

May 2020

For the latest information on Friendship Force of Fort Worth go to <http://www.fffw.org>



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friendship force

FORT WORTH

A Non-Profit Organization Promoting Peace Through Homestay Journeys
Changing the way you see the world
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June Quarterly Meeting CANCELLED

We are living in strange times. Our June quarterly meeting is cancelled due to the corona virus pandemic. We are experiencing unique conditions for ourselves, very different from past events when SARS and MERS were just acronyms of other peoples' problems a half world away.

Furthermore, our age group makes us the most vulnerable to this highly contagious virus. You are encouraged to guard against infection and follow the guidelines established by our public health leaders. Stay safe and look forward to a more normalized September quarterly meeting.

Other Cancellations

City and state leaders have closed restaurants so our ethnic dinners have also been cancelled. Although some facilities may be slowly reopening our Board will determine when it is considered safe to reschedule ethnic dinners. As always you will be updated by email.

Jeri Edmunds as announced cancellation of the June Central Texas excursion. She tentatively is planning to reschedule for the Spring of 2021.

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." *Physicist Marie Curie*

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Historian

The President's Letter May 2020

Greetings,

We continue to be impacted socially and individually by the novel coronavirus. The May Ethnic Dinner and our June Quarterly meeting were cancelled to comply with recommendations by health officials.

Cancellations also include our Hosting Journey from Montreal and the Super Regional in Minneapolis, both scheduled for September.

The cancellation of all group events has severely impacted the income of FFI. Britton Holmes, Regional Support Manager, USA and Canada, reported that the FFI offices would be closed on Fridays to cut costs. FFI has also experienced staff reductions. Britton requested personal donations to assist FFI during this period of revenue loss.

The FFFW Board continues to meet, with the April, May and likely future meetings being conducted by Webex video conferencing. If anyone wants to attend a Board meeting, contact our Webmaster for information on how to use Webex and participate in the meeting. If any of us can be of any assistance to you during this stressful time, please contact us. Contact information is shown on the newsletter sidebar.

By the way if you need hand sanitizer, the local distillers have been producing it and Randy tells me that it is available at (of all places) Spec's liquor stores, about \$10 for what looked like a 12 oz. bottle.

And now some exiting news! We have received confirmation from

FFI for our 2021 Ambassador Journey. We will be going to **Guadalupe**. We have been working on this journey for several years, and it has finally happened, assuming things have returned to normal. Check the website, your eblasts, and future newsletters for more information, as things develop.

I am looking forward to the time when we can resume our regular activities and fellowship, and enjoy mingling with our members.

Keep safe and healthy,

Jo Thomson

FRIENDSHIP FORCE AND COVID-19

FROM THE FFI WEBSITE

Dear Friends,

As we navigate this unprecedented time in history, our thoughts are with our friends around the world. Hard decisions are being made by our club leaders about whether or not to cancel Journeys resulting in feelings of loss, disappointment, and even relief. We are all eager to get past this and look forward to a time when our members can again take part in the transformational experience of Friendship Force.

Based on the facts today, to ensure the safety and comfort of our members, we will support any groups who do not wish to travel on planned Journeys. If this applies to your group, please contact FFI for assistance with the postponement of the Journey, fee refunds, or a donation of the FFI fee. Please note that this applies to the FFI fees and host fees only. Airlines, tour companies, and other travel providers may have different policies and charge penalties.

We have introduced the following measures so that you may make future Journey plans with confidence:

- Journey payments for Journeys scheduled from now until the end of the year will be due when it is confirmed that the Journey is, in fact, taking place.
- If you have already paid FFI fees for a Journey and it is canceled due to concerns about COVID-19, we will assist in processing your refund or issuing a donation acknowledgment for ambassadors who wish to donate their FFI fees to FFI.
- We will work with clubs to reschedule Journeys that have been canceled. (Hosting a Journey postponed due to Covid-19 in addition to your 2021 assignment is a great way for your club to help FFI as we recover.)

FEBRUARY 2021 WORLD CONFERENCE

We recently reached the booking deadline for the Kaohsiung hotel that was chosen to host the world conference. Due to the current world health concerns, Friendship Force and the International Board of Directors have decided that, in the best interest of the health and financial stability of our members and our organization, committing to such a large event contract represents a risk which we have ultimately decided against taking.

As a result, the February world conference in Kaohsiung is officially cancelled. In its place, we hope to plan a smaller event, a Taiwanese Friendship Festival, for late February/early March 2021, with cultural workshops and activities as well as home-hosting for up to 100 people around the country. Details will follow this summer, but you may register your interest at support@friendshipforce.org.

FFI is immensely grateful to The Friendship Force of Kaohsiung and all the clubs in Taiwan for their flexibility and willingness to host a completely different kind of cultural event next year.

OUR MARCH SPEAKER

Jennifer Hay was our speaker at the March Quarterly Meeting. She is the Executive Director of the B Sharp Youth Music Program based in the heart of Como. The program is a free music education program based at the Leadership Academy at Como Elementary showcasing the Fort Worth Independent School District's only elementary orchestra and is sponsored by the Goff Family Foundation of Fort Worth.



CONNECTICUT FF DOMESTIC JOURNEY TO FORT WORTH

The club hosted the Connecticut club the first week of March and showed them the great things about Fort Worth including our museums, the water gardens, Bass Hall, the Stockyards and the US Bureau of Engraving. Members from Michigan, Virginia, Florida and Canada joined Connecticut for the fun. More pictures follow.



CONNECTICUT DOMESTIC INBOUND



CONNECTICUT DOMESTIC INBOUND



REMEMBERING HUNGARY AND AUSTRIA

If you weren't a member or don't recall, our Fort Worth club journeyed to Hungary and Austria in the spring of 2015. Jim Young lead Berry Bock, Kathleen McClaren, Richard Cookerly, Stan and Taylor Parker, Linda Doyle and Ed Vaughn for a joyous adventure. We brought back many photos and stories, but one is worth retelling. And here it is in Stan's own words.

Lost or Stolen By Stan Parker

"It's gone! I put my backpack *right there*." Taylor pointed at a spot under the table near her right foot. "It had our passports and everything in it. And now it's gone."

I pulled back the white dinner tablecloth and looked. The eight of us from Fort Worth Friendship Force were sitting on the edge of a group of restaurant tables in the middle of a cobblestone street in downtown Vienna. A white tent covered the tables in the event of rain.

I got up. "Maybe you left it at the place we had been sitting." I glanced around for a suspicious-looking person.

"No, no," she said. "I have been keeping it on my back or right beside me."

I walked quickly back to wood benches where some of us had sat. One of our party called something after me.

Not there. I asked the people in the bench area whether they had seen a backpack a few minutes ago. At first, I thought their silence and uncomfortable avoidance response meant they knew something. Then I realized that they might not speak English.

I calmed down and spoke slowly, "My wife left a backpack here a few minutes ago." Pause. "Have you seen the backpack?"

Their more relaxed responses included some mumbling and shaking of heads. Apparently they understood yet could not speak English well enough for a conversation. Or maybe they didn't want to get involved with a panicky tourist wearing walking shorts.

"Danka." Maybe someone turned it in to one of the adjacent stores. All of them were closed for the evening. I turned back to the people. "Danka."

I walked slowly back to the table. Since we had arrived in Budapest two weeks earlier, Taylor had worn the dark green backpack whenever we were in public.

Jim Young, our Exchange Director, spoke as I approached the table. "Stan! Why didn't you tell us about this earlier?"

I knew he wasn't asking about the backpack. He was asking about what I had been

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denying to myself for 10 days. I simply had not been able to take appropriate actions after I learned of my loss. Taylor must have told them while I was away from the table.

I stood by my chair, cleared my throat, and spoke in a rush. “The backpack was not there. I lost my wallet in Budapest. I will tell you about it soon. Let’s focus on the missing backpack first.”

One of our women said, “But you have been buying things. How did you do that?” Ed Vaughn interrupted to report that the police had been called and would be here within 15 minutes.

I avoided the woman’s question.

We discussed whether it would have been difficult for a pickpocket to grab the backpack without our knowledge. One woman remarked that people should be very careful about valuables when traveling.

I walked to the main part of our restaurant and checked with the waiter who had begun serving us. He spoke English very well. Although he was sympathetic, he denied knowing about the backpack or its absence. I left a note with full contact information. I pointed out to him that the note offered a reward.

I knew it was hopeless to locate a lost or stolen backpack in a foreign city. Even so, some of us clung to a very slim hope that the backpack might still be in the hotel room. Not Taylor. Again she insisted she had put it *right there*.

I commented that her belief might be somewhat like my refusal to admit to myself that my wallet had been lost or stolen. This led to questions about what exactly had happened to my wallet.

My listeners knew I stored a lot of things in my front pockets. My wallet, credit cards, and some cash in my left pocket and some additional cash in my right pocket. I also carried a pen and a blue folder for note keeping, my cell phone with its camera, and a bottle of water.

The listeners likely remembered one of the times I had dropped things. We were seated outside a restaurant in Budapest. I had just eaten a fish dinner and was trying to reach a credit card to pay for Taylor’s and my meals. My folders of paper, my water bottle, and some currency scattered under the table. Of course, I picked up whatever dropped.

So, I started my meandering explanation. “You remember the first night in Budapest we had checked in to the hostel where we had prepaid rooms for three nights. Taylor and I could not figure out how to turn on the air conditioning. Fortunately, the nighttime weather was very pleasant.

“In the morning, I talked to the desk clerk. He was not the same one who checked us in. I learned that, to get a remote control that turned on the air conditioning, he wanted 11 Euros per day for the entire time we were there. I pointed out that we had

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already spent one of the three nights that we had pre-paid. He did not budge on the price. The nighttime weather had been very pleasant, so I declined to pay for the air condition option.

“The second morning, I again asked about air conditioning. I again declined to pay for three days.

“Later I talked to still another clerk. She agreed to charge only 10 Euro per night, or the Hungarian equivalent, and only for the nights we used it. She would not accept U.S. currency. I decided to not let my obstinacy get in the way of a relatively cheap customary upgrade. I pulled out the wallet Taylor had bought for me during our Friendship Force exchange to Mongolia. I didn’t have any Euros yet, so I paid 20 Euros in the local currency.

“During the second day, I used forints to pay for my breakfast the second day. Later, I saw a neat souvenir. I reached for my wallet to get a credit card and realized that I did not have my wallet. I passed on the buying opportunity. That evening, to conserve my local currency, I borrowed dinner money.

“Back in the hostel, I searched our luggage, drawers, and dirty clothes bag. I finally told Taylor that I thought my wallet had been lost or stolen. Taylor gave me her set of credit cards.

After the train ride to Buda, Taylor and I got by on our forints, her credit cards, and our home hosts hospitality.

“When we went to Austria, I used one of Taylor’s cards to get Euros. I have used Jim’s cell phone several times, even today.”

“And that,” I told the little dinner group, “is how I was able to buy things and pay for meals during the past 10 or so days.”

One of the dinner group asked when I had reported my cards stolen. I admitted that I had not yet reported them lost or stolen.

The white tent flapped in a breeze.

A police woman walked by briskly. Ed caught up with her and returned. She was not responding to our call and was in a hurry to respond to another call.

More than 20 minutes had passed. We realized that the police were not going respond to our call. Moreover, little, if any, could be done if a police officer did respond to our call.

Ed had checked his cell phone and found out that the U.S. Embassy was closed until 8:30 a.m. I used Jim’s phone to verify that the Embassy did not have some way for us to reach them before 8:30 a.m. Our flight from Vienna was also scheduled to depart in the morning. I could see no way we could leave without our passports or clearance by the U.S. Embassy.

Jim suggested that, when we got to the hotel lobby, we “round up the wagons” and decide what to do.

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We headed back to the Underground and the hotel. We stopped for ice cream cones. At least the comfort food made me feel better.

When we got to the hotel, Taylor seemed shaken from the incident and needed to go upstairs. I told the others that I would take Taylor up and be back to the lobby soon. Someone encouraged me to look for the backpack.

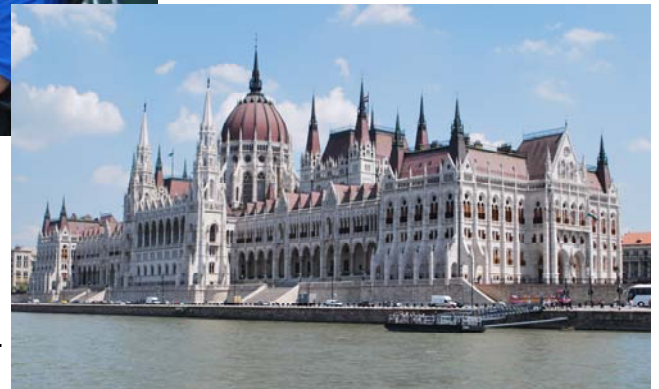
In our hotel room, I found that, before we had left, Taylor put the backpack behind a chair on the far side of the bed. I showed it to her. We located the passports and rejoiced.

I entered the lobby with the backpack and passports held above my head. Victory.

Addendum: The next day, I used the contact information on Taylor's credit cards to report mine missing. They had not been misused.



Our Pécs hosts treat us to a Sörkert or beer garden.



Hungarian Parliament overlooks the Danube River.



Mapping out our walking tour in Budapest.



Taylor makes a new friend.

Plan Ahead

Further details are emailed each month, or can be found on the web page: www.fffw.org. Ethnic dinners are a great way to become better acquainted with members, and to introduce prospective members to The Friendship Force of Fort Worth

FRIENDSHIP FORCE 2020 CALENDAR

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| May 15, 2020 | Ethnic Dinner CANCELLED |
| May 24, 2020 | Board Meeting 4 pm—Conference Video |
| June 5, 2020 | June Quarterly Meeting CANCELLED |
| July 17, 2020 | Ethnic Dinner 6pm TBA |
| July 19, 2020 | Board Meeting 4 pm Benbrook Library |
| August 16, 2020 | Board Meeting 4 pm Benbrook Library |
| August 21, 2020 | Ethnic Dinner 6pm TBA |
| September 4, 2020 | September Quarterly Meeting |
| September 14, 2020 | Northeaster Minnesota Pre-Conference Tour |
| September 18, 2020 | Super Regional Conference CANCELLED |
| October 13, 2020 | International Outbound to Brazil CANCELLED |

- ◇ Ethnic dinners occur monthly, on the third Friday, except during quarterly meeting months.
- ◇ Meeting time is 6:00 PM , unless otherwise noted.
- ◇ Please RSVP if possible by Wednesday prior to the dinner with Judy Williams text 817-680-9316 or email judithwilliams04@yahoo.com, in order to assist in determining a reservation count.

!!!! IMPORTANT !!!!

The FFFW Exchange Policies and Procedures are posted on the website:
[http://fffw.org/newsletters/FFFW Exchange Policies and Procedures.pdf](http://fffw.org/newsletters/FFFW_Exchange_Policies_and_Procedures.pdf).



friendship force
FORT WORTH

The Friendship Force is a non-profit organization whose goal is to establish an environment where seeds of personal friendship are sown across the barriers which divide the peoples of the world. As an ambassador you share lifestyles in a private home in other countries for a week, then you may home host to share your lifestyles. The Friendship Force was started in 1977 by Wayne Smith with the support of Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter. The organization has now become one of the largest exchange programs in the world.

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