

San Francisco Libre News



Reading's Twin Town in Nicaragua



Volume No. 5

September 2003

Jeyserd Torrez Martinez

Jeyserd returned to San Francisco Libre in the middle of July, and has since been in contact with us by email.

He reports that he has been allocated four units in the old market of SFL, each measuring 3m x 3m with good security, and has set about converting them into his carpentry workshop.

Tools from Reading College

In his last week in England, Jeyserd returned to the Carpentry Workshop at Reading College for his presentation ceremony. Paul Knows, President of the Institute of Carpenters, awarded Jeyserd his certificate, and a fine set of chisels. Mr. Knows was especially pleased with Jeyserd's "distinction" at the intermediate level.

The College, and local tool companies, donated many more tools for use in Jeyserd's carpentry workshop in San Francisco Libre.

The RSFLA would like to thank Fred McCrindle OBE, Principal of Reading College, and the Head of Carpentry, Danny Cronin, for creating this scholarship and for making it work.

A special thanks goes to Ase Kowal who attended the College every week, to translate the carpentry lessons for Jeyserd – she's now almost a carpenter herself!



Danny Cronin (L) with Jeyserd at his presentation ceremony

Upcoming Events

1 Nov Twin Towns Event, RISC

(6 pm) Held during the Reading International Festival. With food and presentations from Reading's four twin town groups, including San Francisco Libre. At 35 London Street, Reading.

Note: The planned Sponsored Cycle Ride will now be held in May 2004.

The proposed paintballing day has been postponed indefinitely, unless enthusiastic teams can be formed. Anyone interested can contact Nicola Shute 0118 975 1488.

Tools from 'Tools for Self Reliance'

A month before his return to Nicaragua, Jeyserd paid a visit to "Tools for Self Reliance" at their monthly workshop in Prospect Park.

Tools for Self Reliance is a nationwide charity based in Southampton, that has some 70 branches around the country. They receive donations of old tools, which they renovate, and send to six countries in Africa.

For Jeyserd, they put together their basic joinery kit, comprising various saws, planes, hammers, files, chisels, a vice, and a brace and bit. The whole lot came to more than 20 kg, but he managed to take it all back to San Francisco Libre.

Anyone interested in supporting this excellent organisation can contact Bob Brown on 0118 987 4914.



Jeyserd (front) with Bob and three volunteers (Alison and two Dons)



The banana game, at WOMAD

WOMAD 2003

Light spots of rain descended on Rivermead, as the RSFLA took to the One World Stage at WOMAD, last July. Fortunately the rain cleared, and Vanessa presided over 45 minutes of 'Nicaraguan Games' during which dozens of children scrambled for sweets spilled from broken papier-mâché 'Piñatas'; leapt over bales of hay clutching bananas; devoured bowls of the Nicaraguan staple food 'Gallo Pinto' (rice and beans); picked their way around an obstacle course, first balancing basins of water on their heads, and then transporting beans in a spoon, clenched between their teeth. The event ended with Pilar, Vicky, and special guest Pochita teaching a simple Nicaraguan dance to the assembled throng.

The more serious object of the event may have been lost on some of the younger participants, but the games were interspersed with descriptions of life in Nicaragua, explanations of the difficulties faced by her people, and how the Reading-San Francisco Libre Association is working to assist Reading's Twin Town there.

The Association would like to thank everyone who helped organise, or participated in, the event, and to all those who made a donation to the RSFLA.

The RISC Fair trade Tea & Coffee stall in the One World Tent benefited from Saturday's inclement weather, selling record amounts of beverages.

Contact us: <http://www.reading-sfl.org.uk> editor@reading-sfl.org.uk

Editor of this Edition: Eoghan Clarkson, 91 Howth Drive, Woodley, Reading RG5 3DJ, Tel: 0118 954 0296

Treasurer RSFL Trust/Peter Oakley Trust: John Bullus, 1 Maple Close, Winnersh RG41 5PE; Tel: 0118 977 5252; johnbullus@talk21.com

José Ángel

The mayor of San Francisco Libre visited Reading in July, to attend anniversary celebrations laid on by Reading Borough Council. Mayor José Ángel and representatives from Reading's three other twin towns were invited to events marking 750 years since Reading received its first Royal Charter.



Following receptions, a formal dinner and a fiesta, José Ángel enjoyed the hospitality of various members of the RSFL Association, and was treated to a diverse itinerary. Sr. Ángel owns a small private transport company and so was taken to a number of transport related organisations around Reading. He was also treated to a tour of the Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC), and visited the organisations which helped Jeyserd during his time here - such as Reading College, and the Parish of St James & St William of York.

The people of San Francisco Libre rely on subsistence farming, so a visit to Elm Farm near Newbury was arranged, where José learned about the organic farming techniques employed there.

Towards the end of his stay in Reading, the mayor attended a public meeting at RISC, where he talked about his constituency, and the various community and construction projects he has instituted. We were very encouraged by his enthusiasm for Jeyserd's carpentry workshop, and he made several generous promises of support for the project.

Peter Oakley Trust

The Peter Oakley Trust now assists 12 young people with their education costs. The four most recent recipients of funds are:

Ixamara Valesea, aged 14, who is in the second year of the Las Mojarres secondary school.

Eleasen Valesea, aged 11, who is in the fourth year of the Santa Maria primary school.

Cindy Valesea, aged 7, who is in the first year of the Santa Maria primary school.

Doris Poole, aged 5, is currently in pre-school at Santa Maria.

We have also had some letters from the students who benefited in the first round of Peter Oakley Trust scholarships last year:

Sayda Janneth Obando, who is now 12 years old, and in year 3, says her primary school is big, and has enough chairs for everyone. There are trees in the patio, but no plants, as there is no water source close to the school. A photo she sent shows her on her way to SFL for the 'Woman's Day' fiesta on 8 March.



Sayda Janneth Obando, a recipient of one of the Peter Oakley Trust education grants

News from Nicaragua

British Embassy in Nicaragua Threatened with Closure.

"In order to free up resources to strengthen the UK's diplomatic network in other parts of the world now more critical for UK interests, I have decided to make the following adjustments to our diplomatic representation in Central America. ... we intend to reorganise our representation in Honduras and Nicaragua. In each case, we propose to appoint a Charge d'Affaires. The Ambassadors will at the same time be withdrawn, and HM Ambassador at Guatemala City will be simultaneously accredited to both capitals." Statement by Jack Straw, Hansard, March 21, 2003 Column 57WS.

Down-grading the Embassy will affect the perceived 'importance' of Nicaragua to the UK, and will prevent the useful meetings with Ambassadors that visitors from Reading have had. The British Ambassador in Managua has assisted our Twin Town, San Francisco Libre, with his small grant fund, which included (among other things) a water storage tank for San Francisco Libre.

We feel that the withdrawal of the British Ambassador in Managua will detract from our attempts to strengthen links with our Twin Town in Nicaragua.

If you would like to help keep the embassy open, please see the following section:

Getting Involved ...

Donations. If you would like to make a donation towards the work of the RSFLA, please consider filling out a **Standing Order form**, which enables us to claim back tax on each contribution. Forms are available from our treasurer (John Bullus, 1 Maple Close, Winnersh RG41 5PE; Tel: 0118 977 5252; johnbullus@talk21.com), or other members of the committee.

Christmas Presents. Mayor José Ángel mentioned a scheme he ran in conjunction with a Spanish NGO last year, through which money was sent to buy presents for children in San Francisco Libre. He suggested we might like to help extend the scheme this year. If you would like to contribute to this, please contact our treasurer (details above).

Lobby against the closure of the British Embassy in Nicaragua. According to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) the Foreign Affairs Select Committee may be prepared to make efforts to get the decision to close the embassy reversed, so it is definitely worth lobbying our MPs to take this up with the Foreign Office and also with Donald Anderson (chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Cttee.)

A letter written by the NSC to Jack Straw arguing against closure of the embassy is available from members of the committee.