



friendship force
RALEIGH

Experience Different Views
Discover Common Ground

June 2020



Traveling gives us a lot of great memories that we can always look back on. Getting out of our comfort zone opens the mind to more ideas and possibilities. And while it gives us a peek into how the rest of the world lives, it also makes us appreciate more what we have back home.

Upcoming Memphis to Raleigh Journey, September 14 - 19, 2020

In May 2019 as we were leaving Memphis after a very exciting Journey with them, we asked them to please come to see us and let us share our many beautiful sights with them. (We always do this). Then in the late fall, we extended a formal invitation to the Memphis Club and together we agreed on the dates of September 14 – 19, 2020.

Our planning committee has been working on a program to show them much of what we have to offer and think we've come up with a good plan. Of course, we had no idea this Covid-19 was going to spread and keep on spreading, and possibly cause us to postpone their Journey to us. We haven't done that yet

and have pretty much left it up to the Memphis folks as to whether they'll want to fly to us or whether they'll be comfortable being away from home at that time. We have right many who have signed up to Home Host and Day Host, others who are willing to have Regional Dinners, but nothing has been put in motion yet until we know what the Memphis folks want to do. We hope this works out, but if they decide not to come, we've offered them any time in 2021. We have set a date in mid-July to make the decision of go/no go for this year. We'll let you know how it all works out.

Doyle Long and Liz Smith, Host Coordinators

Looking Forward – Journey to Toulouse, France – September 2021

We are hopeful that we will be ready to travel and our host club will be ready to receive us in time for us to commit to this journey. This is a plum assignment as there are very few European clubs and journeys there are in high demand. Hold the date.

“For those of you who enjoy playing card games, here is a fun site to access a variety of games - <https://www.trickstercards.com/> . Lots of fun!”

Visit us on line: <https://www.facebook.com/friendshipforceraleigh/>

TRAVELING BACK IN TIME — With our current limitations on travel, we thought it a good time to ask some of our experienced travelers to share stories of journeys they have taken and friends they have met. Our thanks to the authors for their amazing memories. Enjoy.

Friendship Force from North Carolina Visited the Soviet Union during the Cold War

More than 37 years ago, on November 12, 1982, one hundred and one Friendship Force members, mostly North Carolinians, left the US on a mission to the Soviet Union as “Citizen Ambassadors of Peace.” We left with a planned stop in Helsinki, Finland, but without assurance that we would be allowed into the Soviet Union. The Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, had died just two days before our departure date and the whole world was concerned about a peaceful transfer of power.

We were a group of courageous and adventurous citizens—a group that was neither homogenous nor average. Members were homemakers, reporters, teachers, lawyers, artists, architects, secretaries, waitresses, and business owners. We were married couples, individuals, mother and son, grandfather and grandson and wheel chair bound. Some Ambassadors were VIPS’s such as the then First Lady of NC Carolyn Hunt (with her body guard, a NC state trooper), Ida Friday, wife of the then President of the UNC system William Friday, and a TV reporter from WRAL with her cameraman. Most importantly, we had one thing in common—our belief that we could make a difference in the relationship between two countries with nuclear weapons pointed at each other.

Although it was the day of Brezhnev’s funeral, the group was allowed to land in Moscow as scheduled. I remember the day as cold, dreary and foreboding. That first night, I took the subway down to Red Square, where in spite of a large crowd, an eerie quiet prevailed. In the city, there was a strong presence of the military with trucks moving on the streets carrying young soldiers and a noticeable number of heavily decorated officers hurriedly passing us on the subway stairs.

In spite of receiving assurances that WRAL TV would be allowed to take its cameras into the country, they were confiscated on arrival. After efforts by the American Embassy, the equipment was finally returned five days later when the group left Moscow for Saint Petersburg. We believed the Soviets made other efforts at censorship as well. Both the newspaper and TV reporters had made arrangements to call back to give reports, but those calls could not be placed according to the operators.

We were more tourists than ambassadors as we stayed in hotels and were shepherded around by Intourist, the official government tourist agency. Like all visitors to Moscow, the group visited Lenin’s Mausoleum to have the somber and ghoulish experience of walking by the preserved body. The government set up our tours and arranged for us to visit “Friendship Houses,” where folk



Phyllis Duncan and Rita Horan, from Charlotte, looking at propaganda along a street in Moscow. I don't have many photos because I left my camera in Helsinki. I just have a few that others gave me.

groups performed and “selected” individuals told us how wonderful life was in the Soviet Union. Small groups of ambassadors were taken to visit schools and medical clinics in Moscow.

Our mission, though, was to interact with people. We Ambassadors carried cards to hand out to people that read in both Russian and English “We come in Friendship” around a pair of clasped hands. When I tried to hand them out on the subway or street, people took one look and handed them back. One of my memories is that of a kind woman who helped me find my way out of a subway station. I was studying a map when she took my arm indicating that I should follow her. When we reached the street, I turned to thank her and she had disappeared.

After five days in Moscow, we took an overnight train to Saint Petersburg, then called Leningrad, which had an entirely different atmosphere. The city was full of light, western style hotels with visitors from other countries—especially Scandinavian-- and for us free time to roam around the city. Here members visited museums, bought food from the shops, and went to churches.

After three days in Saint Petersburg, we flew on the Russian airline Aeroflot back to Helsinki for an overnight stay to reflect and debrief ourselves. Our leaders gave out Friendship Force Awards under The Golden Order of the Red Cabbage Leaf. (A take-off on the NC Order of the Long Leaf Pine.) Carolyn Hunt received the “Eleanor Roosevelt Peace Award” and her body guard received the “KGB Award.” As JoAnn Godwin our leader said, we were definitely tired of body and probably not of sound mind.

Even after thirty-seven years, I still feel this was the experience of a lifetime. More importantly, I believe that little bands of people like us going about in Friendship have made a difference in the world.

- Phyllis Duncan -



Clueless Americans Go to Mexico



The Friendship Force of Raleigh took Santa Claus with us to Altotonga, Mexico, in the summer of 1993. We were the first Americans to ever visit this town, but the children there had no trouble recognizing Santa. They followed him around as he was dressed in his summer garb--red shorts to go with his Santa jacket and hat.

Altotonga was a mystery to those of us who signed on as ambassadors, led by Brenda Unti. I finally found it on a National Geographic map showing Cortez's route during the 15th century from the Gulf of Mexico to what became Mexico City. This newly formed club was so excited about having us visit, and their members provided an incredibly warm welcome. Well prepared, they had recruited at least 4 dentists and doctors--a good thing. Every morning we gathered in the town square to be transported every place within 4 hours of Altotonga.

Only a few of the Altotongans spoke English, and only a Raleigh high school student and I knew any Spanish. However, we still managed to communicate with each other. Several of their members happily encouraged me in my efforts to speak Spanish.

Our hosts were generous to a fault till our group agreed not to admire anything else they owned because they would give it to us. My most treasured souvenirs include a beautiful piece of handmade Oaxacan pottery from our home hosts' house, and a serape that a senorita took off and put over me at a fiesta. This vase is still in my pottery collection, and I still enjoy wearing the serape 27 years later.



John Backlund as "Santa on vacation"

This adventure turned out to be a real exchange, since the Altotongans came to visit us in Raleigh during 1995. The Friendship Force of Raleigh thoroughly enjoyed reciprocating their hospitality.

Santa also known as John and Arlene Backlund were active members of the club. Santa traveled in his summer clothes a lot yet everyone recognized him no matter where we went. Everyone from the time we gathered at the airport to leave wanted their photo taken with him. The Mexican children would at first point him out then rush over to hug. John carried a pail of candy canes which he gave the children. Santa's wife just dressed in a regular summer dress as she did not have a red summer dress.

We had trouble filling the trip as it was in such a remote area of the country. Sadly most who went with us have passed on to their ultimate FF exchange.

- Carol Reilly and Carol Winner –
- Pictures provided by Maurice Winner -

Friendship Lasts a Lifetime

Back in the 2000's our club made a journey to Nara, Japan, after a week spent in Tokyo. Tom and I stayed with Hiro & Hiromi Onishi. Hiro was the founder and President of the Nara club. It was a memorable week for all of us: a formal Japanese tea service, dressing us in traditional Japanese kimonos, visits to Kyoto, and much more, all during their cherry blossom season. In turn, our club hosted Nara later on. Hiro served as a trustee for FFI for quite a few years and only cycled off last year. Tom and I have remained friends with them all these years.

Dear Hiro & Hiromi,

It is so good to hear from you. Yes, it is a long time since we have seen each other but we have very fond memories of good times together. Our news is that Tom and I have moved to a retirement community in Raleigh. We are aging, too: Tom is 85, Sara 84. We have been here for a month and the community is under strict stay-at-home orders, so we have not been able to mingle with others here as usual and everyone wears face masks. Not sure we will recognize anyone once we are back to normal. The only activity here is exercise classes, which are held outside with 10 people or less. I have been faithful in attending.

We have been very worried about Friendship Force. We donated some money and our club will do the same but I am not sure the organization can be saved as they are totally dependent on travel. I think people will be slow to start back up. It is ironic that after decades of asking for a journey to France FFI finally assigned it to us and now perhaps it won't happen after all 😞.

It seems that the whole world is in this together and suffering together. We are grateful for friends like both of you, and hope for better days before long.

Stay safe, Sara & Tom Brower

Dear Tom & Sara,

Long time no see!! Time flies too fast. We miss you.

We are doing well, but we are getting old. I got 80 years old last January and Hiromi 76 years old.

Just for your reference, I attach herewith some of our recent photos.

Kingo Fujita kindly transferred me your message which reminded us about our nice memories we shared with you.

Our daily life has been changed dramatically since about last two months due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It's quite scary that we don't know yet when it will come to the end. How about your town? We are concerned that the situations in USA are becoming quite serious all over the country.

I am also quite worrying about FFI which is now facing financial crisis. We are now making our utmost efforts to raise money to save FFI, but we don't know yet about the results.

There are too many uncertainties at this right moment. Since we can't control the situations by ourselves, let's try to find some enjoyable matters even staying at home.

All the best and looking forward to hearing from you,

Hiro & Hiromi

My Adventures During Lockdown at Waltonwood

I have plenty of things I can do in my apartment, but the staff has done an excellent job of providing socially distanced activities to keep us occupied and improve morale. My latest efforts have included basketball (junior level), shuffleboard, darts, bocce and exercise class. My personal trainer and I have a Zoom session in my apt twice a week, and I can ride the recumbent bike down the hall. Of course, it's pleasant to walk outdoors.

Every week the staff plans one or more events in the Courtyard which we can attend from our balconies. Doyle Long joins me in my apt on weekends for movie night--6 feet apart, and I play weekly card and board games in a large room on my floor with a few neighbors. I feel very lucky to be here despite, or maybe because of, all the restrictions that keep me safe.

A good book suggestion if you can find it: "My Family and Other Animals" by Gerald Durrell. Some of you might have watched the PBS miniseries by the same name. The book is just as delightful.

- Carol Reilly -

Highlights from Friendship Force Members

At the Board's request, Carol Reilly, Jan Johnson, Judy Allen, Carol Winner and Elaine Rakouskas called Friendship Force members in May to check on them, find out about any news they wanted to share, provide updates on club activities and invite them to submit memories of past journeys to Olga Dovic for the newsletter. This was worthwhile since those we reached appreciated the calls.

The good news is that most of our members are coping well during coronavirus days, including newer members Scott Cappelluti

and Diana Moore.

Everett and Cookie Roberson are at their Emerald Isle home and will remain till it's safe to return to Raleigh. Mike & Elaine Rakouskas have been enjoying their time at Emerald Isle and keeping an eye on the beach re-nourishment project.

Mark and Judy Wright have enjoyed exploring the Neuse River Trail and the trails along tributary creeks on their new e-bikes.

Jane Fellows is looking forward to being a home or day host or to helping with a Durham Day. Fay Krapf would be "glad to home host if needed" for the Memphis incoming journey—assuming their club can come in September.

Wilmington resident Ray Nell Pearsall is downsizing before moving into a senior facility.

Sara and Tom Brower skated into The Cypress retirement community just under the wire as the coronavirus struck. Eventually they will get to go to the dining room, meet more residents and have housekeeping service.

Lois Brown has been in and out of the hospital in Florida with serious heart problems and says: "I am rereading the cards and notes I received when I was soooo sick. The card from the Friendship Force was so pretty and the message was so uplifting. I am on the road to recovery and want to get back to Cary [with Bill], but my doctors haven't given me the permission to go just yet. Thanks again for caring about us." Their address is 26455 S. Tamiami Tr, Apt 521, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.

Barbara Hocutt sounded quite cheerful. She's

content to be safe at home, where her house has never been cleaner. Her son delivers groceries and a neighbor cooks some meals for her, although Barbara has taken her turn in the kitchen as well.

Bill Cole recently had reconstructive foot

surgery and following a stint in rehab is at home now and doing well.

Other members who would like to let Carol Reilly know what's happening in their lives may e-mail her at bobcarolreilly@aol.com or call 919-847-7611.

Members who would like to share their stories for the newsletter, please email them to Olga Dovoric at olganc9@gmail.com | 919-250-8376



Jorge Montoya has been hard at work on creating a new Friendship Force of Raleigh web site and Mike Rakouskas has agreed to assist him with some of the content. If anyone has any suggestions for what should be included, please email or call either Mike or Jorge with your suggestions. We hope to “go live” soon.

As a reminder, we have a presence on Facebook which provides updates on current activities (Quite limited during the Coronavirus situation, of course) and announcements, so please check it out and feel free to add any comments and updates you would like to let our members know about how and what you are doing.



friendship force
INTERNATIONAL

Friendship Force International

As you are aware, FFI immediately reacted and responded to the effects of the pandemic, the cancellation of journeys, and the subsequent loss of income to the organization. Individuals and clubs from around the world generously responded, including Friendship Force of Raleigh members and the Club as an organization. This response is putting FFI back on secure footing. Our Club received many notes of thanks including ones from the CEO Jeremi Snook, from the Chair of the Board Bobbie Mulholland and the Board Treasurer. Below is one of those:

Dear Friendship Force Club of Raleigh,

We want to extend a heartfelt thanks for your generous donation during this turbulent time. Just as our members have always been the driving force behind our organization, your generosity is the life force of the Friendship Force right now. Your donation of \$1,000.00 was received on May 14th, 2020.

The benefit of your donation at this critical juncture for the organization cannot be overstated. You are helping clubs to remain intact, members to stay connected, and employees to keep their jobs. Because of patrons like you, we believe Friendship Force will safely navigate the most difficult time it has ever faced. Please know that you have had a lasting effect on the organization as a whole and all of its members by contributing to our campaign. We have no doubt that with support like that of your club, our vision of a more peaceful world will continue to grow when we are on the other side of this worldwide crisis. –**Friendship Force International**

We encourage you to check out recent blog posts from CEO Snook.

<https://blog.friendshipforce.org/>

There you can read all the latest financial updates, as well as articles of interest.

2020 FFR Board of Directors

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SAVE THE DATE

HOLIDAY PARTY

**THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 3**

DETAILS TO COME

**THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF
RALEIGH 2020 MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION**

<https://www.facebook.com/friendshipforceraleigh/>

Please circle one:

New

Renew

Today's
date: _____

A. INDIVIDUAL DATA

Last name _____ First name _____ M.I. _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Home phone (____) _____

Employer _____ Alt. phone (____) _____

Profession (or former prof.) _____ E-mail _____

B. SECOND ADULT - Family Membership

Last name _____ First name _____ M.I. _____

Employer _____ Alt. phone (____) _____

Profession (or former prof.) _____ E-mail _____

C. TALENTS OR INTERESTS YOU COULD SHARE WITH FRIENDSHIP FORCE

Foreign languages spoken _____

Countries visited or have knowledge _____

Talents and skills _____

Countries you would like to visit _____

D. MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR CALENDAR YEAR JAN. 1 TO DEC. 31

_____ \$50.00 Family membership renew /new (Two adults living in
same household with or without minor children)

_____ \$30.00 Individual membership renew / new

_____ \$10.00 Student membership renew / new

_____ **Total** Please make check payable to The Friendship Force of
Raleigh and mail to: The Friendship Force of Raleigh, P.O.
Box 21022, Raleigh, NC 27619

An Order Form Link for Name Badges can be found here: <https://thefriendshipforce.org/resources/>