



Friends OF COLOMBIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE COLOMBIA RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Colombia,

As we move into fall, we look forward to enhancing our programs in Colombia and welcoming into our membership and on our Board the latest wave of PCVs to Colombia. Generation two of PCVs, known as Colombia II, bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm which we welcome with open arms.

Michael Band, PC Colombia II-3, is our new webmaster for friendsofcolombia.org. He brings with him the link to recently returned RPCVs as well as great ideas for developing the site. You can contact Michael at mband1115@gmail.com.

We have offered membership to all current PCVs and are reaching out to the returnees to join FOC as a way to continue their PC Colombia experience. The FOC membership continues serving Colombia through its projects and maintains connections with fellow RPCVs by sharing their experiences.

Peace Corps Colombia is planning an anniversary celebration in Barranquilla at El Prado Hotel on October 21, 2015. The celebration is identified as 25 Years of Peace Corps in Colombia. As we know,

the reference is to the first 20 years from 1961 to 1981 when PC left Colombia due to the violence and the last 5 years initiated by Ambassador Carolina Barco's suggestion to President Uribe that he request Peace Corps' return to Colombia. See *the invitation with details about this event on page 8*.

Please keep us informed regarding changes to your contact information, and note an important change in membership dues dates. January 1, 2016 will mark the start of our one-year membership due date for everyone. This will help us help you avoid confusion about when your membership payment is due....it will be every year by January 1 unless you have joined for multiple years. Should you have a question regarding membership you may contact Gale Gibson at foc.membershiplist@gmail.com.

Sincerely yours,

Arleen Stewart Cheston
President, Friends of Colombia



FALL 2015
ISSUE

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FROM THE *Field*

"Most early Peace Corps volunteers have lots to say about horses. Why are horses so strong in our memories?" asks Refugio (Will) Rochin, Colombia II. Rochin invited some of those volunteers—*caballeros*, he calls them—to share some of their horse stories with FOC readers. Here are a few of them, along with others prompted by Miguel Lanigan's *El Puta Caballo* story published in previous newsletters.

CUENTOS CABALLEROS

MICHAEL O'DAY WRITES:

I was in Carcasi, Santander 1964-1966 and had two horses which I referred to as "Hijo de Puta" and "Son of a Bitch". We had lots of strange adventures, including having one of them fall on top of me after slipping on an old stone path. I lay trapped downhill with my leg under the horse until a *campesino* came along and got the horse off of me. And then there was the rolling competition down the mountainside between me and the horse after he lost his footing and we both went over the side. Or the horse stuck in a bog in the *altiplano* and my losing my boots in the mud while fetching a stick to encourage the horse to get up before he completely submerged. Chasing a loose horse for hours at 10,000 feet is good exercise. And fetching horses and trying to mount them bareback is always fun. Putting shoes on horses that slowly shift their weight onto the leg you are holding is a great muscle-building exercise.

DARREL YOUNG, COLOMBIA I, SERVED IN SAN PABLO, NARIÑO FROM 1961-63. HE WRITES:

Peace Corps in rural Colombia was, among many things, a source of ongoing local amusement and occasional volunteer euphoria. Horses were big in both.

Source of Amusement: One afternoon, returning from a *vereda* about a half-hour horseback ride from San Pablo, a few raindrops started to fall. My *promotor*, along with the *agronomo* who was accompanying us, reached around to undo rain slickers tied behind their saddles, and I did likewise. It was my first time to use rain gear while astride my horse, but the slicker's cut being the same as a *ruana*, I confidently gave it a little twirl, so that the hole in the middle would drop over my head. However, I must have done so a bit too confidently, because

as some part of the material passed by the eye of my horse, my usually trusty steed shied violently, catching me off-balance in mid-twirl, and launched me *ano* over elbows into the rare Andean air, where I landed mercifully in the middle of an unpaved road. Once my *compañeros* determined that no serious damage had been done and retrieved my horse, we proceeded back to San Pablo for our usual post-outing decompression at the usual place. Apparently, my short flight with its abrupt ending was a lot more humorous when described from the rear, and the more folks drank, the funnier it got!

On a related note, three of us, my Peace Corps partner, Rick Simon our *promotor*, Aurelio, and I were visiting another outlying *vereda* one afternoon. As we saddled up to leave, Rick purposefully left the cinch on his saddle a little loose because he noticed a sore on the horse's side. We were going along at a leisurely pace, Rick a few lengths in front, when he bent down to adjust something on his left stirrup while holding on to the saddle horn. This caused the saddle, with its looser cinch, to rotate better than a full-quarter turn, leaving him no choice but to let go and fall gently to the ground. Rick's horse was somewhat skittish to begin with, and all these goings-on unnerved him even more. Once the horse realized Rick was no longer aboard, he bolted at top speed, wanting to put as much distance as possible between himself and such unsettling circumstances.

As I watched all this unfold, some part of my psyche flashed back to those Saturday afternoons at the Strand with Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Johnny Mack Brown, et al., chasing down runaway horses, so I took off in hot pursuit. I managed to close on Rick's



(Above) Darrel Young on a pit stop with his horse.

“
Chasing a loose
horse for hours at
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CABALLEROS (CONT'D)

horse but couldn't quite pull alongside. Both horses were going full out, but my horse's head couldn't get past Rick's horse's hindquarters. However, I could see the reins still around his neck since Colombian reins are not separated, but rather one continuous strap. I knew if I just leaned forward enough, I could grab those reins and rein in the runaway, just like in the movies. So I shifted my weight to the right just a bit, extended myself parallel to the ground, horses still flattened completely out, and reached for the reins. Some part of me, however, was still on the flat part of the learning curve, because as my hand passed my horse's eye, I once again found myself askew and airborne, this time landing on the only concrete culvert in northern Nariño. I had more hitch than gitalong for about a week, but eventually the frequent recounting of this incident also became *aguardiente*-fueled entertainment for all.

Source of Euphoria: San Pablo sits on a high mountain ledge, overlooking the Rio Mayo far below, with one road running into and then out of town. Consequently, no matter your approach, the road into San Pablo is one long uphill grade. Oftentimes, returning home after a lengthy day in the countryside, evening shadows gathering, I would give my horse *rienda suelta* as we hit that final, uphill stretch, and knowing food and drink and shelter awaited, he would hold nothing back, stretching out to the max as he dashed for the finish line. There is no better ride than sitting in the saddle on a horse charging up a long, slow grade; it's like being rocked in your mama's arms, not just smooth, seamless! With the sound of ever-faster hoof beats, freakin' gorgeous scenery everywhere, the wind caressing your body, you want to ride forever. When it can't possibly get better, your horse's horseshoes hit the cobblestoned streets of town, sending sparks flying in all directions! As you rein in, your horse rears a bit, and kids playing off to one side yell "¡Viva! ¡Viva; caballero, viva!" The moment overwhelms and you know there's nowhere you'd rather be than right there, right then.

One other note of interest about San Pablo: The farrier was also the town barber and dentist, offering an early version of one-stop shopping, i.e. he would shoe your horse, cut your hair, and fix your teeth, all on the same visit. He had a slate-board easel sitting out from where he wrote, in chalk, the prices for various dental procedures—exam, filling, extraction, etc. The price list had two columns, one of each procedure "*sin gas*"; the other, more expensive listings for the same procedures "*con gas*." I let him shoe my horse, but that was the extent of my buying local, at least as far as he was concerned.

PETER KAPP RECALLS:

Peace Corps must have purchased hundreds of horses in Colombia. Two of the most interesting were the ex-cavalry mounts Jim Hoey and Dave Toryla had. I think they came from the *carabiñeros*. Used to marvel at how effective those horses were when used to control crowds at the bull fights in Bogotá. Supposedly the *carabiñeros* could scoop a rifle off of the ground at a gallop.

My horse was originally bought by Refugio I. Rochin from a horse trader, a guy known to locate and supply horses for clients. This cost about \$100 U.S. back then. It was trained for the *gringo* with the Spanish Paso. Smooth trotter. Castaño. brown.

REFUGIO ROCHIN WRITES:

I arrived in Sandona Nariño in early May 1962. I remember the time because I celebrated my 21st birthday alone on May 31. Steve Murray, my partner from Colombia I, was at a retreat with others from his pioneer group of Colombia PCVs. So, the time is fixed in my memory.

Steve and I bought our *caballos* directly from a horse trader; i.e., a guy who ventured around to buy quality *caballos* for clients like me. Steve found him via word-of-mouth in Sandona.

As far as I recall, Peace Corps Colombia did not buy horses, scooters, bikes or other transportation for the first groups. We were



(Above) Peter Eugene Kapp on his Peace Corps horse in Sandona Nariño, Colombia in 1964.

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“With the sound of ever-faster hoof beats, freakin’ gorgeous scenery everywhere, the wind caressing your body, you want to ride forever.”

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FROM THE FIELD (CONTINUED)

CABALLEROS (CONT'D)

reimbursed within reason. Some volunteers worked with *Promotors of Accion Comunal* of the Coffee Federation. In some cases the federation supplied horses.

Steve taught me “the ropes” for handling my horse. He had a very tall white horse. A strong *caballo* that seemed to enjoy up and down, rough mountain trails. My horse was a medium size brown macho that was trained in Colombian Paso Fino, a smooth gaited trot. I rode it daily, not knowing it needed rest. Poor thing, he started to lose weight and ate all things green, sugar cane, banana leaves, weeds, etc. I was so naive. I didn’t know how to rest or feed him properly over time. I bought him *bulto* from a village store. It looked like sawdust but it was for my horse that was corralled nearby. One day my horse didn’t look happy and backed away from me as I entered his corral. Then he stood his ground, shook his head from side to side, stomped his hoof and charged me. I thought I would be run over and bitten for sure. But, I raised my rope above his head and he stopped, right in front of my *soga*. Well trained! Who knows, probably whipped by his trainer with a *soga* over head.

I asked around for solutions and two came up. One, send my *caballo*—macho—to pasture for R&R and, two, accept a timely offer from Chris Sheldon (PC Director) and Merton Cregger (CARE Peace Corps Director) to serve as Volunteer Leader for Narino and Putumayo, living in Pasto. So, I found a farmer with a high altitude pasture—about 6,000 feet above Sandona. Grass aplenty and moist. And I moved to Pasto to assist volunteers as “Volunteer Leader”—with a new green four door jeep.

Thus began the story of volunteer leaders... and their jeeps. See that saga in the next issue of the newsletter.

(Below) Picture of mountain terrain in Nariño. Notice the road entering and criss-crossing communities in the higher elevations, up to 12,000 feet above sea level.



(Above) PCV Miguel Lanigan, author of *El Puta Caballo*, which appeared in the Winter 2015 newsletter. Miguel’s original story prompted many responses from early PCVs about their own horse experiences.

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Project UPDATES

FRIENDS OF COLOMBIA SHOWED UP IN FORCE AT PEACE CORPS CONNECT BERKELEY, JUNE 5 – 6, 2015

BY PATRICIA A. WAND, COLOMBIA VIII 1963-1965

After the final session of Peace Corps Connect—Berkeley, as I got on the dorm elevator to retrieve my bags and head out, another returned PCV got on with me. He was probably in his sixties and, making small talk, I asked, “Is this the first Peace Corps Connect you’ve attended?” With a smile he said, “Yes, it is. And next year will be the second.”

That pretty well summed it up for all of us.

He went on to explain. The speakers were informative and stimulating, the contributions of fellow RPCVs to the world and their communities continue unabated and their stories are astounding. Most of all and overall, the spirit of Peace Corps was pervasive. Throughout the plenary sessions, the breakouts and individual interactions he was reminded of the reasons so many of us signed up in the first place.

For every Peace Corps Connect, Friends of Colombia joins forces with National Peace Corps Association to offer something special focusing on Colombia. And now that Peace Corps has come alive again in Colombia, it makes our efforts even more rewarding.

Peace Corps Connect - Berkeley was no exception. FOC sponsored a Colombia Gathering on Friday afternoon, June 5, and a lively dinner on Friday evening. In addition, and for their first reunion ever, fifteen RPCVs who trained in Colombia VIII joined forces for meals and informal events to mark the milestone 50 years since they left Colombia.

On Friday afternoon more than 40 Colombia RPCVs gathered on the UC Berkeley campus in standing-room-only

space, introducing themselves one-by-one and participating in lively discussions with two outstanding speakers, Michael Edward Stanfield and Samuel Sharon Farr.

Michael E. Stanfield, Professor of History and Latin American Studies, University of San Francisco shared his research on why and how beauty has become a central positive identity marker for Colombians. He posits that Colombians focus on beauty and beauty pageants in order to divert attention from the complicated realities of daily life; that is, the insecurity, poverty and violence that pervade the lives of most non-elite Colombians. Through well-chosen photos spanning nearly two centuries, Stanfield illustrated how the Colombian concept of beauty changed from indigenous traits to European and western characteristics as Colombia shifted over time into the global economy. He admitted his own surprise in how much he discovered about Colombia and even U.S. policies through his study of Colombian fashion trends over time, aesthetic values and beauty. Stanfield’s latest book is *Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia* (University of Texas Press 2013).

(Below) More than 40 Colombia RPCVs participated in a lively discussion about their Peace Corps experiences, hosted by Friends of Colombia.



(Above) Pat Wand, Refugio (Will) Rochin, Nariño PCVs, 2015 Rochin was Volunteer Leader in Nariño & elsewhere.

“Is this the first Peace Corps Connect you’ve attended?” With a smile he said, “Yes, it is. And next year will be the second.”

PROJECT UPDATES (CONTINUED)

FRIENDS ... (CONT'D)

Our own U.S. Congressman Sam Farr addressed the group next, building on his keynote address earlier in the day at the opening session for Peace Corps Connect. Farr served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia 1964 – 1966, assigned to the barrio of Castilla in Medellín in an Urban Community Development program. Early in his service, Farr learned first hand the sustainability of citizen-focused, self-directed projects when he supported the *barrio* in the construction of a long-desired soccer field. That experience with *Acción Comunal* laid the groundwork for his life of service. He shared stories about his recent return to Colombia and the barrio as well as Colombia-related legislation in Congress that he has help to craft. He saluted the return of Peace Corps Volunteers to Colombia and the role Friends of Colombia had in facilitating their return.

Colombia RPCVs, family and friends gathered Friday evening for more stories, reminiscing and laughter. Sixty-three people enjoyed an informal reception at the HS Lordship Restaurant overlooking the Bay and just as they sat to eat they were unexpectedly joined by Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet (RPCV Samoa) and staffer Chris Austin (RPCV). Their presence broadened the scope of topics at some tables to include current and future Peace Corps activities. On Saturday, Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet addressed a plenary session of Peace Corps Connect.

Friends of Colombia activities in Berkeley were supported by the FOC Board and coordinated by Pat Wand and Dick Miller who oversaw local arrangements. Pat Kelly, FOC Newsletter Editor, joined in hosting attendees.

Mark your calendars now. Peace Corps' 55th anniversary is 2016 and we'll be celebrating it at Peace Corps Connect in Washington, DC, September 23 – 25, 2016.

See you there!



(Above) TOP: Faye Hooker and Linda Baldwin at a reunion brunch for Colombia VIII. BOTTOM: Professor Michael E. Stanfield shares research for his book reviewed on Page 9.

(Below) TOP: Kay Hetrick Kessel, Ginnie Selle Deason, Jon Deason, and Pat Wand at the Colombia VIII reunion. BOTTOM: Congressman Sam Farr (second from left) with fellow RPCVs at Friends of Colombia reception and dinner.



(Above) John Garamendi & Sam Farr, U.S. Congressmen from CA and returned Peace Corps Volunteers, address the Berkeley gathering.

“Peace Corps' 55th anniversary is 2016 and we'll be celebrating it at Peace Corps Connect in Washington, DC, Sept. 23 – 25, 2016”

After PEACE CORPS

THEN AND NOW: RETURN TO BUCARAMANGA

BY ROBERT BERGSTROM, COLOMBIA IV

I served in Bucaramanga, Santander from October 1962-64 with my partner, Jim Brown. We taught physical education, primarily at the Universidad Industrial de Santander, but also coached high school and club teams, and traveled to the rural areas to teach recreational games in those communities. Jim and I worked with Lazaro "Gito" Soto, the head of physical education for the Departamento de Santander and, with his help, we established a mandatory physical education program for all freshman students at the university.

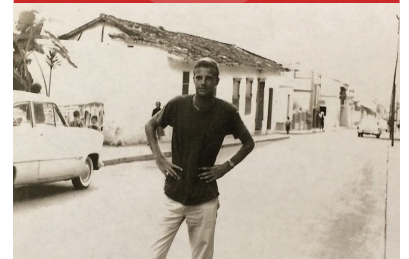
Fifty years after departing Colombia, I made a return trip to look back at my Peace Corps experience, and to share that experience with my wife, Sara. I took along pictures from the time I was in Bucaramanga, and then tried to find those same places today. Because of the tremendous amount of building and expansion, this was a difficult task, but with

the help of our driver, Miguel, we found some places.

I easily located the former Teatro Analucia, a movie theater with apartments above where the four of us assigned to the university lived. The theater now has another name, and gone is the large marquee where we used the letters to write "Seasons Greetings" and took pictures of us standing on the marquee for our holiday cards that year.

(Below) TOP LEFT COLUMN: Students on a hunger strike 50 years ago. BOTTOM LEFT COLUMN: Food carts outside the university entrance, the same location today.

(Below) TOP RIGHT COLUMN: The hotel where we stayed was just an open field 50 years ago. BOTTOM RIGHT COLUMN: Now it is a modern 18-story hotel with a rooftop bar, infinity pool, gym, spa, and a spectacular view of the high-rise buildings in the city. It is attached to a modern four-story mall with American brand stores, a food court, multiplex theaters, and a casino. We went there to buy Big Macs at the golden arches, or wine and other necessities at a Walmart type store. We even attended a Catholic Mass in the mall, along with about 200 other people.



(Above) TOP: Trying to find the house where I lived with a family for a few months was a different matter (actual house shown here). BOTTOM: The whole area, formerly an upscale residential neighborhood, is now high rise apartment buildings and businesses. We could not find the house.

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Fifty years after departing Colombia, I made a return trip to look back at my Peace Corps experience...

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AFTER PEACE CORPS (CONTINUED)



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Bicycles have
been replaced by
motorcycles by the
thousands...
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THEN AND NOW... (CONTINUED)



(Above) LEFT: I had pictures of the open entrance area of the Universidad Industrial de Santander from the time when the students were on strike, and shut down the university. I was amazed at the changes we saw. RIGHT: There is now a large entry gate with students swiping their ID cards to get through the numerous turnstiles. We had to go back to our hotel to get our passports before we were allowed to enter. There were vendors outside the gate, and inside were new buildings, a large sculpture, other modern art, and wow, I just could not believe it!

I wanted to ride the rustic campesino buses with goods stored on top, and people with chickens riding inside, but they have been replaced by sleek, modern buses. Even the Metrolinia buses in town did not take cash, but a card that one had to purchase. Bicycles have been replaced by motorcycles by the thousands, which zip in and out of traffic, which is heavy and chaotic.

The volleyball, basketball and tennis courts where Jim and I taught have been replaced with classroom halls, a performing arts theater, and other buildings. New courts, fields, a track, gymnasium, and soccer stadium now stand in another location. Certainly, bigger and better than what we had in our day. The physical education program

we started continues with an offering of numerous sports.

Throughout our stay in Bucaramanga we experienced friendliness and helpfulness beyond expectation. Miguel, our driver, went out of his way to provide us with many experiences from the local foods (the fried ants are not as good as I remembered) and sights. We encountered a professor who voluntarily gave us an hour tour of the campus. A woman at the airport got us into a cab, and then followed us to our hotel to make sure we did not get cheated on the fare. The warmth and friendliness of the local people we encountered left us with a feeling we treasure and relate to everyone as we tell our story of our Colombian adventure.

LA HONORABLE CARRIE HESSLER-RADELET

Directora del Cuerpo de Paz de los Estados Unidos de América en Washington, D.C.

Tiene el placer de invitarle a la celebración del veinticincoavo aniversario

Miércoles 21 de Octubre de 2015 a las 9:00am

**Gran Salón
Hotel El Prado, Barranquilla
Carrera 54 No. 70 - 10**

Traje profesional
Favor confirmar al 385 10 60 Ext.200
colombiapc@co.peacecorps.gov



Books, BOOKS, BOOKS

OF BEASTS AND BEAUTY: GENDER, RACE AND IDENTITY IN COLOMBIA

BY JERRY NORRIS, COLOMBIA VI

Prof. Stanfield takes readers through a literary odyssey in Colombia's socio-economic and political history. His main prism is through the lens of popular, local magazines of the time, such as *Cromos*, still in circulation today. Each helped build the image of modern, Colombian beauty. His time period goes back to 1825 when the country's total population was 1.3 million, 35% being Indian, today, it is 47+ million. He captures the critical components which "brokered Colombia's encounter with modernity, giving it a bipolar, back-to-the-future quality". His wide-ranging subject matter of 'gender', 'race' and 'identity' is woven into the juxtaposed meanings of 'beauty' and 'beast' in a contemporaneous Colombia context.

The beasts of civil war and political violence went hand in hand in Colombia when eight major civil wars rocked the country between 1831 and 1902, the last being the War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902). Fourteen local civil wars broke out over the same period. A successful border war with Peru in 1932-1933 over control of the port of Leticia marked the first time that Colombia wasn't engaged in a civil war.

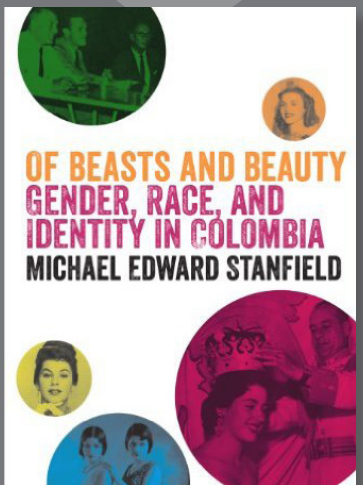
In the first half of the 20th Century, bipartisan governance dominated the political scene, quieting the beast. The first Miss Colombia pageant was held in 1932, again in 1934. Thereafter, the pageant slumbered until 1947. Wars in Europe set the stage for national and international pageants, but Colombia didn't need them when effective national reforms made symbolic sovereigns unnecessary. Ominously, this period ushered in the next era of Colombian history: *La Violencia*. The Liberal leader Jorge Gaitan was assassinated in 1948, igniting the flash point of civil war with Conservatives. In the book, *La Violencia en Colombia*, sociologist

Orlando Fals Borda, wrote: "it was a lone act which stripped with a single bullet the thin veneer of civility from an entire society".

Was there a home in Colombia without a red swath running through it, a family untouched from this political fratricide? It marked a time that became for survivors an enduring argument against remembrance. And yet ... there emerged the fig leaf of beauty amidst a roiled, genocidal national character, when highly competitive contests to crown *bellezas nacionales* blossomed in every village and metropolitan area of Colombia, faithfully recorded on the fashionable covers of *Cromos*.

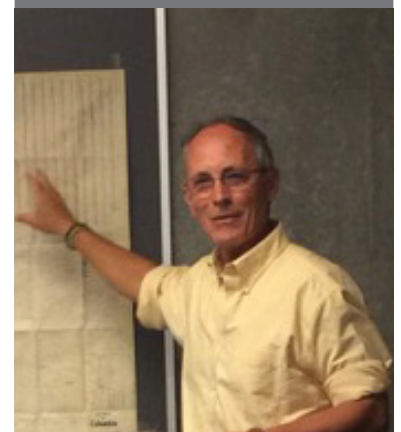
This led to a breakdown of elite politics. Partisan civil war placed beauty and pageants center stage as the symbolic, nonpartisan, civic and peaceful ritual of positive Colombian national identity. "Beauty and beast joined in a passionate tango, each partner with proscribed steps, neither able to part from the other for the rest of the 20th Century."

Prof. Stanfield's thesis can be summarized in the following manner: Colombia never overcame the 19th Century political divisions between Conservatives and Liberals; never resolved the 19th Century issue of Centralism v Federalism; never established a national government that truly forged and administered a nation that never replaced factionalism and the quest for partisan hegemony with a modern political agenda. Beauty, then, became an alternative and positive expression of civic and Colombian pride, one often embraced as an alternative to entrenched racial and caste inequalities, to the ugliness of being poor or rural, and to the cyclical beast of male violence.



Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race and Identity in Colombia

by Michael Edward Stanfield
is available on amazon.com.



Michael Stanfield addresses
Friends of Colombia at
Berkeley gathering.

