

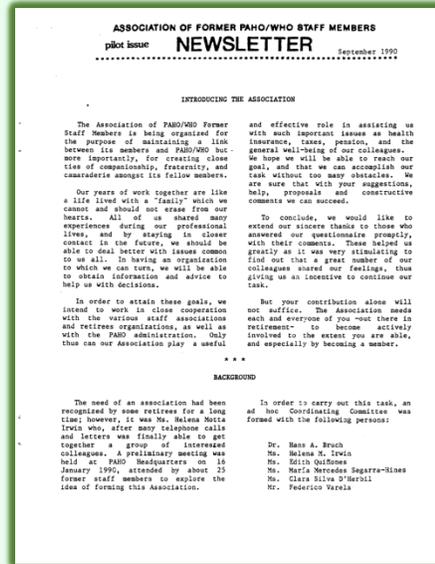


# NEWSLETTER

THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PAHO/WHO STAFF MEMBERS

VOL. XXXI No.4

DECEMBER 2020



*In September 1990 the first AFSM Newsletter was published as a pilot copy*

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## Editorial

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*By Gloria Coe*



As the Association of Former Staff Members of PAHO/WHO celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we recognize with gratitude and deep respect our founding members, their dedication and vision.

The Pilot issue of our first newsletter, dated September 1990,<sup>1</sup> indicates in its first paragraph that AFSM's purpose is "maintaining a link between its members and PAHO/WHO, but more importantly, creating close ties of companionship, fraternity, and camaraderie amongst its fellow members." Furthermore, "over the years of working together are like a life lived with a 'family' which we cannot and should not erase from our hearts." And - we will not.

Having the privilege of recently joining AFSM's leadership, I would like to mention the outstanding work of the Board and our collaborators.

Across 30 years, the AFSM Board continues expanding the founder's vision to create close ties among our fellow members, making efforts to move from an initial Washington-based group to facilitating active participation of former staff, wherever people live. We promote international meetings, chapters, and focal points. Hernán Rosenberg and Jeannette Bolaños are coordinating maintenance of the AFSM Facebook page, and Hernán, as AFSM VP, is coordinating the work of the new focal points who are supporting outreach efforts that have included the registration of 17 new members.

We are especially proud of our Newsletter and of the exceptional work of Marilyn Rice as Editor in Chief and Germán Perdomo as co-editor. Each edition achieves higher levels of excellence and beauty. Hortensia Saginor promotes membership, while maintaining the AFSM Directory and providing contact information for each member. Antonio Hernandez and Stan Orzeszyna excel in their work on the website (<https://www.afsmpaho.com/>) and developing communication channels for our members. Gloria Morales, as Secretary, not only executes the normal duties of that office but also manages the AFSM email, enabling members to directly contact us for assistance and information. Christina Torres, through her warmth and generous support, manages our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/afsmail/>). AFSM is grateful to our translators of Newsletter articles: Enrique Fefer, Mariesther Fernandez, Gloria Morales, Ana Maria Paulina, German Perdomo, Marilyn Rice, Roberto Rivero, and Hernan Rosenberg.

Carol Collado's work on behalf of AFSM with both PAHO's and WHO's Staff Health Insurance (SHI) Offices is decisive in maintaining the cost of our premiums across the Americas and preserving the Region's presence in decision making at the highest levels. Rolando Chacon manages our elections and surveys. Sylvia Schultz, as Treasurer, guides our financial decisions. Hernan Rosenberg, as Vice President, led our months-long review and revision of our AFSM Bylaws. Nancy Berinstein Rosenthal, our former President, provides support, memory, and historical archives; and Enrique Fefer is a generous supporter and exceptional writer.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.afsmpaho.com/copy-of-mission>

The Board is fortunate to have former members who, although they left the Board, they continue to collaborate with the work of the Association. Amongst these are Pepe Cruz who made important contributions to extend our reach and deepen our support. Although he is leaving on 1 January, he promised to continue to participate in our monthly meetings. It is with pleasure that the Board welcomes Juan Manuel Sotelo, former collaborator, as a member of the Board.

During the time of COVID-19, AFSM we acknowledge the considerable assistance provided by statistician Yvette Holder and epidemiologists Alberto Concha Eastman and Marlo Libel. With the support of Board members, they prepared a google survey on AFSM members' experience during the pandemic, the conclusions of which they presented at our 30<sup>th</sup> virtual annual General Meeting on 9 December.

Throughout our history, AFSM members have been very fortunate to have had dedicated and committed Board members and many collaborators who have spent hours of their time, their expertise and skills to ensure that together we create close ties of companionship, fraternity, and camaraderie amongst fellow members and on behalf of our wonderful PAHO family. The Board encourages the participation of colleagues interested in supporting our members and joining our meetings. If you are interested in becoming more active in AFSM, please send an email to [AFSMPAHO@gmail.com](mailto:AFSMPAHO@gmail.com), Subject: Volunteer.

The Board celebrates AFSM's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, appreciative of the rich heritage bequeathed to us and future generations. As older adults, connected through virtual channels of communication, we are caring for each other in the time of COVID-19, affirming the insight of Robert Browning, the great 19<sup>th</sup> Century English poet:

***Grow old along with me! The Best is yet to be,  
the last of life, for which the first was made.***

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***Bienvenida a los nuevos miembros de la AFSM***

**Maritza Romero from Barcelona, Spain**  
**Garry Presthus from Battle Ground, Washington State, USA**  
**Antonio Carlos Campino from Brasilia, Brazil**  
**Lucimar Coser Canon from Brasilia, Brazil**  
**Gustavo Bergonzoli from Cali, Colombia**  
**Alberto Concha-Eastman from Cali, Colombia**  
**Diego Daza Sierra from Cali, Colombia**  
**Matilde Soledad Maddaleno Herrera from Santiago, Chile**  
**Patricia Bordas de Olivo from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**  
**Sandra Josefina Martínez de Vicioso from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**  
**Oscar Suriel from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**

## Summary of the Annual AFSM General Meeting

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*By Marilyn Rice and Enrique Fefer*



AFSM has successfully carried out its first totally virtual General Meeting, via Zoom, on 9 December 2020 AFSM/PAHO. There were 100 participants, many more than had participated in the face-to-face meetings in past years. The full recording and presentations can be found on the AFSM website at: <https://www.afsmpaho.com/copy-of-documents> AFSM is grateful to PAHO's technical support and facilities which contributed to the success of the event.



Our President, Gloria Coe, opened the meeting with a welcome to all participants. She reviewed the objectives of the meeting, provided an overview of the agenda, and designated Juan Manuel Sotelo as the Chair of the meeting.

Mary Lou Valdez, PAHO's Deputy Director, congratulated AFSM on its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. She provided a historical perspective of PAHO's accomplishments since 1990 when the focus was on communicable diseases, reminding us that in 1994 we were the first region in the world to be polio-free. The present focus is on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the interdependence between health and the economy. The numbers of deaths and increased joblessness have amplified levels of poverty with the overall regional GDP going down by 8.1%. PAHO continues to emphasize the need for strong and well-funded health systems to recover from the disruptions due to COVID, which include the increased death rate due to untreated HIV, TB and diabetes. She discussed the Organization's challenge of continuing to support programs and staff, PAHO's greatest asset, in the face of unpaid country assessments. PAHO will continue with cost containment measures while working to increase voluntary contributions as a buffer against future shortfall in country contributions. She recognized AFSM as a strategic asset and, in closing, requested that AFSM continue to support PAHO's activities in the countries.

The official annual membership business meeting began with a moment of silence in memory of our colleagues who died during 2020 and Enrique Fefer read the names while we each reflected upon what those people meant to us, to PAHO and to the countries.

Juan Manuel Sotelo, as Chair of the meeting, proceeded to adopt the agenda and gain approval of the minutes of the 2019 General Meeting.

Gloria Coe, as President, recalled the original purpose for the formation of AFSM and mentioned its ongoing efforts to increase members participation. She gave special thanks to

members of the Board of Trustees, mentioning the work of each of the six committees. She welcomed the 22 new members who joined in 2020 and congratulated the recently designated Focal Points throughout the Region and in Europe. She especially thanked the outgoing and incoming web masters, Antonio Hernández and Stanislaw Orzeszyna and the win-win partnership with the PAHO Federal Credit Union. Finally, she invited all to the next International Reunion to take place in Costa Rica in October 2021, COVID permitting.

Sylvia Schultz, as Treasurer, gave us the treasurer's report with all accounts in order and in good standing, and even during the COVID pandemic we managed to acquire 16 new members. Rolando Chacón announced the results of the election process (see more about this in this newsletter). Hernán Rosenberg gave an overview of the proposed changes in the Bylaws, with the possibility of members nominating an associate member at any time, the changes in dues and the possibility of holding virtual meetings, or physical ones outside of Washington. All members will receive an explanatory mail in about one month and have 45 days to review the changes and then vote on approval or not.

Nancy Berinstein, former President of AFSM, presented the 30-year history of AFSM from the time of its founding as a social club in Washington, DC to its transformation into an international association dedicated to protecting the welfare and benefits of former staff. She spoke of our involvement in the founding of ARAIO, an organization representing former staff and retirees from international organizations such as AFICS, IDB, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the European Development Bank, the IMF and the OAS. The late Jean Surgi and Jaime Ayalde were remembered for their many years of dedication in nurturing and growing the Association. We also heard about Hortensia Saginor, who joined AFSM in 1996 and still serves on the Board as Membership Chair. Former PAHO Directors Macedo, Alleyne, and Roses were also acknowledged for their years of support and encouragement. In conclusion she encouraged us to stay well and look forward to the end of COVID when we will meet and enjoy our new freedom at an AFSM reunion in Costa Rica. Please see her more complete article in this newsletter.

Enrique Vega, PAHO Unit Chief of Healthy Life Course provided an overview of PAHO's plans for the UN Decade for Health Ageing 2020-2030. The Americas Region has a greater increase in aging populations than the rest of the world and a more rapid increase in the oldest of the old (80 years old and older). In our region, the impact of COVID has been greatest in North America followed closely by Central America, especially in people over 60. The epidemic has clearly revealed the deficiencies in the health care systems and long-term-care facilities, and the gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy continues to widen. The Global Strategy on Ageing and Health 2016-2030 is aimed at creating a world in which everyone can live a long and healthy life. Through a long and consultative process, a regional strategy has been developed focusing on 4 action areas: changing how we think, feel and act toward elderly and ageing (confront discrimination); ensure that communities foster the abilities of older people; develop person-centered integrated care and primary health care services responsive to older people; and provide access to long-term care for older people who

need it. On 14 December a report was launched with baseline information for the Decade of Healthy Ageing, based upon a participatory process of partnerships with governments, civil society, universities, artists, producers, communicators and journalists. An online space has been created to collect relevant knowledge in the six official UN languages that can be accessed at <https://www.who.int/health-topics/ageing>. Enrique Vega made a call to PAHO's retirees to become active drivers of the Decade and join PAHO in promoting those plans and programs that build bridges in the gaps of inequality and create healthy environments for older persons in the Region.

Enrique Pérez Gutiérrez, Unit Chief of Health Emergency Information and Risk Assessment, presented the situation of COVID-19 in the region and PAHO's response. We have the greatest number of cases in the world (almost half) and are just behind Europe in the number of deaths. The disease is spreading into indigenous and remote communities and surgical procedures are being postponed to accommodate COVID patients. Although there may be more cases in younger people, the deaths are much greater in populations over the age of 60. There are five pillars to PAHO's program: logistics and information management; public health measures to control the spread; epidemiological intelligence for case management; strengthened lab capabilities (rapid antigen tests, supportive PPE and trained health staff); and communication and media relations.

The Board, concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on its membership sent a survey to all AFSM members to see how they were coping with the epidemic. The information was collected and analyzed by 3 outstanding members. Given the limited number and widespread geographic distribution of AFSM members in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, Yvette Holder surveyed all former staff she could locate and not just AFSM members. Marlo Libel conducted a survey of members residing in Canada and the US, and Alberto Concha-Eastman did so for our members in Latin America. Responses across the countries were remarkably similar. Positive COVID impacts included increased healthy public health practices such as handwashing, improved communication with family and friends, better Internet and computer skills, and more free time for personal enrichment activities like reading, writing and exploring new activities. Negative impacts included inability to travel, shop and socially interact with family and friends, as well as frequent feelings of sadness, depression, isolation, and monotony, especially among women living alone. Most respondents said they would accept the vaccination. Retirees have been supported throughout this time by AFSM by providing access to critical information, and sharing and receiving support in resolving COVID-generated issues. Please note that a more complete article with all the survey results will be included in the March 2021 issue of PAHO AFSM's newsletter.

Miguel Boluda, CEO of the PAHO/WHO Federal Credit Union reported that the FCU is celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Starting in March 2020, due to COVID, the staff completely transitioned to working remotely, even though consultations have been made available through online booking on the new FCU website. A financial overview as of 1 October 2019 showed a strong, well-capitalized FCU. There are several new products and services that are now

offered, including: contactless debit and credit cards, student loans, 20 and 30-year fixed rate mortgages, Master credit cards with points that never expire He highlighted the seven Globies Winners with \$7,000 in donations to charities of their choice, and the success of the virtual financial educational sessions. He recognized the retirement of Patricia Vidal Iljic, a strong supporter of AFSM- FCU relations.

The final session of the meeting was a presentation by PAHO staff of the changes in the management companies for our health insurance and prescription plans, taking effect 1 January 2021. More details about this are in the article on Health Insurance and Pension Update in this newsletter as well as on our AFSM website.

All in all, a smooth-running and informative General Assembly, a result of the dedication of all those involved in the preparation and the presentations. *N*

## *In Memoriam*

**DEATHS INFORMED IN 2020  
NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED**

<b>Berta Rosas</b>	<b>18 March, 2020</b>
<b>Armando Ramos</b>	<b>26 April, 2020</b>
<b>Carlos Francisco Novoa Zapata</b>	<b>15 September, 2020</b>
<b>Ana María Ramos Paz</b>	<b>27 September, 2020</b>
<b>Noemí Funes</b>	<b>Dicember, 2020</b>

### **Condolences**

**To Elías Anzola for his wife Carmenza**

## A Brief History of PAHO/WHO AFSM

By Nancy Berinstein and the late Jean Surgi <sup>1</sup>



In the years before 1989, most of the other international organizations in the Washington Metropolitan area had associations of retirees or former staff as well as those of active-duty personnel. PAHO/WHO was the exception. PAHO retirees had an institutional link with colleagues from other organizations through the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS), whose Washington chapter started in 1981 and was open to all AFSM retirees in the United Nations pension system. But former staff of PAHO/WHO had no official link with its own Administration.



The need for such an association had been recognized earlier, but no action was taken until Helena Irwin got the ball rolling. Through telephone calls and letters, she assembled a group to participate in a meeting at PAHO on 16 January 1990. They formed a preliminary coordinating committee consisting of six members: Hans Bruch was chosen to be the Chairman, with Members Helena Irwin, Edith Quiñones, María Mercedes Segarra-Hines, Clara Silva d'Herbil, and Federico Varela. On 15 May 1990, this group met with Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, then Director of PASB, who welcomed the idea of forming an association and gave it his full support. Jean Gauthier, Chief of Personnel at that time, also aided as needed.



The preliminary committee organized a general meeting, held on 15 June 1990, attended by 50 retirees. This group elected the official Coordinating Committee, consisting of Jaime Ayalde, Alfred Gerald, Yolanda Hanson, Esther Jaramillo, Antonio Ríos, Said Sodique, and Jean Surgi. After completion of preliminary work, the Association of Former PAHO/WHO Staff Members was officially born on 8 November 1990. At that time, those in attendance approved the bylaws, a program of activities, and a budget for the following year and they elected the first Board of Directors. At the first meeting of the Board on 27 November 1990, officers were elected, with Hans Bruch as President. Jaime Ayalde ascended to the presidency and remained in office for ten years. Nancy Berinstein succeeded Jaime for close to another ten years. German Perdomo then assumed responsibility for the presidency and was followed by our current president Gloria Coe. Jean Surgi and Hortensia Saginor were with the Association nearly from the very beginning and all have helped to make AFSM what it is today.

At the time AFSM was born, there were staff representative positions on some of the committees established by the PAHO Administration. Active-service staff had full representation on these groups, but retirees and other former staff members did not. One of the priorities of AFSM was to see that retirees also had an ongoing opportunity to present their concerns. An example is the Subcommittee of the Global Standing Committee of the SHI, for PAHO/WHO Region of the

<sup>1</sup> Died in 2017

Americas. We currently have a representative on this Sub-committee in Washington, appointed by AFSM. Retirees are represented in the health insurance governing bodies in Geneva through a global election process, and AFSM successfully proposed and supported one of its members, Carol Collado, for a position on the Global Standing Committee.



The Board of Directors encourages its members to interact with colleagues in the countries when they travel on official or personal visits. In addition, the Board has sponsored several international meetings for its members: Washington DC in 2002; Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2006; Cartagena, Colombia in 2008; Lima, Peru, in 2010; Panama City, Panama, in 2012; Washington, DC in 2014; Dominican Republic in 2016, and a Caribbean cruise in 2018. The next one was scheduled for October 2020 in Punta Arenas, in Costa Rica, which was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

For major meetings, such as the Annual Meetings, AFSM has enjoyed the facilities of the Organization. The monthly meetings were originally convened in the main dining room of the cafeteria until the Staff Association put at our disposal their more private chess room annexed to it. This arrangement continued for several years until the Administration provided larger rooms and included our meetings on their official list.

During AFSM's growing years, social gatherings of its members and their spouses enjoyed the generous and warm hospitality of President Hans Bruch and his wife Lurdy. Their home was converted into a "country club" where the food was cooked in open BBQs.

Although when AFSM began it was meant to be a social outlet, a way friends and colleagues could come together in an informal setting to enjoy each other's company, today, in addition to that goal it has taken on very important issues to protect the welfare and benefits of the members. We have significant involvement in Staff Health Insurance both on the Regional and Global Levels. That is probably the most important thing that we do, both for members and in fact, for all former staff!

We have an ongoing relationship with the other international organizations here in Washington, NYC, Manila, and Geneva, as well as AFSM chapters and focal points in many countries of the Caribbean, Latin America, Canada, and Europe.

We are doing our best to keep up in the digital age by having a Web site and a Facebook page.

A major effort of AFSM has been its publication of newsletters throughout the year. This is one of our most useful tools in sharing information of interest and importance to the membership.

The group who originally met at Dr Bruchs' house might not recognize the AFSM of today. But we are still here and still committed to good fellowship and service on behalf of the welfare of PAHO/WHO Former Staff. **N**

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## Celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> AFSM Anniversary

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By Hortensia Saginor



The Association was established in 1990 and I joined, between 1994 and 1995. The Board of Directors was composed of Hans Bruch as President, Jaime Ayalde as Vice President, Mercedes Segarra as Treasurer, Jean Surgi as Secretary and Dana Dashiell, Guillermo Davila and Renate Plaut as Members at Large of the Board. Of the founders, only Hans Bruch and Mercedes Segarra were still there when I joined.

The monthly meetings were held at Hans Bruch's house. The documents were printed at PAHO and brought to Hans' home. The members of the Board met at his house to stuff envelopes and put the labels on them. Once ready, they were taken to PAHO for shipment.

Hans Bruch encouraged Luz María Esparza, who was the Association's Treasurer, and me, to learn the "Access" program to help him with the database and take care of membership information. Luz María was very busy and I became interested in learning the program, so I took care of membership information and updating the database. I have been doing this assignment for more than 20 years. From the beginning, I understood that the work of AFSM was very valuable for all former staff, keeping us informed of what was of interest and concern to us all.



Another of the assignments entrusted to me was to take on social activities. I have not only organized lunches twice a year, but also the International Meetings, starting with the first one held in 2002, coinciding with PAHO's Centennial. The second one was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2006; the third one in Cartagena, Colombia in 2008; the fourth one in Lima, Peru in 2010; the fifth one in Panama City in 2012; the sixth one in Washington DC in 2014, to coincide with the celebration of the 110th Anniversary of PAHO and the 25th of AFSM; the seventh one in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic in 2016; the eighth one in 2018, on a Caribbean Cruise; and the ninth one was scheduled for October 2020 in Punta Arenas, in Costa Rica, which was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In general, the International Meetings last from three to five days, and the work meetings are always very interesting, with the participation of local health authorities, as well as experts in the history of the country and representatives of PAHO's Health Insurance.

In all the meetings, excursions are scheduled to different and interesting parts of the country along with night activities and dinners with musical shows and typical dances. The PAHO Federal Credit Union (FCU) has always been present, with Miguel Boluda and/or Patricia Ilijic, and has supported us by offering a typical dinner.

Working with AFSM has been a very valuable experience for me, and it has allowed me to meet many former staff. I feel very proud and satisfied to be part of the Association. The 30 years of the Association have been and continue to be very important and profitable for all. Congratulations to everyone who is part of the AFSM. **N**

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## The First International Reunion

*(Washington DC, 30 November – 4 December 2002)*

*When did we begin? Remembering something from our common history with PAHO*

By José R. Teruel and Hortensia Saginor



During the 19th century, the countries of the Americas, concerned about the epidemics that affected them, carried out various health conferences. These conferences served as inspiration for the formation of a special institution that would facilitate the sharing of public health programs among



countries. During the Second International Conference of American States, held in Mexico City between 22 October 1901 and 22 January 1902, a report was approved that recommended ***“the convening of a general meeting of representatives of the health offices of the American republics, to formulate health agreements and provisions, and periodically conduct health conferences”***. The general conference should also appoint a permanent executive board to be called the International Sanitary Bureau, and it would be based in Washington, D.C.



In accordance with this recommendation, the First International Sanitary Conference was held in Washington, DC, from 2 to 5 December 1902, with the participation of representatives from 11 countries. The objective was to organize a united front of cooperation to confront the diseases and illnesses that had occurred in the Region since the end of the previous century. Of special concern was yellow fever

that, in addition to causing damage to the population, also hindered the trade that was beginning to increase among American countries. *The institution that would become our Pan American Health Organization was created.*

Since its inception, PAHO, in addition to controlling epidemics, progressively included other programs in the list of its activities, such as: training human resources in health (medicine, nursing, sanitary engineering, veterinary medicine), maternal and child health, development of health services, research in public health, among others. Specialized centers were organized in some countries to facilitate support for national programs related to nutrition, scientific information, zoonoses, sanitary engineering, educational technology in health, perinatology, health planning, and others such as for epidemiology in the Caribbean and malaria in Venezuela.

PAHO is the international health institution with the longest streak of uninterrupted activities. Even though they were created beforehand, other organizations, mainly in Europe, ceased to exist, mainly due to military conflicts. Only in 1948, after World War II, was the WHO created as an institution specialized in Health, by a proposal presented by China and Brazil. On 4 May 1949, an agreement was signed between WHO and PAHO, whereby PAHO assumed the regional representation of WHO in the Americas. This agreement between the two organizations was signed in Caracas, Venezuela, by Dr. Brock Chisholm, First Director General of WHO, and by Dr. Alfred Soper, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.



With the evolution of Pan American health cooperation, professionals and technicians from the different countries were progressively incorporated into the organization's headquarters and offices in the countries and in the Pan American centers. At the same time, the necessary support system included technical-administrative staff as well as secretarial staff. Over time and with the broad functions that were assigned to it, PAHO incorporated more than 3,000 people dedicated to addressing the health problems that affected the populations of the Americas, and supported the Ministries of Health, other service institutions, and training health personnel.



In 1990, there were already a significant number of staff retired from PAHO who maintained communication and relationships with colleagues with whom they had worked for several years. For the most part, they were united by memories of the difficulties and joys of a lifetime dedicated to cooperating with countries.

A group of retired staff decided to organize an association, based in Washington DC, to coordinate communication among former PAHO staff as well as to assist with resolving eventual problems regarding pension, health insurance, and other matters for which they needed representation with the United Nations. Hans Bruch, Helena Irwin, Federico Varela, Mercedes Segarra, and others, participated in that initial effort, dedicating time to the creation and development of the Association.

In November 2002, PAHO's Director, Sir George Alleyne, organized a ceremony to commemorate PAHO's First Centennial. On that occasion, the Association of Former Staff Members of PAHO decided to invite its members to its First International Meeting, to be held simultaneously in the city of Washington, D.C. At that time, AFSM's Board of Directors was composed of Jaime Ayalde, Jan Barahona, Luz María Esparza, Carlos García, Germán Mora, Hortensia Saginor, Jean Surgi and José Teruel.



For several years, Hortensia had been collaborating on the Association's activities. On this occasion, she demonstrated extraordinary dedication and abilities in solving problems with the organization and development of the event. Due to other planned events, the lodging facilities, mainly hotels, close to PAHO, were unable to accommodate the group of AFSM members who had confirmed their participation. Hortensia and José Teruel managed to find the Holiday Inn Hotel on Wisconsin Avenue, in Chevy Chase, Maryland, that had the necessary facilities to host the 41 participants and their families that had confirmed their participation. Some meetings were held at that Hotel and others at PAHO Headquarters. A bus was rented to transport the participants between the Hotel and PAHO Headquarters. A report of the event and photos were the subject of a PAHO publication and a special AFSM report.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the participants who attended were: from Argentina: Elsa Moreno, Néstor Suárez Ojeda and Ramón Tomé; from Brazil, José Roberto Ferreira; from Colombia: Julio Roberto Jiménez and Alvaro Uribe; from Canada: Una Reid; from Costa Rica: Rodrigo Barahona and René González; from Chile, Héctor Silva Olivares; from Guatemala, Juan Ricardo Ríos Quirós; from Mexico, Eutimio González Luarca, Francisco López Antuñano and Fortunato Vargas Tentori; from the Dominican Republic, Victor Pou Holey; and from Uruguay, Vladimir Rathouser. The Caribbean was very well represented: from Bermuda, Barry Whalley; from Guyana, Dorothy Blake, Mena Carto, Leila Eastman and Claudette Harris; from Haiti, Yva Latortue; from Jamaica, Peter Carr and Paul Ellis; and from Trinidad and Tobago, Ronald Williams.

Among the Washington colleagues were: Primo Arámbulo, Alfonso Chang, Gerald Hanson, Maricel Manfredi, José María Salazar Buchelli and his wife Amalia, Jorge Osuna, Gaston Oxman, Gabriel Schmunis, Horst Otterstetter, Leo Lamarche, Flora Early, Irene Pino, Aseneth Marinaccio, Jaime Estupiñán, Brenda Simons, Nilda Wadhwa and others that included all members of the AFSM Board of Directors.

We cannot end this summary without including Dr. Mayron E. Wegman, one of the Organization's senior staff, who came from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to attend the event. Dr. Wegman was at PAHO in the days of Dr. Alfred Soper and shared with Dr. Horwitz the coordination of PAHO's main technical activities in the 1950s. Later, he was Director of PAHEF (the Pan American Health and Education Foundation), previously created by Dr. Horwitz to mobilize additional resources for the Organization's programs.

It is not possible to list everyone who was present, but we also registered the presence of Dr. Sumedha Khanna (who came from California and, on that occasion, encouraged the participants to interrupt the discussions to do yoga exercises!).

Congratulations on this commemoration of AFSM's 30th anniversary. **N**

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<sup>1</sup> To see the AFSM report in our newsletter, go to this link:

[https://132841a6-d1df-0751-6868-a8ae5dadd191.filesusr.com/ugd/6814f4\\_35ae40c8eade442995a9c2e095899cca.pdf](https://132841a6-d1df-0751-6868-a8ae5dadd191.filesusr.com/ugd/6814f4_35ae40c8eade442995a9c2e095899cca.pdf)

## Reflections on life with PAHO

*By Sumedha Mona Khanna*

Former Staff Member of PAHO 1968-1983



On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Association of Former Staff Members (AFSM), I feel it is appropriate for us to reflect on what PAHO meant for us and why we still want to stay connected with it. The role of the AFSM in keeping us connected, engaged, and stimulated in life after retirement or after leaving PAHO has been crucial and in fact unique in today's world of busyness. This is even more important when we think about where we all came from when we first joined PAHO as a staff member- encompassing many countries, and diverse cultures, backgrounds and professional lives. We adapted to the life in the countries where we served. Some of us even permanently adopted the country where we were placed. Some of our children were born or educated there and found their life-partners and started their own professional and family lives there. Our love and affection for our children bonded us to stay closer to them as grandparents. The home country from where we came became a distant one; just a place to visit occasionally, at least while our own parents and elders were still alive.

It is said that we never leave PAHO because PAHO itself becomes our large extended family. So many of us have spent a large part of our professional lives in PAHO and have shared our challenges and experiences, our creative ventures and sometimes some dark periods. We have witnessed political and social changes in many countries of our Region, including ones from where we ourselves came; but we did not become a part of that political process. When we work for PAHO, we do not belong to the country of our birth, we become citizens of the World. We do not carry our national passports; we carry a United Nations Passport (*Laissez Passer*). We hope that when we leave our work with PAHO, we will leave something of ourselves behind, by which, with a bit of luck, others will remember and honor us. Some of us might venture to write a book about our lives and experiences in PAHO. Some of us might be honored by our country of birth or our old alma mater for our distinguished work in public health.

There is no doubt that each of us carries a special memory and love for either a country, an institution, or a project where we did something special, what I would call "spending special love". For me, for example, the Caribbean countries, especially Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Jamaica, stand out where I served, and they will always be special like my First Love. These newly independent countries from their colonial master were ready in their infancy to grow fast and take on leadership for their development. This was perhaps the most productive and exciting time for building health systems, especially for their vulnerable populations - mothers and children.

Through all these years since our leaving PAHO, AFSM has kept us connected. It has had incredibly dedicated leaders who love PAHO and what it stands for, and who recognize and honor the dedicated work of the former staff members. It has played a supportive role and has been a vehicle for not only keeping us connected but also informed us of new developments, rules and regulations. In a way, it has kept us as a close-knit family. It has created opportunities for former staff members to get together and share their memories and experiences of their lives after PAHO. Many of us have been able to maintain life-long friendships with our former colleagues. This kind of work, all voluntary, comes from dedication and love for PAHO and our contribution to its work. I think it also motivates and stimulates the younger and active generation of PAHO staff.

One of the most important vehicles for sustaining this connection has been the AFSM newsletter. Each issue of this newsletter (that has evolved over the years) contains valuable information about our pension's rules; staff health insurance issues; and our credit union - all especially important for us. It also presents at least one health topic that is especially relevant to us or where important technological advances have occurred. And most importantly, it includes information about what some of our previous colleagues are doing, where they are now, and what new changes have occurred in their lives. One sad note is knowing about the colleagues who have passed on – reading especially about those with whom we worked closely evokes special memories and love in our hearts combined with some sadness. I cherish each issue of this newsletter; in fact, I wait for the next one with anticipation. It is like a big “Letter from Home”, from my extended Family.

On reflecting on our work and life with PAHO, I feel that we are like farmers, who know that no matter how well we plow, seed, and fertilize, and no matter how much fruit our efforts bear, in autumn the fruits of our labor will be cut to the ground. No matter how excellent and useful they have been, they no longer stand. However, most of us realize later in our lives that we feel a need to know that our lifework mattered, that our efforts made a difference, and that we are still worthy of respect. When all is said and done, I feel that we will be known not by how hard we worked or what we achieved, but how well we loved what we did and how we might have made a difference in someone else's life or opened doors for those who came later.

We must reflect and share our memories of our lives well spent.

Thanks to AFSM and its newsletter for keeping us connected, motivated, and energized. **N**

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## Summary of the History of the AFSM Colombia Chapter

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### Helena E. Restrepo, Martha Ligia Fajardo and Gustavo Mora P.



The idea of founding a Colombian Chapter of the Association of Former PAHO/WHO Staff Members (AFSM) arose during the Second International Reunion of AFSM, in April 2006 in Buenos Aires, in which Germán Mora, Gustavo Mora and Helena Restrepo participated on



behalf of Colombia. During the meeting, it was recognized that the founding of local and regional groups was important for linking a greater number of former staff to AFSM, as well as for promoting activities to facilitate their integration.



The recommendation of the AFSM Board of Directors was: “to promote and facilitate the creation of circles of former PAHO/WHO staff in other countries of the Region of the Americas, with objectives and goals that coincide with the purposes of the Association”. The three participants from Colombia committed to this initiative and, upon returning, obtained the

support of other retirees from Cali, Bogotá, Bucaramanga and Cartagena, to carry out this project.

A meeting was organized in Cali, in October of the same year, which was initially called the “preliminary meeting of AFSM Colombia” and that in practice is considered the first meeting of the Colombian Chapter (CCOL). The initiative was accepted with great enthusiasm by the attendees and, from there, the development and consolidation of AFSM CCOL continued.



In April 2007, the next meeting was held in Cartagena, considered today as the meeting for the Chapter's official founding, since the Founding Act was approved, a preliminary draft of the Bylaws was discussed, and a first plan of action was designed, the final version of which was approved in October 2007.

In March 2008, the third meeting of the Chapter was held in Subachoque, Cundinamarca, at the beautiful ranch of comrade Raúl Londoño. Although it only lasted half a day, the basic objective to continue the development of CCOL was achieved. The first Board of Directors was appointed: president, executive secretary, treasurer, and focal points by cities, and an annual fee was established for all members.

In September of that same year, the Third International Meeting of AFSM was held in Cartagena, with a large attendance both from headquarters and from different countries.

At this meeting, Helena Restrepo presented the document entitled: "Why and what for a Colombian Chapter?", that was approved as a framework for its operation. Throughout this meeting, there was great camaraderie, and it was very successful in promoting relations among former staff from across the Region.

Since the founding of the Chapter, it was agreed that at every annual meeting a posthumous tribute would be paid to former staff who died during the year; this has been done with great emotion and personal and professional recognition ever since.

**Reunión Nacional del Capítulo Colombiano de la AFSM**  
del 4 al 5 de junio del 2009



*Miembros del capítulo colombiano disfrutando de un paseo a Girón, lindo pueblo colonial cerca de Bucaramanga.*

In June 2009, the fourth national meeting was held in Bucaramanga, and Dr. Roberto Sempértegui attended on behalf of the PAHO/WHO Office in Colombia. This proved to be very positive for initiating a new stage of CCOL's relations with the office of the PAHO Representative. One of the immediate results was the very effective support to the group of former staff of the Representation's Documentation Center and the convening of a new special meeting in Bogotá in October of the same year. At that special meeting, held at the PAHO/WHO Country Office, relations with that office were further strengthened. In January 2010, a second special meeting was held, also at the PAHO Country Office, in which contact was established with the new Representative, Dr. Ana Cristina Nogueira. In October 2010, the Fourth International Meeting of the Regional AFSM was held in Lima, Peru. Similarly, some members of the CCOL were present: Helena Restrepo, Gustavo Mora and Martha Ligia Fajardo; and again it helped to strengthen relations between AFSM and the Colombian group.

In line with the purpose that we developed since the founding of the Chapter, it was decided that the annual meetings would be held in different cities of the country, in order to visit interesting places and cities where there were special tourist and cultural attractions and in June 2010, the fifth meeting was held in Medellín. The highlight of this was the active participation of the National School of Public Health, that hospitably loaned us its headquarters and the participation of its dean. This



resulted in a declaration of support by the Chapter for the reform initiative of the country's National Health System led by the School. The next meeting, in July 2011, was held in the city of Ibagué, capital of the department of Tolima, considered Colombia's musical city, and where we attended a concert at the city's famous Conservatory of Music.

The seventh annual meeting was held in July 2012, and it took place in the Eje Cafetero area, that is very famous for its beauty in both its landscapes and its small municipalities and parks. There was excellent participation of former Colombian staff residing in the country and abroad. On this occasion, Germán Mora was appointed as an "honorary



member” of CCOL for his steadfast interest in the development of the Chapter and his constant attendance at all annual meetings despite residing in the United States. In October of that same year, the Fifth International Meeting of the AFSM was held in Panama. Attending from CCOL were Martha Ligia Fajardo, Alvaro Uribe, Virginia de Uribe, Elmer Escobar, Gustavo Mora and Helena Restrepo. Once again, relations and friendship were strengthened among the AFSM members from different countries and from the headquarters leaders, supporting the main objective of the creation of the country chapters. Also, in December of that year, Raúl Londoño, President of CCOL, attended the 24th AFSM General Meeting in Washington and presented a report on the progress and achievements of the Chapter.

Unfortunately, the eighth meeting in 2013 could not be held in the Llanos Orientales region, as was everyone's wish, due to the winter ravages on the access roads. It was later convened in October in Bogotá at the PAHO Office with the support of the new Representative, Dr. Gina Watson. Activity reports were respectively received from the PAHO PWR on its technical cooperation to the country and from the Board of Directors of CCOL.



In 2014 and 2015, the meetings had limited attendance due to difficulties for most of the members residing in other cities to travel to Bogotá. Gustavo Mora and Helena Restrepo attended the one in 2015 and respectively presented reflections on two important figures of the country, the Antioquia philosopher Fernando González and the intellectual scholar Estanislao Zuleta. An exceptional lecture was given by the special guest, Dr. José Félix Patiño, on the subject of the value of early-edition libraries, such as the National University where he was Emeritus Dean and to which he donated some books. This meeting ended with a walk to the beautiful town of Villa de Leiva.

It is worth noting that, despite continuing to achieve its main objectives, CCOL was weakened considerably between 2014 and 2018. Even so, the main activities and the social project "María es mi Madre" continued, the latter of which supports elderly people who experience great difficulties, such as homelessness. This has been an example of the committed work by former staff and the wives of some members, and the results of this social initiative have been highly recognized and encouraging. For this reason, CCOL financially supports the project every year.

Despite the difficulties and the general decline of the group, from 15 to 18 September 2016, a meeting of the Chapter was held in Cali with the attendance of the President, Raúl Londoño and his wife, and Dr. Gina Watson, PWR, along with other members of the Board. On this occasion, Carlos Hernán Daza was appointed President of CCOL. In that same year, Helena Restrepo, Gustavo Mora, Germán Mora, and Maricel Manfredi participated in the very successful AFSM International Reunion in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.

Starting in 2018, a resurgence of the Chapter became apparent. This is how, on 21 March, advantage was taken of a visit to Colombia by Patricia Ilijic Vidal of the Credit Union (FCU) to convene a very productive meeting in Bogotá that gave new life to the Chapter. In it, having a FCU staff member present served to clarify issues related to the management of former staff members' accounts, as well as the required procedures to follow to deliver former staff members' funds in the event of their death. She clarified doubts and addressed the concerns of those present at the meeting. Also, at that time, teleconferences were held with Germán Perdomo, AFSM President, as well as with Vivian Huizenga from Health Insurance. A progress report was presented on the María es mi Madre Project, and a new Board of Directors was appointed under the presidency of Ana Lucía Acero. Likewise, a tribute was paid to Dr. Watson, who was named an honorary member of the Chapter. It was also the opportunity to express CCOL's gratitude to Patricia Ilijic for her continued collaboration and support throughout the years.

As of 2019 and especially during this year 2020, CCOL has entered a new stage of revitalization and enthusiasm, in particular recognizing the work of the Executive Secretary, María Mercedes Rodríguez and Ricardo Torres, who has given great technological support.

### ***Achievements, Advances and Limitations***

1. Among the most satisfactory achievements in the 14 years of AFSM CCOL's existence are the social, cultural and recreational gatherings, which have strengthened friendship and solidarity among retired members. In spite of various limitations that did not facilitate our interacting, we have had the opportunity to get to know different facets, both of the members and their spouses, as well as of the geographic, artistic and indigenous cultural diversity of the different regions of the country.
2. Since the initiative to create the Colombian Chapter was launched, meetings have been regularly held and the basic core of its development has been achieved, even though over the years some members who played a very active role in the group's founding have departed. Among them are Luis Carlos Ochoa, Alvaro Uribe, Luis Asdrúbal Arcila, Pablo Isaza, Alvaro Moncayo, Lolita Ortiz, Alberto Arango and Luz de Giraldo, among others whose memory will always be with us.
3. The Presidents of the AFSM have supported us since the beginning of the Chapter and have been a very important part of maintaining the group's spirit. We mention here Jaime Ayalde, Nancy Berinstein and more recently, Germán Perdomo and Gloria Coe. Nancy was always enthusiastic about us and provided valuable financial assistance.

4. It is worth mentioning the generosity of the Federal Credit Union, which has been a fundamental factor in the success of the annual meetings. We gratefully thank its directors and employees. This year, 2020, the Colombian group offered a heartfelt tribute of gratitude to Patricia Ilijic Vidal, on the occasion of her retirement,
5. The appointment of delegates in Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, Cartagena, Bucaramanga and Montería, has been a dynamic factor because Colombia is a country with important cities distributed throughout the national territory.
6. Since the Cartagena meeting, an action plan has been periodically reviewed and updated, with modest but satisfactory achievements. Due to the increasing financial difficulties of the Chapter, it has limited the scope of its activities and projects. Funding from membership fees and special support from the AFSM Board, the PAHO/WHO Country Office, and the Federal Credit Union, has been used to finance periodic meetings. The Chapter's financial situation has not been easy, but, fortunately, we have had the help of wives of some former staff, for which we are most grateful.
7. The CCOL's relationship with the Association of Former United Nations Staff from Colombia has been very beneficial, particularly for the distribution of annual Certificates of Entitlement and for maintaining ties with UNDP.

In conclusion, we consider that, although it is very difficult to get PAHO/WHO country offices involved in the activities of former staff, it is necessary to make the most of all the opportunities that arise that strengthen the links to our achievements in the health field and in turn are part of each of our life stories. In the same way, we congratulate ourselves for having participated in the experience of founding the Colombian group of former staff and spouses, that in turn has provided us with joy and spiritual growth. Diverse needs persist, such as difficulties in the use of modern communication and information technologies that limit participation by older members of the country's local association, and that result in significant efforts and need of support by the current Chapter and Regional Boards. We hope that CCOL continues its development and success. **N**

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### ALL PAHO/WHO AFSM NEWSLETTERS ARE NOW AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE

The AFSM Newsletter has been published for 30 years, beginning in September 1990. To celebrate this milestone, the AFSM has physically located the issues from the first 15 years of the newsletter. The back-issues, in print form, were scanned and uploaded to the AFSM website.

They are now available and accessible on: <https://www.afsmpaho.com/newsletters>.

In celebration of our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we invite you to walk down the AFSM “memory lane” from the very beginning, starting with September 1990's pilot issue.

## Testimonials

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### Connected Through the Association

*By Carlos L. García*

It is very gratifying to celebrate the success of our Association at the time of its thirtieth anniversary, which also coincides with my 30 years of retirement, after completing 35 years of service with PAHO (1956-1991).

What an honor and pleasure it was at that time to have participated in and collaborated with many other colleagues in serving the purposes of the Organization under the leadership of Drs. Alfred Soper, Abraham Horwitz, Héctor Acuña and Carlyle Guerra de Macedo. Starting work at the second PAHO headquarters at Dupont Circle, and continuing with the present one on 23rd Street, I met many colleagues. Some of them are no longer with us and others are scattered around the world, but thanks to the Association that extends its ties, we can have news of and maintain active contacts with them. Thanks also to the Association for keeping us informed of the Organization's current affairs and especially in relation to such important issues as medical insurance and the pension fund.

Congratulations Association !!! and hugs to everyone.



### AFSM an Invaluable Membership

*By Juan Manuel Sotelo*

I have been a member of AFSM since my formal retirement from PAHO/WHO in August 2012. I must admit that it has been almost eight years of learning to live with the daily condition of being a former staff member of an institution to which I gave 30 years of my working life. This learning process is complex because it ranges from making good use of my time to having up-to-date information to know how to access the benefits of WHO's health insurance, and pension that former employees receive through the United Nations Pension Fund.

AFSM has fulfilled my expectations of helping me navigate my life as a former staff member. It has not only been helpful in providing me with valuable current information,

but it has also offered me the experience of sharing with other colleagues with whom I worked, people who gifted me with friendship and respect while I was an active civil servant. AFSM provides an important structural framework, since it involves people generally over 60, who share with me various common aspects and interests, along with the special characteristics of sharing many years of working and living within an international reality, in many cases in several countries. We are connected through our PAHO service, a system that took care of us like a mother while we were civil servants and that we know still cares for former staff.

The opportunities for participation provided by the Association of Former Staff Members are significant, including its efforts to hold meetings in different venues, organize presentations of interest, and offer opportunities to volunteer and collaborate that are taking place even now, during a time when we are living with social distancing.

Congratulations to AFSM on its 30th anniversary. I am confident that it will continue to serve its members well.



## **Meeting in Cartagena**

***By Julio Burbano,***

In 2008, the AFSM Board of Directors convened the Third International Meeting, held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, with the enthusiastic participation of 56 members from various countries. The President of ASOPENUC, an association that brings together United Nations retirees in Colombia, participated in order to strengthen relations between the two associations. Particular attention was given to the discussion of an action plan for national AFSM chapters, based upon what was done in Colombia. As established in the Bylaws, the structure of this plan was developed with concrete and viable activities to go with each of the Association's objectives, along with a designation of those responsible and deadlines. There was dynamic participation by the AFSM President and the Board of Directors. Among the various topics discussed were mechanisms to promote the creation of national chapters, to follow suit on the experience of Colombia.



# Health Insurance and Pension Update

## Looking Back over 30 years

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By Carol Collado



As we celebrate AFSM's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and look back, the topics of health insurance benefits and costs as well as those of pension benefits and requirements have always been included in the Association's newsletters. Although the dedicated column did not start until we went electronic in 2016, almost without exception, each newsletter has had information to share on these topics. The Health and Pension Committee has worked throughout the years with the SHI authorities to keep members informed, advocate for changes in benefits, study information and prepare recommendations so that costs could be kept within reason, as well as to participate in PAHO health insurance committees. We have also compiled and have available to our members an extensive document which assists members and their survivors in understanding how to preserve and protect assets, including health and pension. A major achievement was, after ten years of an AFSM-led effort, the approval of Medicare enrollment as a reimbursable requirement. Although many not in USA considered that this was not applicable to them, the contrary is true. Considerable savings through this option reduce the overall health costs and permit us to maintain our excellent benefits while keeping costs from increasing incrementally.

Information has been circulated on pension adjustments and management of the UNJSPF. We have also participated in the location and notification of those retirees who have not returned their Certificates of Entitlement. For retirees, part of the freedom to enjoy life comes from the security provided by the monthly arrival of the pension allotment. This security is placed in jeopardy when the annual Certificates of Entitlement (CE) are not registered with UNJSPF Headquarters. AFSM receives a list from UNJSPF of those PAHO/WHO retirees whose CEs have not been returned. We spend considerable time and effort, use our contacts, collaborate with the PAHO country offices, call friends, and exhaust every means to contact those persons to have them fulfill their requirement so that their pension payments are not suspended. In some years, we have saved up to 60 retirees from having their pension suspended.

In addition, AFSM supports individual members in resolving problems, and we have proven success in helping to solve issues of common concern. Sometimes, stories paint the best picture, so we are sharing several anonymous accounts of accomplishments during the past 30 years:

- An AFSM member had difficulties with catastrophic and expensive health bills amounting to several thousand dollars. All the member's appeals had been seen at various levels within SHI and Aetna, finally being hung up in legal proceedings that lasted for more than three years! AFSM was asked to help, and although the intervention was complicated and even went to the highest levels within the WHO SHI, due to AFSM's interventions the case was finally resolved in the member's favor.
- An AFSM member residing in the US underwent surgery in a Latin American country. The clinic involved did not have experience neither with international clients nor with the complications of American medical insurance. Bills were submitted through the normal SHI channels in the US, but difficulties were encountered since said bills did not meet the American standards. The family

was being asked to pay the hospital debt. AFSM worked with the member, family, and SHI for several months to achieve a successful resolution

- A 94 years old AFSM member was forced to change her bank account away from where her UN pension was deposited due to fraudulent activity. Unfortunately, forms sent to the UNJPF by email, letter, fax, and certified mail with return receipt, over a period of three months, received no response, and the member became increasingly agitated over the problem. Unable to close the account with fraud potential for fear of losing her pension payment, the family, who resided several hundred miles from the member, requested AFSM's assistance. This occurred at a time when there were considerable problems in communicating with the UNJSPF. Although it took more than 2 months to resolve, AFSM's continual insistence, monitoring, and communicating with contacts at UNJSPF finally facilitated problem resolution.

## Current News

### Health

COVID-19 is still the elephant in the room. In the great majority of countries, the rates of infection with the COVID-19 virus and its corresponding hospitalizations has increased significantly in the past several months, and there are predictions that things will worsen before getting better. This is a serious threat and needs to be taken very seriously. This is not the time to lessen our vigilance. We are high risk, as part of the aging population. Please take precautions, listen to competent authorities, and stay safe.

Coverage for COVID-related medical expenses is being analyzed and decided on a continual basis as we learn more about the disease, its behavior, and consequences. At present, a prescription and sometimes a justification are required for testing and there is a dollar limit to each test. Soon you should be receiving the end of the year SHI Newsletter from Geneva, and it will include further details about the different COVID-related coverages.

### Information for those retirees residing in the USA

There will be changes in the Third-Party Administrator (TPA) for medical services in the USA. Standard practice requires that PAHO periodically put out a call for bids before contracts are renewed. Our present contractors, Aetna, for medical coverage, and CVS for pharmacy benefits, have been respectively serving us for 12 years for medical and 20 years for pharmacy benefits. This time, there will be new providers. Pharmacy Benefits will be managed by Navitus as of 1 January 2021. Preparations have begun, and you should receive a welcome packet from them in mid-December. The provider for medical benefits will be Cigna International also as of 1 Jan. 2021. There have been several Zoom orientations held by SHI in December, and you will find copies of these on the AFSM website [www.afsmpaho.com](http://www.afsmpaho.com) should you have missed these or want to refresh. No transition is totally without some difficulties, and AFSM is here to help you with the move to these new providers. Please let us know if you are facing problems. One difficulty for some will be that the ID cards for Cigna will first be sent by email in mid-December. A plastic card will also be sent to all retirees through the postal service in mid-January. Should you know of anyone who is not connected by email, please let them know that if they need a card, they can call the Cigna number in Florida 1-866-210-8388 to confirm their participation.

### Medicare

There have been some questions because of TV ads asking people who already are in Medicare to reapply. **Do not reapply. Once enrolled in Original Medicare you are continually in the system.**

PAHO reimbursement forms for Medicare costs must be filled in every year because the costs vary from year to year. Once you receive the information on costs for 2021, either from Social Security or as a bill from Medicare, make a copy of it, go to the documents section of the AFSM website where you will find the Medicare Reimbursement form, fill it out and send both documents to [medicare@paho.org](mailto:medicare@paho.org). Reimbursements will be processed beginning in January. While PAHO will still receive paper copies, it will take considerably more time to receive your reimbursement due to the continuing problems incurred by the COVID restrictions and everyone working from home.

## Pension

Good News! The annual report and audited financial statements found that the Pension Fund is most probably not expected to have liquidity problems for the next 30 years.

A new informative brochure about the UNJSPF 2020 is available online at <https://www.unjspf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Brochure-Seminar-2020-English.pdf>. It gives an overview of the Fund's structure, organization, operations, key figures, pension administration, and investments and it is aimed at helping you to better understand the Fund and how it works every day at your service.

We expect that all of you have by now returned your Certificates of Entitlement (CE) before the cutoff deadline of 31 December 2020. Please make sure your contact information is also up to date so that you will be sure to receive pertinent information. We have informed you about the new digital CE that is in a trial phase, and as of 2021 it will be implemented gradually, beginning with new retirees. There is a video which explains this that you can find at <https://www.unjspf.org/simplifying-the-certificate-of-entitlement-process-for-retirees-watch-the-video/> **N**

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### *Results of AFSM Annual Board of Trustees Elections*

This year, for the elections of the three open positions on the Board of Trustees, only three nominations were submitted. In that there were no other candidates, the current members of the Board decided against sending out a call for a general vote and to confirm the three candidates. They are Carol Collado and Hortensia Saginor who will continue as members of the Board and Juan Manuel Sotelo who will join on 1 January 2021.

## AFSM – Thirty Years of Communicating with its Members

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*By Antonio Hernández*



In 1990, a group of visionaries considered it necessary to create an organization that would help retirees maintain a link with PAHO/WHO and above all establish ties of companionship, fraternity, support, and camaraderie among fellow retirees.

Some of the challenges, at that time, were to motivate retirees to join this organization, keep a registry of its members and establish a mechanism to keep everyone informed of activities and fundamental issues such as health insurance, taxes, pension and well-being of all retirees and their families, regardless of their geographical location.

With the support of Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, Director of PAHO/WHO, the first meeting of the Association was held on 15 June 1990 and 50 people attended. To inform others about this event and the Association's future plans, in September 1990 the Pilot Edition of the "Newsletter of the Association of Former PAHO/WHO Staff Members" was published. From then on, it became the official means of communication for the nascent Association, which was officially established in a General Assembly, on 8 November 1990.

To maintain the registry of members and spouses, their geographic location and contact information, Hans Bruch, making use of technological advances in the field of computing and information, prioritized the development of a database and a computer program to collect and update members information. Anecdotally this first program was written in German by Hans's brothers. In 1991, and until today, Hortensia Saginor was in charge of updating and maintaining the information of the members and their spouses or representatives, and she established a system to update the information in accordance with the changes caused by deaths, mobility and the joining of new members.

To this day, the information on deaths and new members of the Association is made continuously through the "AFSM Newsletter". It was also necessary to facilitate communication among the members and for this purpose a directory with the members' physical and e-mail addresses began to be published in printed form. Directory distribution was by somewhat limited and done by mail. As of the year 2000, improvements were made and more information was included in the directory, which continued to be published in print until 2015. The challenge that AFSM continues to have to date is to monitor changes in the contact information of the members, such as their physical locations, postal addresses, email addresses, faxes and telephone numbers. Although the effort is great, the results are not as expected. As of the date of this article, there are more than 1,000 retirees, of which 661 are members of the Association, including spouses and relatives. Of these, 589 have registered an electronic address and of them, only 536 are in active communication with the Association. For AFSM it continues to be a challenge to maintain communication with members who only have a geographic address, since most do not respond to communications by

postal mail, and in several cases the correspondence is returned because it does not coincide with the residence of the recipient.

Starting in 2013, in order to streamline and expand communication with members and provide immediate information, AFSM began a transition from communication in print and by mail to an electronic communication environment. Under the leadership of Cristina Torres Parodi, the Association's website <https://www.afsmpaho.com/> and the email [afsmpaho@gmail.com](mailto:afsmpaho@gmail.com) were established. The Association's website or web page, designed in a friendly way to facilitate access to information, is bilingual and the vast majority is published simultaneously in English and Spanish, following the tradition of the Association's newsletter. Part of the information that was accessible on the website was the directory of the members of the Association, but for technical reasons, security, privacy and protection of the members' information in open virtual environments, the directory was withdrawn. At the time of this publication, mechanisms are still being studied as to how to best make this information accessible exclusively to members.

Because information such as changes to health insurance and the pension system is of great importance to members, efforts continue to keep the information on our website up-to-date, but use by members has been very low. No more than 400 visits per year to the portal were registered, and inquiries to the AFSM email address were almost non-existent. Instead, specific inquiries were made by telephone.

Aware of the difficulties in the process of transitioning from printed to electronic communication in virtual environments, along with the limitations of some members adapting to the use of new technologies as well as the digital division between generations, the AFSM Board of Directors gave priority to closing the technological gap. To this end, starting in 2015, the Communications Committee, coordinated by the author of this article, took charge of designing and establishing a communication and information strategy to facilitate access and information flow among, from, and to members, making use of available resources. The information on the website was updated and improved, permanently incorporating updates on the topics of health insurance, pension, and other topics of interest. Through mass email messages (Blast messages), all members are informed of the availability of this information and are invited to visit the website directly. This strategy has made it possible to increase visits to the portal to a number close to 4,000 visits per year. This has been especially important during this year of COVID-19, which has increased the use of virtual communications. Starting in November, our colleague Stanislaw "Stan" Orzeszyna has volunteered to be the webmaster of the Association's website, thus strengthening the Communications Committee.

The mass e-mailing system has improved the flow of communication with members and with the Board of Directors, because relevant information is sent in real time to members and queries are responded to immediately. However, we are aware that there is a lot of work ahead, especially to locate members who are outside the circle of electronic communication or who have limitations and difficulties in the use of technology. In this regard, we have written and published articles in AFSM newsletters to help members improve their communication mechanisms and we are currently concentrating on moving the entire AFSM communication and activity system to a

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virtual PAHO platform (Share Point) that will help to improve communication safely, while integrating the different programs that make up the AFSM communication system. **N**



*REMINDER*  
*CERTIFICATE OF ENTITLEMENT 2020*

The Certificates of Entitlement 2020 (CE) in original must be submitted to the UNJSPF in New York or Geneva by 31 December 2020, as is required by UNJSPF to avoid the risk of suspension of your benefits from the Fund.

The Fund has indicated that due to restrictions related to COVID-19, it's possible that in many countries some members may not have received their CE 2020 and/or can't send it back duly signed by regular mail at this time. In these cases, if by end-November some members haven't been able to return their 2020 CEs, the Fund will accept an electronic copy of the CE duly completed and signed. If you have not done so already, you should open a personal account in Member Self-Service (MSS) ([www.unjspf.org/member-self-service/](http://www.unjspf.org/member-self-service/)), and enter the "Documents" tab, where you will find a document whose name is "06-Jun-2020 CE 002 - Certificate of Entitlement - Mem". You should click on that document and you will see the original CE. In the upper left corner, you will see a very small box that says "Print". Click on it and your original CE will be printed. Sign and date it. Now you need to scan the signed CE and save it on your computer. Exit the MSS portal and go to the option "Contact us" and look for the option that says, "Send Us a Message". Follow the instructions and at the end where it says "Optional File Attachment 1" press "Chose File", look for the scanned file CE, select it and after checking the box "I'm not a robot" click on "Submit Secure Request".

**Please remember that MSS users are still required to affix their handwritten signature on any of the official UNJSPF forms before converting them into PDF or JPG format and uploading them inside MSS for submission to the Fund (electronic signatures are not accepted).**

Once documents have been submitted to the Fund via this electronic channel, there is no need for participants and beneficiaries to send hardcopy originals to the Fund unless otherwise instructed by the Fund.

If members encounter difficulties creating or accessing their personal MMS account, please call phone number: +1-212-963-6931 or send an e-mail to: [mssupport@unjspf.org](mailto:mssupport@unjspf.org)

Only retirees and beneficiaries paid under the Two-Track system cannot, at this time, access their annual CE form inside their MSS. If you want to know more, please visit their webpage under <https://www.UNJSPF.org/contact-us/> or call to toll free number of your country: <https://www.unjspf.org/toll-free-numbers/>

## Letter of Recognition to Raúl Londoño

### AFSM Colombia Chapter

Bogotá, 06 November 2020

Dear members of AFSM-Colombia Chapter (CC):

**Reference:** Recognition of our AFSM-CC Vice President, Raúl Londoño.

We would like to take this opportunity to share a tribute to the Vice President of the Board of Directors of AFSM-Colombia Chapter, Raúl Londoño Escobar, for the well-deserved recognition given to him by the important journalistic publication called "Manager", as one of the 100 successful managers in the year 2020, for his work as a true promoter of social, business and corporate responsibility in Colombia.

From his position as Executive Director of PRO-SUBACHOQUE Foundation, Raúl, through a major social commitment, has been supporting the Foundation's board of directors and other members in different community development initiatives, among which we can highlight training environmental leaders on communal action boards for the protection of the water sources flowing into the Subachoque River and creating nurseries for the reproduction of forest species. During the pandemic, they delivered groceries to more than 3,000 vulnerable people; they conducted teacher training for 16 rural schools in English in alliance with the Vermont School in Bogotá; and they very successfully created the community radio Subachoque Stereo 94.4 FM, which has become the main means of communication for the local population.

We greatly congratulate our colleague Raúl, for the recognition given to him and we hope that he continues along the path of solidarity and with the same the high level of social commitment with his community.

Cordially,

Board of Directors  
AFSM-Colombia Chapter, 2020-2021



## Celebrating 30 years of Commitment, Partnership, and Success

Completing thirty years is a huge milestone. For three decades, PAHO/WHO Federal Credit Union and AFSM have worked together to serve the global health community. Just as AFSM members have worked to make the world a better, healthier place, it's been our privilege to support the financial wellness of the global health community and meet each member's unique financial needs. We have done that through carefully designed financial products and services – to help AFSM members everywhere create a better, healthier financial future for themselves as well as those they love and protect.

At PAHO/WHO FCU, we are proud to be a part of so many of your lives. As a not-for-profit financial cooperative, we strive to offer lower-than-the-market loan rates on homes, autos, and personal loans, competitive rates on savings dividends, as well as low to no fees on the products and services that help members like you live better, healthier financial lives.

As always, it is an honor to serve you and to help make a difference in your life and the lives of those you hold most dear. Thank you for your membership and support of PAHO/WHO FCU. Congratulations on your 30<sup>th</sup>! We look forward to many more decades of serving you and the entire global health community.



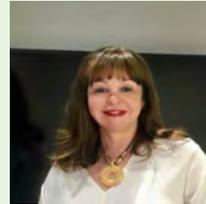
## *AFSM Focal Points*



**Antoinette Loraine Reid**  
Barbados



**Carol Burgher**  
Jamaica



**Catherine Cocco**  
Dominican Rep.



**Cecilia Yépez**  
Peru



**Christian Darras**  
Belgium



**Eutimio González**  
Mexico



**Jorge Rodríguez**  
Guatemala



**Haydee Olcese**  
Peru



**María M Rodríguez**  
Colombia



**Mena Carto**  
Guyana



**Stanislaw Orzeszyna**  
Canada



**Yvette Holder**  
Caribe Oriental



**Antonio Campino**  
Brazil- São Paulo



**Lucimar Coser**  
Brazil- Brasília



**Cesar Vieira**  
Brazil- Rio de Janeiro



**Carlos Bobba**  
Uruguay



# The Back Page

## Board of Directors

### Officers

Gloria Coe ('22)  
President

Hernán Rosenberg ('22)  
Vice President

Gloria Morales ('21)  
Secretary

Hortensia R. Saginor ('23)  
Membership

Sylvia Schultz ('22)  
Treasurer

### Members-at-large

Marilyn Rice ('21)

Juan Manuel Sotelo ('23)

Carol Collado ('23)

Rolando Chacón ('21)

### Honorary Members

Nancy Berinstein  
President Emeritus

Germán Perdomo  
President Emeritus

**Note: The term of each member of the BOD expires in December of the year in parenthesis**

## Committees

### Communications Committee

**Coordinator** – Antonio Hernández  
**Members** –  
Stanislaw Orzeszyna, Enrique Fefer,  
Hernán Rosenberg, Gloria Morales,  
Germán Perdomo

### Publications Committee

**Coordinator and Editor-in-Chief** –  
Marilyn Rice  
**Members** –  
Gloria Coe, Carol Collado, Antonio  
Hernández, Patrick Gannon, Germán  
Perdomo, Hernán Rosenberg, Hortensia  
Saginor, Martha Peláez, Sumedha Mona  
Khanna

### Membership and Outreach Committee

**Coordinator** – Hortensia R. Saginor  
**Members** –  
Mónica Bolis, Enrique Fefer, Elizabeth  
Joskowicz, Hernán Rosenberg, Sylvia  
Schultz, José Ramiro Cruz, Juan Manuel  
Sotelo

### Health Insurance and Pension Committee

**Coordinator** – Carol Collado  
**Members** –  
Gloria Morales, Nancy Berinstein,  
Rolando Chacón, Jerry Hanson, Haydée  
Olcese, José Luis Zeballos, Marisa Manus,  
Juan Manuel Sotelo, Stanislaw Orzeszyna

### External Relations Committee

**Coordinator** – Hernán Rosenberg  
**Members** –  
Gloria Coe, Carol Collado

### Elections Committee

**Coordinator** – Rolando Chacón  
**Members** –  
Enrique Fefer, Antonio Hernández, Sylvia  
Schultz

**Auditor** – Fredy Burgos

## Presidents of AFSM Country Chapters

**Bolivia Chapter**  
Horacio Toro Ocampo, htoroocampo@yahoo.com

**Colombia Chapter**  
Elmer Escobar, e\_escobar@cable.net.co

**Brazil Chapter**  
César Vieira, cesarvieira@globo.com