



# IDRC Alumni Newsletter

Number 6

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## Peru Honours Hubert Zandstra



*In May this year IDRC Alumni member Hubert Zandstra, now Director General of the International Potato Center, in Lima, Peru, was honoured by the Peruvian government for his work in agriculture in that country. Above, Hubert and his wife Ilse at the award ceremony. Full details on page 3.*

## HOLA! Sept 24 – Alumni Goes Latin!

Earlier this year your Board members decided to celebrate the regions where IDRC is active by giving each year's Reunion a regional theme. By happy coincidence this year's Reunion will feature a Latin American theme. That means regional food, music, libations and much more. You won't want to miss it! Also this year there will be a special pre-event: IDRC President, Maureen O'Neil will present a one-hour briefing for interested Alumni members on IDRC's strategies and plans for the future.

**Friday September 24**

**President's Briefing 4:00 – Reunion and AGM 5:00**

**IDRC Conference Facility, 250 Albert Street**

**RSVP (if you haven't already) by Sept.13 to Alison Craig:  
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## From the Board



### A TASTE OF LATIN AMERICA.

We are preparing for our third Annual Reception and Meeting, to be held on **Friday, 24 September, at IDRC Head Office in Ottawa**. Our theme for this year's gathering is Latin and celebrates IDRC's south and central American linkages. Angie Anton, our newest Board member, is working with IDRC's Latin American Director, Fedorico Burone, to create the atmosphere and strike the right note for the many members who will be attending. In the future years we plan to build into each annual meeting a theme based on a region of the world. We'll give more notice of our focus for future meetings to enable members to offer input and advice.

### CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES.

Our thoughts on the proposal of a constitutional framework for IDRC Alumni are beginning to take some shape. Based on informal but emphatic feedback from members, the final solution will be simple. We are directing our attention to including in our institutional or Board structure a means of representing our members from outside Canada. We are currently encouraging our members within a region to establish local "chapters" to carry out Alumni-related activities.

### WE REGRET

to advise that Mary Baker Blackwell, a founding member of the IDRC Alumni and Secretary to the Board, has resigned from the Board effective 1 September. Mary will, of course, continue as a member of the Alumni but her business and volunteer activities increasingly demand her time.

In 2002 Mary founded her company, Lifestyle Transition Management. LTM manages the personal affairs and property of individuals absent from their home for short- and long-term periods as well as managing lifestyle transitions of seniors and others by assisting them with the demands of changing lifestyles and circumstances. To learn more about Mary's new venture, see "*Where are they now*" on page 4, and visit the LTM website at [www.lifestyletm.com](http://www.lifestyletm.com). Mary is also a founding Board member and active fundraiser for an Ottawa charity that provides hospice palliative care programs and attends to the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of individuals and their families at the "end of life".

### TO FINISH

on a positive note, we are pleased welcome Kim Daley as the new IDRC representative to the Board.

*Jim Pfeifer, Chairman*



**Hubert Zandstra (IDRC 1971-89) with his wife Ilse, who described the ceremony as "very moving."**

**Ilse too has reason to celebrate: her first children's book, entitled 'Ukuku conoce al sol' has just been published. It is in Spanish, fully illustrated and available in book stores in Peru. Ilse points out that she also worked for IDRC, on contract as a research associate in the Health Sciences Division, for about four years.**

## **Honoured in the birthplace of the potato**

On May 18 Dr. Hubert G. Zandstra, Director General of the International Potato Center (CIP), was honoured with the 'Great Cross for Distinguished Service' – one of the highest honours bestowed upon a foreigner by the government of Peru. In a ceremony held at CIP headquarters in La Molina, the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Manuel Rodriguez Cuadros, recognized Dr. Zandstra for his contribution to research on the potato, sweet potato, and lesser known Andean roots and tubers, as well as for his "dedication to promoting integrated management of natural resources in the world's mountain regions, and particularly in Peru."

Ambassador Rodriguez commended Dr. Zandstra's contributions to Peru and in particular his work in the National Working Group on Mountain Ecosystems organized by the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2002, the International Year of Mountains. Mr. Rodriguez also acknowledged Dr. Zandstra's contributing role in Peru's current influence in international fora on biodiversity conservation and the sustainable development of mountain regions. The minister highlighted the significance of having CIP headquarters in Peru—the birthplace of the potato, the world's fourth most important food crop.

Dr. Zandstra, whose term as Director General of CIP ends in April 2005, expressed his gratification to Peru and to the Peruvian people for the honour. He reflected on his time at CIP, recalling that one of his most gratifying experiences over the past 13 years was the reintroduction of sexual (botanical) potato seed—a technology used by the Incas—in the Callejón de Conchucos in Ancash in 1994.

CIP's involvement with this community began at the request of Father Ugo de Censi, who first approached CIP after the farmers of the region lost all of their seed during a devastating drought. With the seed CIP sent, a potato variety later called Chacasina, the farmers' yields multiplied by five and the community no longer had to constantly search for good quality seed.

CIP initiated activities in Peru in 1971 with a mandate to research the potato as a world food crop, and to promote and create new technologies to increase the use of potatoes in the developing world.

CIP's research has broadened over the decades and currently includes potato, sweet potato, Andean root and tuber crops, and the sustainable management of mountain natural resources. CIP has regional offices in Kenya, India and Indonesia; liaison offices in China, Ecuador, Uganda and Vietnam; and initiatives and networks around the world.

## Where Are They Now?



**Mary Baker  
Blackwell**  
**IDRC 1970-1984**

## 'A Very Special Place to Work'

Two-and-a-half years ago a casual conversation about former IDRC employees and the 'good old days' started the ball rolling towards the creation of the IDRC Alumni. Unfortunately no list of former employees was available, so Mary became a "detective extraordinaire", using the Internet, personal contacts and telephone directories to track down alumni.

The efforts of Mary and other founding Board members eventually located 266 former employees. And 121 of them attended the first alumni reunion in October, 2002. Mary says this was very rewarding. "It allowed me to reconnect with so many old friends and colleagues, in particular three members who are no longer with us," she says. "Their absolute pleasure in being contacted and the opportunity to share memories and a few laughs made the many hours it took to pull everything together so very worthwhile. It is absolutely amazing what a little effort can produce!"

Mary joined IDRC in July 1970, shortly after the Act establishing the Centre was passed. In those early days, she says, there were no procedures to follow, they were created on the spot, everyone wore several hats and did what had to be done with great enthusiasm. People talked to each other, meetings and decisions were made in elevators and hallways, no one looked at the clock, and the staff worked as a team with everyone stepping up when there was a deadline or crisis.

"The Centre was a very special place to work, and there was a great sense of family," Mary adds. She worked first in the Secretariat, where her primary responsibilities were Board communications and activities along with grant communications. But she notes that if she had a job description her primary responsibility would have read 'Other Miscellaneous Related Duties'. Actual job descriptions came much later!

After several years, Mary moved to the Communications Division as Assistant Director, then on to the newly created Office of the Vice-President International and became responsible for liaison and coordination between Regional Offices and Regional Offices and Ottawa. She was also a member of the Administration Committee responsible for the creation and continuing updating of the Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual.

After leaving the Centre Mary's career included real estate and consulting work. The latter led to involvement in the establishment of a new organization, the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), located in Beijing. "It was déjà vu, IDRC all over again," she recalls. "A number of 'IDRC antiques' were recycled to assist INBAR get up and running."

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Retirement followed but Mary quickly found this “didn’t work for her”. So in 2002 she founded Lifestyle Transition Management, a small company offering administrative services, short- and long-term property and personal affairs management, and assisting seniors making a major transition in their lives.

“The major objective was to remove the stress from our clients’ lives, and this unique and innovative business was extremely welcome in the community,” Mary says. Complete details of the services offered by LTM can be found on the company website at [www.lifestyletm.com](http://www.lifestyletm.com).

Mary is also on the Board of a charitable organization offering hospice palliative care programs attending to the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of individuals and their families at the “end of life”. Because of her commitments to this charity, particularly in the fundraising area, and an increasing workload in her own business, she says it is “with a definite feeling of great satisfaction and accomplishment for a job well done” that Mary tendered her resignation from the Board of the IDRC Alumni effective August 31. “But of course I will remain an active member of the IDRC Alumni,” she notes.

## News from the Centre



## Disseminating Generous Seeds

To the sound of salsa songs about the benefit of biodiversity, by the untying of a bright yellow ribbon around a stack of books, the Spanish and Mandarin versions of the book *Seeds that Give* were launched last October and November in Cuba and Beijing.

The book draws from a decade of IDRC research on agricultural biodiversity and participatory plant breeding (PPB). With PPB, researchers work alongside farmers in the fields to develop new seed varieties. Farmers become partners of researchers. It also makes more widely available genetic materials used in traditional varieties, increases yields and maintains important genetic variations.

*Seeds that Give* is part of a series of short publications, the *In\_Focus* collection, which distils IDRC’s experience with an eye to drawing out important lessons, observations and recommendations.

The book has been produced in five languages: English, French, Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic. Like the others in the series, the book is part of an information pyramid that also includes six case studies and a comprehensive web site: <http://www.idrc.ca/seeds>

Jean-Marc Fleury

