com/news/3255441/detail.html>

Contributed by Virginia Drewry

members
required to
make a
quorum at
monthly
meetings.

- Wallace is leaving at the end of July.



Alexandria
Community
Rowing
P.O. Box 16431,
Alexandria VA
22302
703-836-1151

www.rowalexandria.com



The "key" to the
boathouse!

Congratulations Ergers!

Congrats! The final tally for all the erg pieces you devoted to ACR in 2004 is posted at Concept II's Website: <http://www.concept2.com/sranking/univStandings2004.asp>.

We finished 21st out of 1,113 teams, with 13,937,192 meters. This performance placed us in the top 99.952380952380952380952381 percentile. We topped the 22nd-place finisher, Hudson River Rowing Association, by only 68,296 meters. This is impressive especially if you consider that we had 29 members on our team, while Hudson River had 38. You can see that every meter counted.

Among the rowing clubs in the greater D.C. area that are geared toward professional-aged rowers, we finished first by a wide margin. The next-highest tally came from Baltimore Rowing Club (#40, 20 rowers, 8,373,295 meters). Prince William Rowing Club was the only other showing of consequence (#53, 7 rowers, 6,054,046 meters).

(Of course, we had the advantage of a splendid boathouse with plenty of ergs, which is a huge factor during winter conditioning. Nevertheless, it's a nice feeling to trounce our competitors by such a wide margin.)

In 2003, ACR managed to finish 67th out of 1,402 teams. But, back then we had just 10 rowers, who racked up 3,566,713 meters.

In 2004, many of us didn't begin to record our meters until winter conditioning had commenced. Let's do better this season and record our meters year-round.

And try to persuade your teammates to do the same. *Submitted by Virginia Drewry and Jim Rutherford.*

Goodbye!

The Competitive Sculling Team and the rest of the ACR family bid farewell to coaches Duncan Morhardt and Tom Scifres. Duncan begins a new journey with even earlier (or later--depending on how you look at it) hours as he earns his degree from the Medical College of Virginia! Tom also will be heavily engaged -- coaching scullers and sweep rowers ALL day -- in Charlottesville, Virginia at the Rivanna Rowing Club. A side benefit -- accommodations right on the river! Way to go Tom! We wish both Duncan and Tom the very best in their new endeavors!

Hello!

Not to be left coachless, the competitive scullers and ACR welcome Steve Pritzker and Maura McVeigh. Steve currently coaches women's varsity at the University of Virginia. Additionally, he has 3 summers of coaching experience with the ACB adult novice sweep program. He is a former T. C. Williams rower and was a 4-season competitive heavyweight rower at Yale University winning numerous medals at highly competitive regattas.

Maura has coached masters and novices for DC Strokes and TBC. She is a former rower from Wakefield High School, rowed two fall seasons with ODBC, and formerly learned to scull in ACB's summer program under Jaime Rubini. Maura is a third year student and rower at Mount Holyoke College.

Nutrient Notes:

To get the most nutrients from your baked potato, eat the potato skin. Ounce for ounce, the skin has far more fiber, iron, potassium, and B vitamins than the flesh. The only reason to avoid the skin is if the potato has a greenish tinge. That's chlorophyll, a sign that the potato has been exposed to too much light after harvest. It's also an indication that solanine (a naturally occurring toxin) may be present in increased amounts, especially in the skin. This might cause cramps and diarrhea.

Tip: To cut out fat calories try new toppings for your baked potato like salsa, light sour cream, steamed broccoli or seasoning instead of the butter, sour cream and bacon.

Source:
University of California, Berkeley
Wellness Letter

News from Cindy Powell

I thought many of you might be interested in an update on Cindy Powell and her little Welsh Corgi, Bailey. A year ago, Cindy joined the Peace Corps, where she is stationed in Niger. Bailey stayed behind with "yours truly" and has been a welcome addition to the Mead family and a great companion to our husky/shepherd mix "Duke". Even if you do not know Cindy, I think you'll be moved by her engaging narrative of her first year in Niger. You can e-mail Cindy at marpcvs@intnet.ne. Include Cindy's name in the subject line. *Betsy*

A year older, but not much wiser

By Cindy In Africa

A year ago today, when I got back to my apartment from an outlet shopping spree with my then-neighbor, "Miss Broadcast News," a DC TV anchorwoman, I received my invitation to join Peace Corps Niger.

Having just emerged from an air-conditioned, Banana Republic haze of fashionable summer garb, I was none too keen on the idea of moving to the world's poorest country where temperatures regularly soar above 100 degrees. And Susan, who's also my outlet-mall shopping consultant, didn't even think I was serious. After hearing just the headline about what my Fed Ex contained, she twirled around and flounced next door to her own apartment to cut the tags off her new purchases.

Yet here I sit 12 months later, in a pool of sweat three hours after sunset, thinking there's no place I'd rather be. (And Susan couldn't agree more, by the way.)

Yesterday on the phone, my favorite Belgian in all of Peru asked me, "so, how are you feeling about your Peace Corps service? Are you enjoying it? Do you count the months and days? Are you looking forward to it being over? Does it still seem like the right thing to be doing now?"

My response? "Yes. All of the above."

Being in Niger is exasperating, exhilarating, terrifying, challenging and relaxing. But despite all the ups and downs, so far I'm not bored and I don't regret my decision to come here. Even when the temperatures soar so high that clipping my toenails is enough exertion to make the sweat drip off my face onto my leg (as it did this morning); Even when I'm stuck at the Maradi transit house due to a terrorist threat against Americans in Niger when I'd rather be out in the fields planting crops with my villagers during these crucial first few days of rainy season; Even when I'm panic-stricken about whether the power will stay on long enough for me to finish and email my pump-repair proposal before the Peace Corps deadline; Even when I feel like my friend's kid, Max, said he did during his first week of Kindergarten last fall: "lonely times when I could not find a friend."

Even when I awoke this morning to my mosquito net jiggling around, and realized the reason: because a lizard had scampered up the side to eat a three-and-a-half-inch long praying mantis that had been hanging there.

Even given all that, "I'm just so glad to be here!" (Does anyone get that Free to Be You and Me reference to the baby dialogue in the hospital?)

I've decided that serving in Peace Corps Niger is likely reading an 850-page book with multiple characters and plot lines that, initially at least, don't seem to tie together. You keep thinking that if you read a little further, it will begin to gel. The themes will emerge, the story lines will intersect, and the higher meaning of this dense, heavy



Niger



novel will crystallize. By the last page, you tell yourself, you're bound to feel a sense of satisfaction, an understanding of what you just read and why.

And with that blind faith, just like a baby bird sitting tight, patiently waiting for a tasty worm to be dropped directly in its beak, you continue schlogging through the book. But not every book is tied up in a neat little package with every tension resolved. Some leave you with a disturbing number of unanswered questions and ambiguities. Some make you wonder whether your lack of comprehension is due to your own limitations, your inability to connect the dots yourself. Or maybe there are no grandiose conclusions, and that is precisely the author's point.

With the first third of my service coming to a close, I am beginning to let go of the hope that someone is going to drop into my mouth a juicy worm. I don't think I'll awake one day with "the answer."

Of course, the grandmother of all questions that I strongly suspect will be equally mystifying to me by September 2005 is why, after more than four decades of development efforts in this country, are these people still so desperately poor.

According to the lead of a recent story from a United Nations news service, Africans are only getting poorer: "The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) said on Friday that poverty levels on the continent had increased by 43 percent over the last 10 years, with women making up to 80 percent of the people living on less than a dollar a day."

Less than a dollar a day. A year ago today, as I got winded lugging my obscene number fancy clothes and other purchases up a flight of stairs to my condo in one of DC's most high-end neighborhoods, that figure would have stunned me. Or maybe I simply would have glossed over it, not being able to grasp what that reality would be like for people.

Today, I live in a very different neighborhood. And my educated guess is that my neighbors, many of whom decided recently they couldn't afford 15 cents for the last month's literacy class tuition, are living on a whole lot less than a dollar a day.

After the grandmother of all questions comes the uppity youngster tendency, which I try to quell whenever possible: "Even though experts of many educational, professional and ethnic backgrounds have pondered and experimented with different approaches to development, why can't I get my villagers to wash their hands after relieving themselves and before eating; to have their babies weighed at the health clinic; to eat -- and serve their children -- a more varied diet; to use their free time more productively on small-income generating projects; to make attending Hausa literacy class a priority over having your hair re-braided, putting henna on your feet, or sitting in the shade and making small talk with the same dozen or so men you see every single day; to invest an appropriate amount of thought, time and community organizing to pull their end of the bargain in preparation for the launch next fall of an elementary school?"

Why do they seem to expect pumps, schools, textbooks and the handmade hats I knit to be handed to them on a silver platter? Why do they say "have patience" or "if God wills it" rather than taking their destiny into their own hands? Why don't they ask me to teach them how to knit? Why did Indo let her baby son die of diarrhea when her "co-epouse" (her husband's other wife) knows how to make oral rehydration solution? For that matter, why didn't Indo pay attention the day I was teaching Hassou in her home just a few months earlier? Why do Hausas say "yes" every time a volunteer suggests a new project or idea, and agree willingly when they are told their end of the bargain, yet not follow through? Why don't they just say what they mean?

How much of their creativity, initiative and drive to improve got stifled during the years of French colonialist rule? Have the past 40 years of "charity" only further squelched their sense of control over their own destiny? Are the roots much deeper than a century, dating farther back perhaps than the coming of Islam to Niger? Does their sense of resignation and even helplessness stem in part from the strong role

Rowing History

B.C. • Oared vessels began to be used for transport, commerce, fishing, life-saving and war, but, while there are occasional references in classical texts to boat racing, rowing primarily

for exercise, non-ceremonial

recreation or

competition was

not common

before 1800.

animism has played in their culture? If the world is an inherently chaotic place, governed only by the whims and fancies of unseen spirits, what good does it do to try to direct one's life, to steer a straight course?

I have to remember, I didn't join Peace Corps to save the world. My decision to sign on with Uncle Sam's feel-good, appease-critics-of-our-bulldozer-approach-to-international-policy program was like buying a used Toyota (sorry, Detroit) with decent insurance coverage: I just wanted a reliable, relatively safe vehicle to get me overseas.

Prior to coming here, I was in a rut. Earning my keep and spending it on vegetables and yoghurt every week at Safeway wasn't floating my boat (although now I frequently have fantasies of walking into my old familiar, well-stocked grocery store on Wisconsin Avenue). I wanted to see the world, learn another language and culture, and stretch my limbs and limits.

All of the above are happening. Even on the tough days, I feel more alive and stimulated here than I have in years. To help me through bad times, my mantra is, "just glide through this as gracefully as you can, girl." I try to adopt the villagers' image of me as their guest: A bird sitting on a branch. The bird's not demanding too much of the branch. She alights there, cocks her head this way and that to take in the surroundings, and with her tiny little bird brain, eventually makes the decision to move on to a different branch or tree.

Time keeps moving along, and with a clear 24-month-period mapped out, I'm more aware of that than ever. After I fly away from Niger, the little village of Bantché, like the bird's perch, will still be here. And life will pretty much continue as usual - the sitting, the pounding, the gossiping, the farming. Photos I leave behind or mail to them will get dog-eared through multiple viewings and reminiscings. They'll tell funny stories about me trying to pound, or the fact that I wear pants and earrings, which is the equivalent of cross-dressing.

Meanwhile, good stuff happens, too. Mala Abdou, a man about my age and maybe 75% of my Peace Corps body weight (no exaggeration), is now nearly four months into his regimen of tuberculosis treatment. He rides a bush taxi into Maradi every 10 to 14 days to report to Issoufou, the TB specialist, and obtain the next round of antibiotics or other pills with pictures of the sun rising, high in the sky or setting to indicate when each pill should be taken. He typically knocks on my door to tell me when he's leaving Bantché to see the doctor, and shows me his collection of pills upon his return. Once, he proudly showed me the pasta and crackers he bought after the doctor had told him to eat a variety of foods.

Mala Abdou is grateful to me, all because I noticed him cough, cared enough to ask, and encouraged him to see the doctor. He thinks I'm brilliant and kind all because of that.

Then there's Amina, who recently gave birth to her 15th child, a healthy baby boy, on my friend, Margaret's 30-mumble-mumble'th birthday. Amina's "door" is always open and I frequently seek her company in the evenings. Since all her children between baby Hamisou and 8-year-old Masa Udu died, her house is blissfully toddler-free and thus a calm place to sit under the stars and contemplate the day's happenings.

Amina and I talk about how Hausa women give birth alone, squatting in their hut, without making a sound. She doesn't wake her husband or children until the umbilical cord needs to be cut; only then is the village's midwife summoned. We joke about how cranky and hungry her two oxen are when they first come in from the pastures at dusk, and how they even recognize her husband's voice, which signals that food is not far. I repeatedly make her describe to me how she is able to sleep without a mosquito net, thus allowing Africa's nuclear-sized cockroaches free run of her body and her children's. She laughs at my squirminess, and marvels at the fact that I'm afraid of mice but not frogs. For Nigeriens, it's the opposite.

One day, Amina announced that when I go back to the United States and meet the man of my dreams, not only would she travel in an airplane to attend the wedding,

1274 • The first reference to a "regata" appeared in Venetian documentation; Venice's dependence on water transport provided a natural venue for the evolution of medieval and Renaissance water festivals. By 1315, the Venetian regata included boat races among other forms of aquatic display

and entertainment [Dodd].

Source:
www.rowinghistory.net

along with Zouera and Buga, the other coolest 40-something women in my village. But once I'm married, my new husband and I should come live in her house with her, she said. Since the tradition is for daughters to leave home and live with their husband's family, Mariamma, who's 10, and Masa Udu won't be around much longer. But Nasirou, a too-cool-for-words 20-something whose favorite shirt is a red football jersey, has already picked out his bride and after harvest and Ramadahn, will wed her and bring her home. Hamisou, the 10-week-old, will be grown and married before you know it. And with Amina and her ox-feeding husband, and me and my soon-to-be groom (his identity unknown to us both at this point!), there'll be four couples living cozily, along with the ox, a half dozen goats, some chickens, a perilously thin cat, and plenty of cockroaches but no mice.

Then there was that blustery Saturday when Mala Moussa Kala's wife, Chapa'a, had to be rushed to the health clinic during labor due to some complication. She was home by late morning, and I stopped by to see her - only my second or third time inside the home of these lovely, but very timid, cloistered women. Understandably, Chapa'a was exhausted and lying sprawled on the floor resting after her busy morning. And there's the four-hour-old infant, lying on the bed with nothing but a light scarf across his legs.

I know I complain a lot to you about the heat here, but this day in early March, at the tail end of cold season, was one of the bitterest I'd experienced. I touched the baby, and I could tell without a fancy thermometer how low his temperature was. Dangerously so. Luckily, many of my close friends have already had a couple of babies, and I've hung out in a few hospital rooms and overheard the nurses' advice to these new moms. Skin to skin is the best way to keep a baby's temp where it should be, I recalled.

So I had Chapa'a lift her shirt and I smushed her naked son up against her stomach.

Had she fed him yet, I asked? No, was her reply. You're not supposed to feed a baby for the first few days, she informed me. Apparently, Chapa'a's thoughts on colostrum or "first milk" were on par with what most Hausa women think: that this yellowish, sticky substance breasts produce for the first few days is not good for babies.

OK, even before visiting all those cute babies in DC area hospitals, I knew that a newborn should begin breastfeeding as soon after birth as possible (think Nancy Starmer, and the eighth-grade social studies unit on mother-infant bonding).

I told Chapa'a she was wrong, and she obligingly put the baby to her breast. And when I went back later that afternoon, she assured me she'd just fed him a second time. Well, we tried again anyway, and sure enough, he took more milk.

I wasn't sure if I was being too pushy with this meek woman whom I barely knew. Maybe she was just too worn out to try to argue with some white person who barely speaks Hausa. But when I returned from a 10-day trip out of town that same month, and stopped by for a visit, her face lit up when she saw me. Fully recovered from her difficult labor and delivery, she was gracious and grateful, and couldn't wait to pass me her precious little bundle to hold. I ooohhed and aaaahed appropriately, finishing each compliment with "Tubark'allah" to ensure that Allah or the evil animist spirits didn't take away this prized possession.

Sani, my village chief's son who has more effort than 17 of his neighbors combined, said he wants me to stay for 20 years in Bantché. Mala Jari, the father of Bantché's religious leader, is an adorable old man who handmade my bed with old stalks of gosh, I don't know what woven together with animal skin to create a lovely, aesthetically pleasing and very tough platform that I rest on four stones in my yard. Every time I see him, his face lights up like a carved-then-shriveled apple: "We like you, Sahiya," he gushes. "You make us happy!"

With all my comings and goings recently for AIDS workshop, pump proposal and the like, I felt slightly guilty but secretly delighted when Zouera, part of the 40-something Charlie's Angels trio I mentioned earlier, expressed her dismay that I was leaving again for "business."



"We want Sahiya to sit here. We like it when she's here," she said warmly, but without hiding her disappointment.

I love to hate this place. It's so easy to complain when the dust swirls so much overnight that your sleepy winkers are extra chunky and crusty. When you break out in mysterious red bumps from your shins to your shoulders, and you're not sure if its bed bugs, mini boils, heat rash, or all of the above. When you can't eat a salad no matter how badly you crave greens, cause even when you yourself wash and soak the lettuce in bleach, you end up hatching amoebas a week later. When you just can't bear the thought of eating anything else white. When you really just want to sit in a comfy chair in an air-conditioned, carpeted theater with a jumbo sized popcorn and coke watching a movie - a new movie. When you see pictures of your friends' kids and they're getting bigger and learning things and singing songs (even in Spanish!) far far away from Niger. When you can't even venture more than 50 feet from the Peace Corps hostel in Maradi without being accosted by some kid that at the very least wants the thrill of being greeted by an "anasara" (white person).

Chances are, I'm not going to be living here for even half of John Kerry's presidential term. But despite all these annoyances and the stark lack of luxury here, this place has wormed its way into my heart. And while I'm sure the medical staff will treat me for all sorts of parasites and creatures upon my departure, that one heartworm is always going to be there.

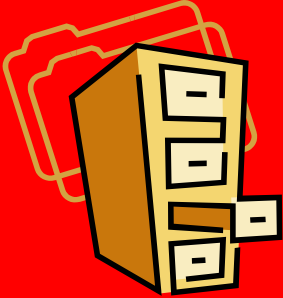
Maybe I won't have all the answers when I leave here. Most likely, I won't have reached any earthshattering conclusions that will shape not only the remainder of my career, but also the whole course of international development. Perhaps, then, the worm really is nothing more than a panoply of feelings, images and experiences. But, unlike how I feel after some of those confusing novels I've forced myself to finish, I suspect I'll never regret having invested this time here.

And, How's Bailey? See for yourself!

Bailey Blue Powell enjoys a leisurely afternoon.

More on next page,,,,,





In Search Of...

- **File cabinet and computer.** Wondering what to do with that extra file cabinet that's sitting in the garage, attic, or other location in your home? How about that computer you just replaced with the latest in technological wizardry? The ACR Steering Committee would love to provide a new "home" for them in a cozy little place in the boathouse. WHY would you want to give these to us? So we can maintain our records in a central location and maintain continuity as SC members come and go.
 - **Sliding Seat editor.** If anyone is interested in taking over or helping with Sliding Seat responsibilities, please contact me at betsymead31@starpower.net. WHY? Because I'm finding it difficult to publish issues on-time, or at all, and come up with timely and interesting information! It's a fun undertaking, but can take some time to put together!
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