

July 2011

# BTSCA Newsletter

P.O. Box 486, Brunswick, ME 04011

www.brunswicktrinidad.org



## Dear Members and Friends,

### Summary of events- 2010/2011

It has been a busy year for BTSCA events with the grand opening of **Cuba Week 2011** the upcoming **Peace Fair**, the **Give and Go..... read on!**

### Cuba Week 2011!

Cuba Week began with a very special art opening "Summoning the Spirits: the Saints of Santería in Cuban Art". A gallery talk by Pilar Tirado introduced the work of the artist, Elio Vilva, who has done extensive research on the religious iconography of African origin in his native Cuba. The symbolism of the spiritual traditions as shown in his art, have had tremendous influence in music, literature, and other cultural manifestations throughout Latin America. The exhibit was displayed at the Frontier Cafe along with the photography of Carl Elsaesser, who as a student at Hampshire College, had spent a semester in Havana in 2010. Many were able to see the displays which were hung for over a month and appreciated by all ages.

The Portland, Maine band Olas, closed Cuba week at Frontier, with a show of a blend of American folk, rock, Arabic, and Afro-Cuban sounds. They played original, all-acoustic passionate music accompanied by dance. There were lots of feet tapping and swaying to the mystical and luring sounds which captivated a sold out crowd. A terrific and exciting end to another successful Cuba Week, introducing many to the sounds and sights of Cuba.

## EAST OF HAVANNA

On Wednesday during Cuba Week the film East of Havana was shown twice to enthusiastic full houses at the Frontier Café. The film, directed and produced by Jauretsi Saizarbitoria, explored the emerging hip-hop scene in Cuba from an intimate and personal perspective in a very professional execution. Jauretsi was our featured presenter at our November Annual Meeting. Proceeds from the showings will go towards re-building efforts at the Trinidad Library.

### Delegation 2011

Trip notes. February 19-26 2011 Trinidad,  
Cuba  
by Tatiana Lera

Friday night before the trip I am reading on the net about traveling to Cuba. After several blogs, it is apparent that little things that we take for granted are very valuable to them. I go around the house collecting pencils, baseball caps, toiletries... Jay (my husband) is puzzled.

Jay and I leave home at 5:30 am and get to the Montreal International airport in six hours. I go to the tour operator kiosk and am given the tourist visa to travel to Cuba. I withdrawal \$240.00 Canadian.

Waiting in line for the check-in counter, I notice all the luggage with locks. I ask Jay to go get me one!!!

At the check-in counter the agent needs to call the supervisor to make sure I may travel with a Spanish passport: pas de problème. The suitcase is just within weight limits, even with me carrying some books in the backpack. All those extra toiletries did have some weight to them!

Flying Cubana is getting more and more American in that they charge for drinks, alcoholic and not. They did give us a little snack with orange juice and coffee. We fly only 3hrs and 30min through the US. How is this possible?...

We arrive at Santa Clara International

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Airport at 9:00 pm and go through immigration and customs without any problem. They ask me twice if I have been here before and why I am here. Why do I travel alone??

There is a scanner for the carry-on luggage and then I pick up my suitcase. Nobody asks me anything.

I go outside, change some money (100CAD=89.50CUC, the Cuban currency for foreigners). I go to the tour operators to check in and OH NO!!! I am the only one going south, so I need to get in a taxi by myself, at night, in Cuba! What I haven't yet realized is that Cuba is one of the safest places in the world to travel.

As always, the taxi driver, Nail, is a wealth of local information; from him I learn that in Cuba:

- Not everyone wants to leave. He has a brother in Barcelona and a friend in the US and, though they come back to visit and believe they are God just because they have money, they have lost their goodness.
- He makes 500 Cuban pesos a month = ~20CUC. The taxi makes around 1500 Cuban pesos monthly that he gives to the government.
- Homes are provided by the government to everyone; his family has paid 20-30 pesos monthly for 20 years. The idea of having more than one flat does not exist because no one needs two houses!! Property passes within the family.
- There is mandatory military service for two years for all men.
- The road is something! There are LOTS of people walking and people on horses! Construction looks ugly and all the same.
- We see old US cars. The taxi is a Peugeot (French) from the government. The driver tells me that they are going to start selling them to drivers.

- We pass a privately-owned onion patch... Onions are expensive.

We finally get to the hotel in Trinidad after about 45 minutes. I tip the guy 5 cucs!! Now I know it was way too much, but he had a little baby, and after all it is only money, it comes and goes...

The first impression of the hotel is bad; it is old and run-down. It is 12:30am; it has been a long, long day. I barely sleep because of the disco noises, cars, people... I am tired.

## DAY 1 Sunday

I wake up at 7:30 and ask to change rooms and all is good. I spend the day relaxing at the beach. I see an old Canadian who gives stuff to a local with two girls ( a toothbrush, a lollipop, a razor... the banana they do not care for). Nothing happens until dinnertime. I meet a group of musicians who have a band, La Parranda de Manaca. They are playing at the hotel. Among them are Camilo and Evis. After talking, Camilo offers to take me to the Municipal Library at 10 am the next morning for my first official visit in Trinidad.

## DAY 2 Monday

I start my day with a swim at the beach. I return and people from the government are looking for me. I will meet with the Vice President of the Asamblea (the local Town Council) at 10:30. I drive to town in a taxi (8CUC) and meet Camilo, who takes me to the library. I give them the books donated by members of BTSCA (Brunswick-Trinidad Sister City Association), and they are very grateful. I bluntly ask them what else they need:

- Printer
- Binding material to protect the books they have.
- Money to restore the back building
- Funds to buy materials

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Camilo takes me to the Asamblea to talk with the Vice President (Maddiel González Rueda). I learn that Camilo and Teresa García Vera (the International Relations Representative in Trinidad) are cousins... I feel much better.

The VP comes and greets me at the door, and we talk for two hours:

- He has been in office since May 2010 for a 2 ½ year term.
- Brunswick is the most active of Trinidad's sister cities.
- Water infrastructure is at its limits because it is 200 years old and sustains 74,000 people.
- They are still working on the houses (48%) affected by Hurricane Dennis in 1995.
- The 500th anniversary of the founding of Trinidad (1524) is coming up and they would LOVE to have us there.

They give me the agenda for the week. The President of the Asamblea (Ramón Naranjo León) comes in to say hello.

Camilo takes me to the home of the director of the band (La Parranda de Manaca) where we talk about the needs and wants of the band:

Uniforms (8 shirts)

Caps with logo

A dream would be to be able to bring them to Brunswick for Cuba Week.

Jose is another of the musicians. His wife, Marlen, works at the Oficina del Restaurador, the office charged with restoring Trinidad's historical buildings.

## DAY 3 Tuesday

I meet Teresa, the director of the Municipal Library. Later I go to el Hogar Materno, a place where women from rural areas who have at-risk pregnancies can stay and be cared for while they wait for their

delivery. They receive me like a queen, offering juice and coffee. They remember last year's visit, especially Elsa Levy, a midwife from MidCoast Hospital, and Abby, the Spanish teacher from Chewonki. They send their love. Here are some simple needs at the Hogar Materno:

- 5 round tablecloths
- Blood pressure apparatus
- Disposable syringes

We go to the Policlínico, which is also a university health center. They have 90 doctors and 30 offices. They say they want/need nothing. They mentioned the 200 Cuban doctors who offered to help the US with relief after Hurricane Katrina. They waited for a long time in Havana ... they never got the visas from the US and are hurt by the experience.

Afternoon/evening at the hotel. I get there in a cocotaxi, an adorable tiny round taxi that looks like something out of Disney World, for 5 CUC... horrible ride, I would rather spend three more for a car! The band of my new friends is playing there tonight.

## DAY 4 Wednesday

I have trouble getting a taxi. Finally I contact Nail who gets me everywhere for 5 CUC. Later I learn that he also has a *casa particular*, a Cuban bed and breakfast, with 4 rooms.

I make my official visit to the library, where I leave the mementos of Maine I brought as gifts. A person there has just paid 1 CUC for a pencil this morning! They tell how they need to pay for material for the library with a check of 250 pesos= 12 bucks! They show me the plans for their renovation project. The library is literally falling down. All the wooden parts of the building are rotting away. The books are in pretty terrible condition. Things they need:

Literature for adults and children (Allende, Coehlo...)

These materials for bookbinding:  
Ph neutral paper (tissue, oaktag...)

Glue  
Brushes for applying glue

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Scissors  
Paper cutter (we go out  
later and I buy one for 2.34 CUC)  
Polyester Thread  
6 cm needles  
Ruler  
Paper punch

I visit the Casa de Cultura, run by Mariana Farnés – aka Nancy. They provide day camps in theater, music, dance, art... for both kids and adults. There is an exhibit on José Martí done by kids. They are very welcoming. We need to send art material, colored pencils, markers, oak tag...

I visit the Escuela de Arte, a four-year art college in the original Spanish fort. There are 58 students and 30 instructors/professors! Enrique González Sosa is the director.

They need a computer for an art history class.

I return to the library with Felicia to deliver the cutter. They invite me over for lunch next day. We talk to Camilo about getting the printer. He will need to go to Sancti Spiritus, the capital of the province, on Friday with the money and get it there. He insists on me not going because that way transportation will be much cheaper.

I walk by myself around town. I go to the bookstore and buy four books for the equivalent of \$2.10!!

I have dinner at Marla's, a friend of a friend. I explain to her that I have a secondhand oboe donated by a BTSCA member to be donated to a young girl. This girl trained at a special music school, and now that she has graduated she has no instrument to continue her career. With Marla's help I can finally contact Estela, the mother of the young oboist, and arrange to deliver the oboe tomorrow night near Camilo's where I am invited for dinner! They live in the same house.

DAY 5 Thursday

We are supposed to go out of town to el Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills), a UNESCO World Heritage site. The valley was the center for sugar production from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately we do not have transport, so are unable to go. So Teresa and Jamelkis, a friend of hers, walk me around town. We visit the church, the

Canchanchara (a restaurant), and the Museo Romántico, a museum in a beautiful 19<sup>th</sup> century home.

I go to lunch at the library, where everyone has brought something. I cannot get over how noble and giving these people are. I talk to the administrator (Leonardo Escalante?). We talk politics and he gives me two books on the relationship of Cuba and Congo.

The day ends with dinner at Camilo's with the band and wives and kids. Estela and her daughter Jennifer come to pick up the oboe. Right away Jennifer plays beautiful music with it!! The banda takes me out to Artex, where Cubans go to listen to music and dance. GREAT evening!

DAY 6 Friday

Last day with my friends. Today Camilo is going to get the printer. I have a full morning with Nora, the woman in charge of International Relations for the province of Sancti Spiritus. We start at the Municipio, the Town Office, with a coffee. I give her the book about the history of Brunswick, which she likes a lot. She talks about how beautiful their land is, how grateful they are to Brunswick and all the work that has been done so far.

This has been an amazing and wonderful trip. I want to move to Cuba! Trinidad is so fabulous. I hope we can follow through on the many project ideas I have and help donate some of the items folks need. My first priority would be the Municipal Library. We have facilitated the donation of so many books; now we need to make sure their "house" is in good shape!

## Give & Go

The Give & Go sale was held again this year at Ft. Andross on June 9 and 11. In the weeks leading up to the sale 21 wonderful volunteers gave their time to collect and organize items for the sale and donated their 69 collective hours to BTSCA. We had 3 trucks and a table doing time as well! We have not yet heard how much the sale brought in, or what our portion of the proceeds will be, but we plan to donate all of the money to our Trinidad Municipal Library Fund. Thank you to all of the following: Andrea Jacobs, Annette Fournier, John

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Fischer, Bill and Jill Cooney, Harry and Judy Warren, Peter and Marcy McGuire, Tina Phillips, Melissa Weisheit, Deborah Luhrs, Richard Garrigus, Andrea Jowdry, Jan Wilk, Emily Swan, John Turner, Jean Shaw, Liz Pierson, and Louisa Slowiaczek and friend.

(An annual non-profit fundraising event sponsored by Bowdoin College)  
This year's Give & Go sale was again a record breaker. This year the gross intake was \$52,460! Our dedicated volunteers donated 62.75 hours of their time and will earn a grand total of \$13.80/hr. This means we can donate these funds to the library in Trinidad, that's \$866.07!!

## **Peace Fair**

Volunteers are needed for the upcoming Peace Fair on August 6 from 10 a.m. -4 p.m.

## **Plants for Peace Sale**

Jane's Magical Garden

Once again, on May 21 and 22, Jane Donelon held her 26<sup>th</sup> annual Plants for Peace sale. Offering unusual perennials, annuals and bulbs for sale dug from her garden, she donates the proceeds to BTSCA and Peaceworks. You do not have to be a gardener to enjoy this event; it is delightful to just come and take a leisurely stroll through her extraordinary garden, enjoying the colors, textures, sweet smells and creative design. Jane's magical garden is such a gift, and her sale a support to the peace efforts in our community and beyond. Thank you Jane!!!

## **Pastors for Peace Caravan 2011**

Barbara West, Steve Burke, Pilar Tirado and others from Let Cuba Live gathered at the Gazebo on Sunday afternoon, at 2 p.m on July 3<sup>rd</sup> to label and box supplies heading to Cuba. Among the 80- boxes of supplies were tools, medical supplies and dental supplies thanks to generous members of the community.