

Leadership Perspective

A reflection by Peace Corps directors of 30 years of volunteer service worldwide



11 directors guide agency over 30 years

Eleven men and women have guided the Peace Corps of the United States through both tumultuous times and tranquil ones since 1961.

They have come from varied backgrounds and from all regions of the country. They have been elected officials, members of the Peace Corps staff and businessmen. There have been four Democrats and seven Republicans. The shortest of their terms was one year; the longest, eight years.

After their service at Peace Corps, they have gone on to become lawyers, academicians, a candidate for vice president of the United States, a governor, an ambassador, the CEO of a sports car club and the head of Special Olympics.

In commemoration of Peace Corps' 30th anniversary, the current director and his 10 predecessors were each asked to contribute their thoughts about serving as Peace Corps' highest ranking official. In the following pages, they share their recollections about the challenges they faced.

Preparing Peace Corps for 1990s and beyond

Paul D. Coverdell 1989-Present

It is difficult to capture in a relatively short space what it has been like to direct the Peace Corps of the United States during the revolutionary years of 1989-1991. Events of this period have been so extraordinary that the most appropriate description comes not from historians, but from singer/composer Paul Simon in lyrics proclaiming these "days of miracle and wonder."

Even in stodgy newspapers, the headlines have been breathtaking: "The Wall Tumbles" ... "Leningrad to Again Become St. Petersburg" ... "Walesa Elected President" ... "Albania — A Prison Nation Opens its Gates" ... "A New Flag Rises Proudly in Namibia." So rapidly and decidedly has the world changed, however,

that the most stirring words fail to capture the drama which has engulfed nations and their peoples.

So too have these been years of dramatic change for Peace Corps. Just three years ago, no one could have imagined reaching agreements with nations, such as Namibia, which were so new that the documents we signed had to be written on plain paper because no official letterhead existed. Nor could we



Peace Corps Director Paul Coverdell with President Bush.

have envisioned sending volunteers to nations, such as Hungary, where change came so rapidly that government officials hurriedly scratched through part of their nation's old name, "the People's Republic," on stationery left over from the previous regime.

As the winds of change have blown across the entire face of the world, Peace Corps has responded enthusiastically to requests for assistance. In the first two years of this decade, we have reached out to 25 nations, bringing to nearly 90 the number of countries in which Peace Corps volunteers are currently working. In many of these nations, Peace Corps extended our country's first helping hand. How exciting it is that American volunteers are today building new friendships in countries formerly as isolated and troubled as Mongolia, Nicaragua and Laos.

As might be expected, not all events during these tumultuous times have been supportive of our mission. Removing our volunteers from harm's way — in the Philippines, Liberia, Yemen, Tunisia, Morocco, Pakistan, Mauritania and Tanzania — required us to temporarily suspend our programs in those countries. Fortunately, these rather dramatic and historic evacuations were all handled with no harm coming to any volunteers or staff, and we are now in the process of returning to all of these nations except Liberia. Having just returned from North Africa, I am

Coverdell promoting Third Goal

reminded of the sincere and moving query from a Tunisian woman whose child was in a special education program, "When will the American come back?" I am pleased that our answer is, "Soon."

As Peace Corps seeks to include more countries in its important mission, it also seeks to include more Americans. Ours is, and has always been, a land of immigrants — a melting pot of the world's peoples and cultures. Unfortunately, Peace Corps has never managed previously to mirror the diversity of the nation. It has never been able to reproduce within its volunteer force the rich and beautiful mosaic that is the United States of America. In the 1990s, Peace Corps is saying to America, "Everyone is welcome — every race; every ethnic group; every region of the country." We have invited America and America has responded. To make Peace Corps truly reflective of the face of America, there is more work to be done, but we have made progress.

As I have traveled throughout the United States talking about the volunteers and their mission, I have found an almost universal interest in, and admiration for, the Peace Corps. I have also discovered that there is no group in the country that appreciates Peace Corps more than children and youth. They, more than anybody, love to hear about the volunteers, and particularly about the wonderful and mysterious lands in which they work. Because of this genuine interest that American children have about other peoples and cultures, it has saddened me to learn of our nation's embarrassing deficiencies in geography, language and general international awareness. One can't be head of an agency which has a worldwide mission and be unmoved by the overwhelming data which chronicles how little our students know about the world around them.

While Peace Corps has always been charged through its Third Goal to bring knowledge of the world home to America, this goal has acquired new urgency in this, the last decade of the 20th century. Through our World Wise Schools program which links volunteers serving overseas with elementary and secondary schools in this country, Peace Corps is promoting geographic and international knowledge, as well as a spirit of volunteerism. Likewise, through Fellows/USA, in partnership with public schools, businesses and universities, we are bringing knowledge volunteers gain overseas back to help with tough problems and challenges in this country.

As we look toward the remainder of this decade and this century, we know that the world will continue to change rapidly and dramatically. We know that the majority of people seeking Peace Corps' help will soon live in the world's great urban areas, rather than in the small towns and villages in which our volunteers have served so well. We know that the population of the developing world will

continue for some time to become younger, requiring that greater attention be focused on children and youth. We know that increasing demands for Peace Corps will put strains on our resources. Because we are planning for the future, and because we have implemented a new Integrated Planning and Budget System (IPBS), a new Programming and Training System (PATS), and a new system of Institutional Memory (IM), we hope to be ready for all of these changes.

In summary, getting Peace Corps ready for the 1990s has meant getting ready to respond to an ever increasing number



Paul Coverdell has visited with Peace Corps volunteers around the world.

of countries which want to participate in the great Peace Corps partnership. It has meant making Peace Corps more reflective of the true face of America. It has meant getting ready for a new century by bringing the knowledge our volunteers gain overseas back to the United States. It has meant keeping the agency shipshape and ready to serve.

Being director of the Peace Corps during these years of revolution has been an exhilarating challenge. It has been a period of reinvigoration and growth — a renaissance of the volunteer spirit. As Peace Corps' 30th anniversary year comes to a close, let us look back on the past with pride, but let us focus our energies on the future — to new challenges at home and abroad; to reaching and passing the 10,000 volunteer goal; to making new friends in all corners of the world. After all, that is what Peace Corps has always been about — the future.

Paul D. Coverdell, who was chosen by President Bush to head the Peace Corps of the United States as its 11th director, took the oath of office as the current leader on May 1, 1989. Before moving on to public service at the national level, he was president of a prominent, nationwide insurance marketing firm based in Atlanta and served as minority leader of the Georgia State Senate.



Loret Miller Ruppe watches women in Ghana demonstrate spinning techniques.

Ruppe led way through 1980s

Loret Miller Ruppe, 1981-89

When I was first appointed as Peace Corps director in 1981, reporters always asked me, "Can a Republican, a Reagan appointee, support Peace Corps?" Ten years after I was first appointed as Peace Corps director, I can say with pride that yes, Peace Corps mirrors the best of all America, and it must be bipartisan in the best sense of the word. During my tenure as director, we had a president and vice president who showed their support for this great organization.

President Reagan visited Peace Corps volunteers in several countries. He wrote letters to them, mentioned them in speeches, had two Rose Garden ceremonies dedicated to them, and even personally intervened to help increase the Peace Corps budget. Then Vice President Bush visited with our volunteers in 14 countries. His wife, Barbara, went to Ghana for the 20th anniversary. They made many phone calls to families of volunteers over the years. Today, George Bush continues to support Peace Corps and the concept of volunteerism as our president.

When my own term as Peace Corps director was launched, some harbored doubts that a housewife from Houghton, Mich., could master the Peace Corps' administrative intricacies or keep it safely distant from the mire of partisan politics. The Peace Corps at that time was still struggling to overcome its 1970s' image as a haven for hippies, and like so many valuable programs, was so busy doing its job that it didn't have time to stop to talk with the very people on whom its continuation depended — from members of Congress to key people in the executive branch.

There were growing misperceptions about what we did or did not do, and how we went about it. Frequent changes in leadership had led many people to think there wasn't either a program worth leading or a leader capable of handling it.

Morale was low. Somehow, the Peace Corps machine chugged ahead, but with an extremely low profile and an aloofness from the political process on which it was dependent. There were those who had concluded that the Peace Corps wasn't or shouldn't be functioning.

Honored by my appointment to such an important post, I carried high hopes for the consuming task before me. As a deep believer in the necessity of the Peace Corps, I was determined to meet the challenge vociferously. I refused to agree that the Peace Corps was an anomaly.

Everyone in the Washington power structure needed an update on the Peace Corps. It has a mission of self-help that American volunteers perform with an almost religious fervor. The Peace Corps illuminates the tenets of democracy for all who participate, whether they're doers or receivers. It is pro-American and pro-world. It is anti-poverty and anti-hunger. It is humanitarian. It is educational, for both the developing world and the United States.

It also responds to changes in America, and not just political ones. Over the years, the United States has moved from being a youth-oriented society to one that is older and more conservative, and the Peace Corps has had to adjust accordingly. Volunteers are older now, which is not surprising in a nation slated to grow "grayer" as we near the turn of the century. As the volunteer corps has grown more mature, our approaches to training and placement have had to change.

Women, furthermore, are growing to be a greater part of the Peace Corps, which parallels another change in our society. We've gone from 32 percent women in 1962 to equal numbers of the sexes serving today.

At the same time, a decrease in America's stock of certain skills has forced the Peace Corps to make adjustments accordingly. In 1961, the 15 million family farms across the country

Ruppe fought budget battles

fed us a supply of agricultural workers. With only one-third or so of those farms still in existence today, we have to look harder for our agricultural volunteers. Fewer young Americans are majoring in math and science these days, robbing us of prepared teachers. All of these changes, and more, have required adjustments — and the Peace Corps has responded.

When I first came on board, the Peace Corps budget was so undernourished that it was hardly noticed by anyone. By sheer chance, I discovered this budget had been sent over to the State Department and then to the Office of Management and Budget without my ever being invited to defend it, much less to try to get some of the drastic \$10 million cut reinstated. A \$10 million reduction without a day in court! I insisted on a review, and I marched on the White House armed with facts enough to smite any cuts, drown any dissent. I discovered opponents who could not comprehend why we needed staff in each country where we had volunteers. I don't think the people in charge of cuts had ever traveled to a developing country, or even heard of the Peace Corps prior to meeting me, so my persuasive tactics were sorely tested. I did return with a small triumph, though; I managed to get \$2 million restored.

I think we've overcome the skepticism. Most of our leaders now recognize that the Peace Corps is important in providing plenty of bang for the foreign aid dollar.

Of course, the ultimate credit goes to the volunteers, to the staff, and to all others who have served unselfishly over the last 30 years.

But indeed the greatest honor and credit has to go to Hubert Humphrey, Henry Reuss and John F. Kennedy. And of course praise and immense credit go to that human dynamo, Sarge Shriver — the man who first led Peace Corps, the force who put it all together, and who continues his strong support today.

Credit must also go to all Peace Corps directors down through the years — Jack Vaughn, who followed Shriver; Joe Blatchford; Kevin O'Donnell; Donald Hess; Nicholas Crow; John Dellenback (my mentor); Carolyn Payton, the first woman director; Richard Celeste, former governor of Ohio, and now to Paul Coverdell, who is preparing Peace Corps for the 21st century.

Finally, all Peace Corps must mourn the passing of Congressman Syl Conte (of Massachusetts), who was there from the first — supporting the Peace Corps Act, which set goals and guidelines for building the understanding which leads to international friendship.

Those goals continue to be the foundation on which Peace Corps is built as current volunteers and returned volunteers continue to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Loret Miller Ruppe, who was appointed Peace Corps director in 1981 by President Reagan, was the longest serving director of Peace Corps. On Feb. 22, 1982, while she was director, the Peace Corps was re-established as an independent agency. She currently is serving as U.S. ambassador to Norway. Her remarks here are based on recent comments sent from Oslo as well as excerpts from the book "Making A Difference," in which she wrote a chapter titled "In a Changing America."

Celeste's mandate: restore visibility

Richard F. Celeste, 1979-81

When President Carter asked me to take on the leadership of the Peace Corps in March 1979, he emphasized that he wanted me to restore its visibility and vitality, a task which I assumed with enthusiasm. The president's May 1979 executive order establishing Peace Corps as an autonomous agency within ACTION helped accomplish both objectives. It set the framework for putting our organizational problems behind us, and it helped give Peace Corps back its identity and visibility.

As we entered the 1980s, the challenges of Peace Corps programming occupied a major portion of my attention. Our goal was to improve the diversity of Peace Corps, the quality of its program and, to the extent that resources permitted, the quantity of that program as well.

During my administration, Peace Corps built strong collaborative relationships with other development agencies, particularly the U.S. Agency for International Development. We developed worldwide joint programs in village-based energy and in forestry, and we established healthy collaborations at the country level in most of the 63 countries where we were then active. Perhaps one reason for this is the fact that there were by then former Peace Corps volunteers in every AID mission overseas.

To increase our diversity, we moved into work in refugee resettlement. We signed agreements with the United Nations high commissioner on refugees and the United Nations volunteer program. As the Peace Corps entered 1981, it had more volunteers involved in collaborative projects with AID and

'Ten years after I was first appointed as Peace Corps director in 1981, I can say with pride that yes, Peace Corps mirrors the best of all America.'

-- Loret Ruppe

Celeste pushed for diversity

other development agencies, and more volunteers working in the context of international organizations — especially on refugee resettlement — than at any time in its history.

Looking back, I am particularly enthusiastic about our success in involving women and minorities in the agency, particularly in staff positions. More than a third of all country directors and senior headquarters staff were of African American or Hispanic American descent. And one-third were women. Indeed, 13 out of Peace Corps' 19 senior staff members were women or minorities. In our own self-interest, we greatly strengthened our ties with traditionally black colleges and universities and invested substantial time and money in the recruitment of more minority volunteers. Still, recruitment of minorities represented an enormous challenge.

It was my view that quality of programming was the essential ingredient for Peace Corps success. To accomplish this goal, we moved ahead with a new process to better assess, select and prepare volunteers for overseas service. We invested heavily in improvements in both pre-service and in-service training, including the development of new training materials and models, and a worldwide core curriculum, so that all volunteers — regardless of where they were trained — had a common context in which to work. We also substantially upgraded stateside training, developed a cadre of program sector specialists, and significantly expanded the exchange of technical information, not only with and between volunteers, but also with others in the development community.

In terms of programming criteria, we attempted to focus our commitment on the poorest people of the developing world, to ensure that we developed their capacities and did not increase their dependence on our services. Concurrently, with sharpening our program criteria, we promoted the integration and involvement of women in development activities. More than a dozen Peace Corps offices ran special conferences on the role of women in development during the last year I was Peace Corps director, and we prepared new women in development training materials as part of the core curriculum.

While the diversity of Peace Corps was enhanced and the quality of Peace Corps efforts, from selection and training through programming, was demonstrably

strengthened during our administration, its quantity of service — in terms of the number of volunteers overseas — declined. In my last year, we fell well short of filling the requests we have received — due in large measure to limited funds and the enormous pressure of inflation overseas. In fact, during the 22 months I served as director, the Peace Corps budget grew only 5 percent. Its budget at the time I stepped down was below the Peace Corps appropriation level in 1966-1968.

Consequently, we were limited in our response both to requests from existing programs and to indications of interest from a number of new countries, including Haiti, Peru, Uganda and several small island nations. Despite these limitations and the necessity to leave Afghanistan, Chad, Nicaragua and El Salvador because of political unrest, we maintained a Peace Corps presence in more than 60 countries using a carefully planned process of country entry or re-entry. To sustain volunteer numbers we emphasized program quality enhancements which not only strengthened the impact of the volunteer's service, but also reduced early termination. In addition, I encouraged the extension of effective volunteers beyond their initial two-year tour.

Still, I pointed out candidly to President Carter that, in terms of quantity, the number of Peace Corps volunteers serving overseas declined toward the lowest level in a decade. This reduction was not because of any lack of interest in the Peace Corps, either in developing countries or our own. Rather



Peace Corps Director Richard Celeste makes a new friend while on trip abroad.

it was largely a consequence of the lack of the funds required to effectively recruit, train, place and support volunteers in the field.

I believe that the challenge of the 1980s for the Peace Corps was to assume an advocacy role, not simply on behalf of our own programs and volunteers, but also on behalf of the people the Peace Corps sought to serve in the developing world. I tried to set the stage for this by re-emphasizing the third legislative goal of the Peace Corps — “To promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people.” We established an associate director for development education and encouraged the creation of an independent not-for-profit foundation, dedicated to this effort, called the Peace

Corps Institute. We also began to mobilize that extraordinary but largely untapped resource of this country — its thousands of returned Peace Corps volunteers.

Peace Corps’ 20th anniversary focused attention on the needs of developing world peoples and the need for Americans to better understand them, their problems, and their aspirations. This remains the challenge for the Peace Corps as it faces the future.

Richard Celeste, appointed Peace Corps director in 1979 by President Carter, served as governor of Ohio from 1983 to 1991. Currently, he is president of Celeste & Sabety Ltd.

Payton recalls early days

Carolyn R. Payton, 1977-78

The day I accepted the invitation to write a few pages pertaining to my Peace Corps experiences provided me with a sense of déjà vu. It was also the day that I received the latest newsletter published by former volunteers who served in the Eastern Caribbean. The newsletter evoked all sorts of early memories.

EC1 had arrived in-country during my tour as deputy director/director of the Eastern Caribbean. There is nothing more exciting than the unlimited possibilities of programming a new Peace Corps country for placement of volunteers, unless it is that of programming for several new Peace Corps countries. For me those countries were the former British colonies of Grenada, St. Vincent, Dominica, Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis and Montserrat.

Adding to the excitement was the experience of sometimes being literally on the spot to witness the transformation of these countries from colonial status to fully independent nations. I was present when the British flag was lowered for the last time and the national flags of Barbados, St. Lucia and Grenada unfurled and were sent aloft while the crowds cheered and cried with pride. For many, issuing an invitation to Peace Corps would be among the first administrative actions taken by the fledgling governments.

These events took place in the late 1960s, but I had been captivated by the Peace Corps since its earliest days. I was involved as a psychologist in the first effort to assess Volunteer suitability for overseas service. Because of the uniqueness of the Peace Corps, there were no guidelines, no criteria for determining who might prove to be successful in achieving the Peace Corps goals. Nothing was in place to know who might be able to persevere through the transition from our culture to that of a developing nation.

My job was to make such determinations from testing, observation and interviews of Peace Corps trainees over the three months that training lasted. Thus I came to know the fishermen from Maine destined for Togo, along with their Togo I colleagues — carpenters to build schools for the Togolese and a team of MD’s and nurses. I remember geologists training for Cyprus, school teachers for Ghana, community developers for the Dominican Republic. No matter what

the training site or assignment, there was a commonality to all, the spirit of dedication and commitment to help.

The enthusiasm of these would-be volunteers was contagious, and I left academia in 1964 to work full-time first in the Washington office, and then in the Eastern Caribbean. Be assured that when I returned to the United States, I was as different, as expanded, as anyone who has undergone the in-country immersion. A most noticeable result was my decision not to return to teaching. Wanting to hold on to the egalitarian oneness experienced in the field, I turned to the applied side of my field and joined the Howard University Counseling Service.

I was contentedly toiling away when again I was afforded an opportunity to become involved with the Peace Corps. President Carter invited me to become the director of the agency, an honor and pleasure which could not be spurned.

The late 1970s differed in a number of ways from my first encounter with the Peace Corps. During the intervening years, all of us had undergone the Vietnam War and its aftermath and were left with varying residue. The sexual revolution and widespread use of drugs were also a part of our history. The “me” generation and materialism had supposedly replaced the altruism of the 1960s. Who, if anyone, could now be found who would choose to make the kind of sacrifices Peace Corps demanded?

The answer to that question was a delightful surprise. The volunteers whom I visited in such differing sites as Swaziland, Niger, Fiji and Philippines were clones of Togo I: the same enthusiasm; equal dedication to helping others help themselves; equal willingness to trade off the “luxuries” of stateside for two years in the bush teaching mathematics. It was awesome and humbling. Are the similarities attributable to the fact that the same kinds of people are attracted to the Peace Corps or may it be that the experiences provided by Peace Corps create the same kind of person?

For me, the answer clearly resides in the significance of the experiences provided. This is why programming and volunteer placement had such high priority for me as country director and agency director. I believe volunteers must be placed in programs and sites which will allow them to know and be known; to trust and be trusted by their neighbors; to be

friends to and befriended by the people who surround them. It is this existential phenomena which lies at the core of the Peace Corps experience. Upon talking with volunteers in the field or upon their return, those who speak of the transfiguration which happened to them rarely recount the number of fish ponds stocked or wells dug or children vaccinated. Yet they do convey that they have received more than they gave, that they have been touched in some way and are leaving in a different psychological "space."

As long as this continues to happen, and the more often it happens, the more we can be assured of the continuation of the Peace Corps and the more guarantee we have that the Peace Corps' three goals will be met.



Carolyn Payton served as Peace Corps' first woman director.

Carolyn R. Payton, named Peace Corps director by President Carter in 1977, today is dean for counseling and career development at Howard University in Washington, D.C. From 1964 to 1970, she was with the Peace Corps in several capacities including chief field selection officer for Latin America, deputy country director for the Eastern Caribbean and special assistant to the director for Latin America.

Dellenback served through mid-70s

John R. Dellenback, 1975-77

While I served as a member of Congress, a proposal was brought up and passed to change the structure of Peace Corps. On the surface, the idea of combining the nation's international volunteer program (Peace Corps) with its domestic volunteer programs into a single agency (ACTION) seemed like a good one. It would reduce duplication, stretch available funds and make it more readily possible to match volunteers' talents and alternative areas of service.

It was while the effort was underway to make the amalgamation productive and effective that, upon leaving Congress in 1975, I became part of Peace Corps. One indication of the effort to bury Peace Corps in ACTION was that, while I served as director of Peace Corps, my formal title was carried as assistant director of ACTION for international operations.

During my two years as director, Peace Corps did some effective swamp draining but fought a lot of alligators as it worked its way through a series of problems. Among the most critical was to counter the effort to reduce substantially Peace Corps' funding, thereby cutting the program. Pressure to do so came both from the Office of Management and Budget and from the director of ACTION. Peace Corps was able to resist those pressures because of strong bipartisan support in both houses of Congress. Senators and representatives, Republicans and Democrats, joined in refusing to accede to proposed drastic cuts in Peace Corps' appropriations.

Another critical problem arose from the decision by the director of ACTION to eliminate Peace Corps' independent recruiting in favor of a single recruiting office for all of ACTION. Over time it became clear to me that, whatever possible advantages this might bring to domestic volunteer programs, it was not advantageous for Peace Corps.

There was a constant struggle to have recruiters stress the unique challenge and commitment that Peace Corps offered and required. Peace Corps' ace in the hole here was the contagious nature of its basic vision and purpose and the great spirit of a steady stream of principally young Americans who rose to the challenge and refused to be daunted by bureaucracy.

A third major problem was to keep alive and clear the uniqueness and free standing strength of Peace Corps. As a member of Congress when ACTION was created, I had thought at that time that it would prove a good move. Experience proved me (and the majority of Congress) wrong. My service in Peace Corps convinced me that our volunteers — past, present and future — as well as Peace Corps itself would all be losers if we ever sank below the surface and became merely the

Dellenback tackled challenges

international arm of a single national volunteer agency. So the effort intensified to keep morale in Peace Corps high and to keep America as aware as possible that Peace Corps was alive and well and continuing to do a great job.

There were other problems such as keeping the State Department and the White House from politicizing Peace Corps. We also dealt with challenges like having to pull out of countries such as Ethiopia, spiking the Phoenix-like rumors that we were linked to the CIA, dealing with some tragic deaths of volunteers, handling host countries' steadily rising requests for volunteers with unnecessarily high paper qualifications and trying to make the best possible health care available to volunteers. In retrospect, these situations were serious and part of the ongoing life of Peace Corps, but were not unique to our

time. Having a volunteer in Colombia kidnapped and trying to help secure his release without putting other volunteers at risk was a tough and wrenching task.

Striving to think through why the attempted amalgamation of the nation's international and domestic volunteer programs really wasn't a good idea opened my mind to a realization that the underlying orientations of and reasons for the programs were quite different. Essentially the domestic volunteer programs arose from a desire to find constructive things for volunteers to do — while Peace Corps has a broad vision of helping to meet one of the world's great needs, namely to promote world peace and friendship, and harnesses the great strengths of visionary volunteers into serving and meeting that need.

Always my visits to the field were revitalizing, each time reminding me that the best job in Peace Corps was really not the director's, but probably a country director's — or a volunteer's.

With the presidency changing hands, I formally separated from Peace Corps after about two years in office. Clear in my mind was the knowledge that person for person, and dollar for dollar, Peace Corps was (and remains today) the nation's most effective foreign relations involvement.

John R. Dellenback, who was appointed by President Ford to head the Peace Corps, is board chairman of World Vision, secretary of the board of World Vision International and serves in a variety of capacities with numerous other organizations around the United States.



Director John Dellenback, right, makes a point to Senator Paul Tsongas, an RPCV.



'The generous spirit of the American people has produced in this country a great and long-standing tradition of voluntary service. During the past three decades, that tradition has been carried on with dramatic and far-reaching effort by the members of the United States Peace Corps.'

— President Bush

Craw faced Vietnam, Watergate

Nicholas Crow, 1973-74

The national polarization brought about by the Vietnam war, the constant tug-of-war with the administration and Congress over funding levels, and the Watergate scandal all had an impact (albeit non-programmatic) on the agency during my watch as Peace Corps director.

I remain convinced to this day that the administration wished — by design or by accident — to downgrade the status of the Peace Corps by submerging it under ACTION and I have been happy to see it re-emerge with its own status and identity. Although the Watergate matter was a disaster for our government and crippled many spheres of activity, it was, perversely, a blessing in disguise inasmuch as the White House was too preoccupied to spend much time keeping an eye on Peace Corps. Consequently, we actually had more freedom to innovate and to operate than we previously enjoyed.

Having come from the recruitment/selection/placement side of the agency, I had long been convinced that it was critical to Peace Corps' future to reverse the decline in volunteer count that had been occurring for many years. I viewed this as critical for the agency's credibility in living up to the expectations of it overseas, but also in being able to demonstrate our viability to the Congress. I was pleased that we were able to reverse this negative momentum, to enter seven or eight new countries and to at least stabilize the agency's critical mass for the future. In support of these objectives we also introduced a goal setting/measurement plan for the first time, the Country Management Plan, which gave us a much firmer foundation on which to argue our case to the Congress and for allocating our resources appropriately across 69 countries.

One thing that never ceases to amaze me, even today, was the gulf between the "reality" of Washington and the many different worlds in which our Peace Corps volunteers functioned. It was easy to be overcome by the demands of administration, congressional and State Department needs. Yet, one trip to a Peace Corps program overseas would quickly remind you how irrelevant these were to the challenges faced by individual volunteers daily. While the demands on a Peace Corps director's time are considerable, the best way to main-

tain perspective is to get out and live among the volunteers and to partake of some of their "reality!"

Nicholas Crow was selected by President Nixon in September of 1973 to head the Peace Corps as director of international operations under ACTION. He has held various executive positions with ACTION and VISTA and, in the private sector, with Project Hope and Scorpio Racing Enterprises. He is now president and chief executive officer of the Sports Car Club of America.



Recruiting posters form backdrop as Nicolas Crow talks about Peace Corps.



Hess resisted 'trying times'

Donald Hess, 1972-73

It was a trying period for the Peace Corps in several respects when I served as director, but not in terms of the volunteers. They were doing just fine in the fulfillment of the mission overseas. Rather, the trouble was "back home," right in the nation's capital.

In Washington, a refocus of the program occurred in the prior year. First, there was the packaging of it under the new umbrella volunteer organization, ACTION. The Peace Corps had become the "international operations" arm of that newly formed agency.

That was dispiriting to former volunteers as well as those serving at that time. More importantly, "international operations" just did not provide a rallying to service and marketing pizzazz. As a result, volunteer recruitment became an extraordinary challenge. It was exacerbated by a turning away from the "generalists" to the "specialists" in order to meet program needs.

The Peace Corps name had been suppressed. Its "program flag" was losing its unique identity for the public who over the years had been ardent supporters of the concept that Peace Corps represents. Beyond this, those who had been volunteers overseas — largely young Americans with a liberal arts background who had contributed two years to serve the needy throughout the developing world — felt deserted or a sense of betrayal.

It was my hope that the Peace Corps' identification erosion might be curbed, if not turned around, in part by my accepting the post of director of international operations (Peace

Corps director) because of my coming directly from a prior two-year assignment as country director of the Peace Corps in Korea. The turn-around effort proved to be an overwhelming Sisyphean-like challenge. There was a new administration eager to engage the "new directions" in Washington. Further, the Congress had already endorsed the creation of the ACTION organization.

In that same time period, the Peace Corps had other pressures on it, again on the home front. There was a growing interest — in fact a demand — by both the Executive Office of the White House and the Congress to have the Peace Corps quantify the worth of its service overseas and to the United States. The first of its three goals, meeting needs for trained manpower, presented no insurmountable problem in this regard. However, try putting the other two goals — the "understanding missions" — on a scale and read its cost-benefit value. This quest to prove in dollar terms, at least to Louisiana Congressman Otto Passman's satisfaction (he held the appropriations purse strings), gave the Washington Peace Corps staff its greatest test in order to save the program. Literally dozens of studies, evaluations, data measurements and collections, analyses and reports of all stripes were launched, some directly by congressional committees, others by the Executive Office of the president. And, of course, there were various evaluations by the Peace Corps itself.

Prior to my coming to Washington, the Peace Corps appropriations had been especially attacked. Part of the task at hand was not to allow any further shrinkage of the funding. In this, we fared rather well. Unfortunately, we still could not bring the living and readjustment allowances for Peace Corps

volunteers to the deserved higher levels. Importantly, however, we were able to stop the downward sizing of the Peace Corps.

Through all of these travails in Washington, we were careful to insulate the volunteers from the bureaucratic maneuvering and games that not uncommonly befall most agencies along the Potomac. Volunteers were able to serve the people in their host country in the grand tradition of the Peace Corps since its inception.

The relative independence of the Peace Corps was also put to the test during this time. An unusual example of this was when the unfortunate need developed to remove the Peace Corps from Uganda in the



Hess, left, dealt with pressures on the home front while keeping Peace Corps on course.

fall of 1972. The mercurial Gen. Idi Amin had created an ambience throughout his country that precluded the Peace Corps from executing its purposes. One Peace Corps trainee was killed and another wounded by the general's soldiers. Further, another volunteer was incarcerated without cause. A war-like climate seemed to be closing in fast and volunteers' safety could no longer be guaranteed.

When the State Department was told of our desire to leave the country, there was fear of how that might translate for both the Amin government as well as American government personnel. After elongated but friendly polemics, it was realized that volunteers did not constitute a direct component nor were they employees of U.S. foreign

policy but were American citizen volunteers. As such, they could not be forced to stay in a country when the mission of the Peace Corps could not be fulfilled and their safety could not be assured.

From the many positive experiences with the Korea in-country training, a worldwide move was begun to stage the dominate training of volunteers in the host country where they would eventually serve. With this came the greater utilization of host country nationals in the training programs. Training became much more relevant and costs dropped. The true dividends, however, were a more satisfied volunteer because of more realistic preparation and the anticipated drop in the volunteer attrition rates.

The period of my service was indeed personally rewarding. It was made especially satisfying through the realization of the dedication of 7,000 volunteers to the principles and zeal for accomplishing the goals of the Peace Corps. They represented a concept and name that will live worldwide forever.

Donald Hess, nominated by President Nixon in 1972 to head the Peace Corps, was a country director in Korea just prior to his presidential appointment. He is now vice president for administration at the University of Rochester in New York.



O'Donnell, left, stayed in touch with world leaders regarding Peace Corps' mission.

O'Donnell came up from ranks

Kevin O'Donnell, 1971-72

I became responsible for the Peace Corps on July 1, 1971, when I was appointed associate director of international operations of ACTION. It was created effective that date to bring all volunteer programs of our government into a single super volunteer agency. The Peace Corps was the largest member of ACTION, which also included VISTA, SCORE, ACE, RSVP and some other volunteer activities.

My appointment marked the first time that someone who had served overseas in Peace Corps was selected for these responsibilities. In May of 1966, I had volunteered myself, my wife and our eight children to start up the Peace Corps in Korea and serve as its country director.

Almost immediately upon assuming my role, I was beset with budget problems in addition to the expected problems resulting from merging several independent agencies into one. Congress, in those Vietnam conflict days, had soured on almost all foreign assistance efforts, both military and developmental. In such an environment, those who wished to cripple Peace Corps could move subtly but decisively.

As evidence of this, here is a quote from the Feb. 9, 1972 Congressional Record: "Mr. Speaker, I say without fear of contradiction or any factual statistics to the contrary that the so-called misnamed Peace Corps is the most useless and, in all probability, most detrimental to our foreign policy of any agency in our federal government."

These words were spoken by Congressman Otto Passman, D-La., chairman of the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee responsible for the Peace Corps'

appropriation. This same congressman earlier stated that if he had but three minutes to meet his Maker, and in those three minutes he could kill the Peace Corps, he would die a happy man.

Since the Senate did not act on the appropriations bill passed by the House before they recessed, a continuing resolution was necessary to allow Peace Corps to operate until Congress reconvened. This resolution provided the Peace Corps a budget of only \$72 million — \$10.2 million below the administration's request.

It was my responsibility to operate the agency within the budgetary restrictions imposed by Congress. At this point, I had begun preparing contingency plans to recall volunteers from their overseas assignments, thus abrogating our agreements with the host governments by returning these volunteers prior to the completion of their service. Our credibility around the world would have been destroyed.

On March 6, 1972 orders were cut to bring home 2,313 volunteers from 33 countries. The cables were prepared and cleared by the State Department to move at 12:01 a.m. March 7, 1972.

At the eleventh hour, Congressman Passman relented and reluctantly agreed to "find" another \$2.6 million in a supplemental appropriation at a later date. This gave an immediate, but short-lived respite to Peace Corps. It was apparent that Passman might just not be able to put through a supplemental appropriation. His handling of the whole foreign aid package had alienated several congressmen who just might not wish to bail him out.

Suddenly, upon signing the \$3.189 billion foreign aid bill on March 8, 1972, covering the fiscal year ending June 30, 1972, President Nixon announced he was determined that the Peace Corps continue at its present level. The president said he would use his executive authority provided by the foreign aid bill to transfer other funds to the agency to permit it to keep operating at full strength.

Peace Corps also benefitted from the crisis because, in

sharp contrast to the Passmans of Congress, many other congressmen and senators were quietly determined not to let something like this happen again. This crisis generated tremendous public reaction. The media response was invariably favorable to Peace Corps. Countless columnists and editorial writers presented the case for Peace Corps.

I was pleased to learn that, despite the rumors flying all around the world as to whether Peace Corps would survive, the volunteers, trainees and staff had gone about their tasks and kept doing what they went overseas to do.

The Peace Corps in its origins was meant to be a non-career government agency. It was to be an in-up-and-out experience. As a presidential appointee, I was not bound by this rule. However, I believed very strongly in the concept of a non-career Peace Corps. I believed persons should join Peace Corps, make their contribution and leave, so that another person could follow and share in the Peace Corps' experience.

I submitted my resignation to President Nixon effective April 30, 1972, which would be exactly six years to the day since I joined Peace Corps. I also sent a letter to all volunteers, trainees and staff announcing this decision.

"These years have been alternately exciting, difficult, challenging, frustrating...but always rewarding," I wrote. "They have never been dull or boring. Like the volunteer's, my own Peace Corps experience has been so highly intense and personalized that it is difficult to articulate. I think all of you can understand what I mean. And like the volunteer, there comes a time to pack it up and return to "real life ... except ... maybe ... Peace Corps is the real life?"

Kevin O'Donnell was chosen associate director for international operations when President Nixon created ACTION in 1971. O'Donnell was responsible for management of the Peace Corps program under the new umbrella organization for volunteerism. Previously, he was country director for the Peace Corps in Korea from 1966 to 1970, then director of the agency's administration and finance and deputy acting director. Currently, he is chief executive officer of SIFCO Industries Inc. in Cleveland.

Blatchford sought new directions

Joseph Blatchford, 1969-71

The spring of my second year as Peace Corps director, there were protests against the Peace Corps in reaction to America being at war in Vietnam. Shortly after 8 a.m. May 8, 1970 — one week after U.S. troops had invaded Cambodia — members of the Committee of Returned Volunteers staged a protest at Peace Corps headquarters, then 806 Connecticut Ave., just across the street from the White House.

The demonstrators made the fourth floor of the Peace Corps offices their headquarters. They draped flags, including the Viet Cong banner, and displayed posters and handmade signs urging Peace Corps employees to strike. They demanded "liberation" of the entire building for use of other demonstrators coming into the city. They also wanted access to the State Department communications system to call all volunteers home until the war ended. The occupation lasted a day and a half.

Against this backdrop, new directions were taking place

as the Peace Corps prepared to celebrate its 10th anniversary. Basically, these changes involved the recruitment of people with speciality skills, more minorities, United Nations volunteers and individuals who would serve at home as well as abroad.

All of this, of course, took place during my tenure at a time when the president decided a bipartisan task force should look at the U.S. government and reorganize it. As part of that plan, the suggestion was made to pull the volunteer agencies together and create an umbrella agency for volunteer organizations.

The President announced formation of such an agency at the University of Nebraska in January of 1971 and he asked me to be the director of it. This proposal easily passed both houses of Congress. You will see newspaper articles today which say ACTION was created by President Nixon to get rid of the Peace Corps" but that is just ridiculous. I personally believe it helped the Peace Corps because the Vietnam war had caused

Americans to turn more to home and against foreign aid.

In early days of Peace Corps, Americans felt genuine excitement and pride when it was discovered that, contrary to our affluent image, volunteers could live in the villages or barrios and love it. The American people, in a public opinion poll, declared the Peace Corps to be the best investment among our foreign assistance programs. However, problems beneath the surface, ignored in the early excitement, began to emerge. Governments became disturbed by the presence of foreigners in schools which transmitted their history and culture. And, it became clear that our means of setting the volunteers out on their own — which came to be called “parachuting” — failed because of a lack of extensive training, thorough supervision and substantial prearranged local support.

As the decade came to a close, pressures of this kind steadily reduced the numbers of volunteers. In a 1970 report, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee noted that the Peace Corps was “increasingly becoming the target of anti-American sentiment....The committee believes that the time is near when the assumptions and concepts on which the Peace Corps was founded need complete re-examination.”

When I came in as director, I found that basically the Peace Corps was operating from a “recruitment” base in the 1960s and we needed to change that. I immediately formed a task force, charged with focusing on new directions for the Peace Corps in the 1970s.

The task force drawn from government, business, labor, Peace Corps staff and returned volunteers suggested a number of guidelines adopted by the Peace Corps in the form of new directions for the 1970s. These plans were approved and supported by President Nixon and generally endorsed by Congress.

The first of these new directions was to shift more volunteer assignments to the high-priority needs of developing countries. Long-range planning was the first step; country directors were asked to work out with local leaders a four-year plan to utilize volunteers.

Host countries could just take so many “BA generalists.” They needed agricultural specialists, math and science teachers, architects, foresters, and people in skilled trades such as auto mechanics, carpentry, plumbing. There were a lot of internal rules of the Peace Corps that had to be changed to accomplish these things.

Our advertising had to change to show young men and women who lived on farms that they could be useful in the Peace Corps. We needed to convince those in the skilled trades such as an auto mechanic, carpenter,

brick layer. When I talked with the labor movement, they thought the Peace Corps was just for kids out of college. There were thousands and thousands of youth, who had various skills, who didn't think of the Peace Corps.

By the time I left in the first part of 1973, the number of purely BA generalists was 30 percent and 70 percent had some kind of skill and training or were teaching what they had already studied.

We also felt more should be done with ex-volunteers. There was no particular program. So I appointed one of the top people in the Peace Corps to head the Office of Returned Volunteers. It was headed by Payne Lucas, the Africa director, whose job was to get the word out. The idea was to find places where ex-volunteers could continue to volunteer at home.

Joseph Blatchford, appointed Peace Corps director in 1969 by President Nixon, was later designated to head the newly formed ACTION agency encompassing both domestic and foreign volunteer service programs. His recollections here are based on a recent interview and from an article he wrote for Foreign Affairs magazine titled “The Peace Corps: Making It In The Seventies.” He now is a partner in the law firm of O'Connor & Hannan.



Blatchford extends his hand in friendship while on a Peace Corps trip to Africa.

Vaughn built volunteer support

Vietnam cut back numbers

**Environment
'absolute best'
job for PCVs**



Vaughn said that being Peace Corps director 'was easily the best job in Washington.'

Jack Vaughn, 1966-69

During my stewardship as Peace Corps director, the reverberations, contradictions and frustrations from Vietnam probably reached their peak. This resulted in declining applications for Peace Corps service and growing hostility on campuses.

Many male volunteers felt guilty because they were in the Peace Corps instead of the armed forces. I found myself spending growing amounts of time negotiating on Eye Street with General Hershey (Lt. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, then director of the Selective Service) and his formidable state draft directors. Often, these meetings became pretty hot and essentially silly sessions. These were fights I loved to win, when occasionally I did.

In 1967, an ex-Ethiopia volunteer from Massachusetts, Paul Tsongas, came by my office seeking advice on whether he should accept an offer as a village development agent in Vietnam. I advised him to run for president.

The best of my tenure came from the improvement in dialogue, programming and volunteer support as large numbers of former volunteers joined the corps as overseas staff. Their real world impact on Peace Corps operations was extraordinary. We also benefitted from accelerating the moving of training overseas and from hitting language training much harder.

The greatest pleasure came from seeing Republican politicians embrace the Peace Corps idea as if it were their own. I remember Senator Barry Goldwater meeting with our senior

staff one morning and leaving us convinced that the Peace Corps was the most republican thing the Republic had ever done.

I used to begin many of my speeches in the Peace Corps with the statement that I intended to help it become as good as my predecessor Sargent Shriver said it was. What I really meant to say was that after all the great things that Sarge had accomplished, being Peace Corps director was easily the best job in Washington. If it still is (and I suspect it is) we can all blame Sarge.

One thing I discovered very early in the Peace Corps in Chile was that the absolute best, fool-proof, high payoff jobs for volunteers were in conservation and the environment — such as reforestation. Over the years I have found no reason to change this view. Conservation and natural resource management are areas where volunteers can see enormous critical need, the possibility of tangible and relatively rapid achievement as well as long-term impact, a little immortality and a lot of Marlboro country.

The volunteers in conservation projects in Guatemala — where I am currently living — are achieving extraordinarily important goals for Guatemala, the region, for themselves — and for Barry Goldwater.

Jack Vaughn, who was selected by President Johnson in 1966 to be Peace Corps director, is presently with the U.S. Agency for International Development's regional office for Central American programs in Guatemala.

Shriver started it all in 1961

'President Kennedy kept agitating with me to start, start, start the Peace Corps. I continually delayed. I wanted to improve our chances for success...the first time.'

Sargent Shriver, 1961-66

At the beginning most "mature" persons thought the Peace Corps was an unrealistic idea proposed by a youthful president, and fraught with peril for those who volunteered to serve in foreign villages and towns. The president was guilty of romanticism and naivete, the critics thought. Richard Nixon said it would be a "haven for draft dodgers."

Even Eleanor Roosevelt told me she was "terrified" by what might befall idealistic but inexperienced Americans assigned to work in remote places in the underdeveloped world.

All of us charged with organizing the Peace Corps were affected by the skepticism of the experts. That's why we called upon psychologists and psychiatrists to help in selecting the first volunteers. That's why we asked experts who had lived and knew the people and languages in remote places like Nepal, Malaysia, Tanganyika (as Tanzania was then called), India, and Thailand to help us with language training, physical conditioning, medical advice, and cross-cultural instruction. We knew we had only one chance. The Peace Corps had to work the first time. Like a parachute jumper, we knew the chute had to open successfully the first time it was tried.

I was especially cautious. Nothing in politics is more devastating than conspicuous failure. For the youngest president in American history to blunder with an initiative involving the youth of America in the international arena, where mistakes could not be hidden, would besmirch Kennedy's judgment among serious experts (as they loved to think of themselves) in foreign affairs. No wonder that most State Department veterans looked upon the Peace Corps with incredulity and alarm. Fortunately, Dean Rusk, the secretary of State, and at least one of his deputies, Chester Bowles, thought the Peace Corps would succeed.

Kennedy was unaffected by the skeptics. The man who startled the world when he said "Ich bin ein Berliner" when all the allies still hated the Huns, and the absolute evil personified by the Nazis, was not daunted. The man who predicted that the USA would put a man on the moon in this decade. He believed that the American people could do things never done before in human history. So, he kept agitating with me to start, start, start the Peace Corps. I continually delayed. I wanted to improve our chances for success...the first time.

On March 1, 1961, we went public. With monies from the president's emergency fund, we began the Peace Corps. We enrolled, trained, tested, and selected the best volunteers we could find. We planned activities in ten countries in Africa, South America, India, Thailand and the Far East. We chose exceptional men to lead these new volunteers in activities

never attempted by American civilians. We taught languages never before taught in American schools. We brought some of the volunteers to meet the president in the White House. And, we sent all of them overseas to their assignments before Congress had passed legislation approving the program or appropriated any money to finance our activities.

Thus, the Peace Corps began, and with God's help, and the incredible dedication of the volunteers and their leaders in every country, it flourished. Congress subsequently approved all we had done, and gave us the money to do more. Within four years we had 13,600 volunteers on assignment in some 45 undeveloped lands.

Then came Vietnam. The corps shrank in size to 5,500 persons. The nation lost its sense of direction, its self-confidence, and its courage. For the first time we were defeated in military action. We lost heart, and almost our soul. And the Peace Corps suffered and suffered.

The road back has been slow, and not yet finished. We are nowhere near the 13,600 volunteers in service in 1965. We should have twice that number today because the world needs volunteers, and we have them ready to serve, and the world needs the practical idealism the Peace Corps represents. We have had enough of the "Real Politik" of German and European history. We need to progress beyond Machiavelli, Metternich, the Congress of Vienna, Clemenceau, and even Roosevelt, Churchill and DeGualle. They were fabulous men for their times — courageous, visionary, patriotic, incredibly intelligent and dedicated. They were men for the ages. But we are already in a new age, requiring new men, and women, with a new vision beyond military and economic power, a vision for the age of nuclear weapons and potential holocaust for all.

The Peace Corps can and should be an integral and leading participant in the creation of that new era. For its practical, person-to-person service to the weakest of our fellow human beings regardless of race, economics and military might is not just one way, it is the only way to achieve survival for all.

"If you want peace, work for justice." Unless we seek justice, with all the fervor and money we spend to achieve military victories, we will never create a just world or a peaceful one. A nuclear holocaust is the alternative we face.

Sargent Shriver, who was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to launch the Peace Corps as its first director, now serves as president of Special Olympics.



Sargent Shriver, left center, served as global ambassador as Peace Corps' first director.

'The wisdom the volunteers brought back with them added to the reservoir of compassion and understanding in America. It has provided our nation with the insight into the thinking of the great majority with whom we share the globe. But Peace Corps volunteers, because they were toilers and not just observers, also learned that they need not sit by impotently while others suffer. That, too, is an important lesson for America.'

-- Sargent Shriver

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