

AFSM GENERAL MEETING  
THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
Nancy Berinstein  
12/9/20

Good morning everyone. My name is Nancy Berinstein and for those of you who may be new to the organization, I am a former President of AFSM and served in that capacity for approximately 10 years. It is truly a pleasure to be with you today.

We are presently celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AFSM. The organization started out very informally with a few former PAHO staff members who some of you may remember. Hans Bruch, Helena Irwin, Edith Quinones, Clara Silva d'Herbil, Federico Varela, and Maria Mercedes Segarra-Hines are part of the original group. They just wished to form an association where friends and colleagues would come together in an informal setting to enjoy each other's company. The group took their idea to Dr Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, the Director of PAHO, who welcomed the idea of forming an association and he gave it his full support.

A general meeting of 50 former staff members, all from the Washington area, was then held in 1990. Hans Bruch was named as our first President.

During the very early years there were social gatherings of its members at the home of President Bruch and his wife Lurdy where outdoor BBQs were enjoyed. As the association grew, summer luncheons were held at restaurants or at the Breton Woods Country Club. Our annual meeting and luncheon was always held at PAHO Headquarters.

AFSM has benefitted greatly by the long- term involvement of some members. Jean Surgi and Jaime Ayalde were active on the Board from its beginning. Jean became Vice President in 1992, went on to become Secretary, and served on many committees. Jaime Ayalde became President in 1996, served in that capacity for ten years, and then remained on the Board. They each gave us up to 20 years of their time and dedication. Hortensia Saginor joined the Board in approximately 1996 and has served for many years as a Social/Activities and Membership Officer. She is still an important member of the Board up to today.

As time went by, the social nature of the association began to change. When AFSM was born the Staff Association had full representation on some of the committees established by the PAHO Administration BUT retirees and other former staff members did not. AFSM came to see that there was work to be done. They set a priority of having former staff be given an ongoing opportunity to present their concerns. In time we gained representation on the Health Surveillance Committee that met here in Washington and this has continued throughout the years.

And now retirees are represented in the governing bodies in Geneva through a global election process. AFSM successfully proposed and supported one of its members for a position on the Global Standing Committee and we are all fortunate today to have Carol Collado as our spokesperson.

Many years ago, the President of AFSM would meet with Presidents of other international associations in the Washington area for lunch once or twice yearly to compare notes on their respective organizations. We discovered that there was much to learn from each other. And so, what had started as a once or twice a year luncheon only for the Presidents expanded. AFSM was actively involved in the establishment of ARAIO, an international association of retirees and former staff, with representatives from the United Nations, AFICS, IMF, IDB, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the European Development Bank, and the OAS. We continue to meet yearly and the entire AFSM membership benefits by this relationship.

In time, the Association also began to reach out to former staff beyond the confines of Washington. We sponsored several international meetings. Our first was in Washington, DC in 2002 thanks to Jose Teruel and Hortensia Saginor who were instrumental in organizing it. We were delighted to receive 75 former staff members along with their families and guests at the Holiday Inn in Chevy Chase. The PAHO Administration provided transportation to and from PAHO Headquarters as well as all necessary support staff to make the occasion run smoothly. Dr. George Alleyne, the Director of PAHO, came by to give the keynote address.

It was deemed a success and we agreed it was time to bring such a reunion to our member countries. Dr Mirta Rosas was Director of PAHO beginning in 2003 until 2013 which happened to coincide with some of the years of my presidency. With her encouragement we brought AFSM to Buenos Aires in 2006, Cartagena in 2008, Lima in 2010 and Panama City in 2012. Our last country reunion was the Dominican Republic in 2016. and our last international venture was a Caribbean cruise in 2018. HOWEVER, We are already looking ahead post Covid and hope to come together for a reunion in Costa Rica in the next year or so to celebrate our new found freedom with sorely missed friends and colleagues.

Technology has finally made it possible for us to move beyond the confines of Washington, DC. We have an on line Newsletter, a Website, and a Facebook page. We have country chapters. We also have approximately 17 individuals serving as focal points for AFSM in the Caribbean, Central and South America as well as Canada and Europe. Thanks to Zoom we are able to hold ongoing meetings where we learn about concerns of locals in various countries. This makes it more possible for AFSM to protect the welfare and benefits of its members.

The group who originally met at Dr Bruch's house for BarBQue 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.

It has been lovely to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AFSM by going down memory lane with all of you today. I send you my very best wishes. Stay well!!!