



*Voices Today:**
History in the Making

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Sue Patterson's Memories of Her Years on the Board

If the 70's were the golden years of BPD, the early 2000s were those of lead. By then I had joined the BPD Board, based on Pat Krause's enthusiastic invitation (having recently retired to Antigua following my Foreign Service career) and assurance that my board commitments would "take only a few hours twice a year." HA!

By then I was not only a board member, but also serving on the Board of the Hospitalito as we were trying to negotiate our painful separation, AND being the only BPD Board member living fulltime in Guatemala (thus my membership on the Hospitalito board). In addition, for many of those years I served as the local counterpart to Susan Slater holding things together in the US, with Pat Krause's help.

But hold things together we did, as BPD started our separate program in San Martin Jilotepeque, conceived by Pat O'Connor – what we initially called the "Three-Legged Stool." This stool consisted of training local Traditional Birth Attendants, training local "pharmacy managers" to administer appropriate low-cost, readily available meds for common health problems, and picking up on Doc's program of some 25 years before of training local health promoters. To carry out this program we had very capable help from two Guatemalan physicians, Dr. Barbara Scheiber to get things set up, and then Dr. Rebecca Arrivillaga to keep it all going for several years. It was during that time that the lightbulb finally went on that we needed to get involved helping communities access clean water, similar to Doc's water program of the 1980s. Working first in the village of Los Jometes, SMJ, with a \$5000 donation that had been tucked away somehow, we formed another 3-legged stool, which we still use.

As water became more and more central to our mission, this 3-legged stool consisted of: (1) the villagers' commitment to find and buy a water source to provide sufficient year-around water for the number of village residents plus providing all the sweat equity to dig trenches for the water pipes and to provide their unskilled labor (under supervision) to build the 10,000 gallon storage tank; (2) a signed agreement with the Municipal Government to hire and pay for a

professional engineers' study to trace the path from the water source to the large storage tank, and from there to the villagers' homes; and (3) BPD's pledge to find funding with which to purchase all needed construction materials. This method worked out so well that it is the same method we continue to use.

We have now added other components to our basic program, including family planning, home gardens, goats and nutrition training, but the big motivator for every village is to get their potable water delivered to the "pila" water sink/storage place outside each village home. And the celebrations we attended to inaugurate each system were full of joy, everyone dressed in their finest, and lots of pine needles on the floor accompanied by many fireworks (and long speeches).

Under Paco's leadership, beginning in 2010, our programs have led to true, long-term community development, which requires a long-term commitment and involvement on BPD's/ALDEA's part. It can take 10 years to help the villagers feel empowered and see results from their own initiatives and projects. This is where the rubber hits the road, and keeps both long-timers like me and new ALDEA board members so deeply committed to our programs.

And now we are discussing our next growth phase in a new Strategic Plan, not diverting our impact by trying to get involved in too many other projects (but finding other NGOs working in microcredit, reforestation, building schools, etc.) to carry out their missions in our focus areas while we continue to focus our successful program the way we have found works best for us and for the long-term development of the rural villagers of Chimaltenango.

How could I not plan to stay involved for long-term, "primero Dios"?