

# PEACE CORPS TIMES

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS SERVING WORLDWIDE

NUMBER ONE-1994



• The Journey of Azzedine Downes • You Don't Say (or wish you hadn't) • Books by Peace Corps Writers • More Great Fieldbook Entries • News from the regions and more . . .



# PEACE CORPS TIMES

NUMBER ONE — 1994

## FEATURES



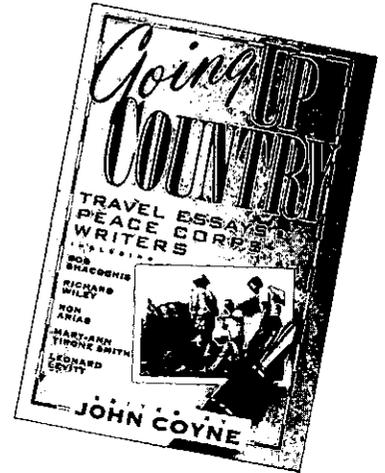
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**ON THE COVER:** Nepali girl flashes a grin from atop a tractor in Lamidanda. Photo by Aaron Rome, PCV/Nepal.

 PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Editorial Policy**

Letters and photos are always welcome, and we try to print all that we receive. Preference will be given to letters that address the contents of the magazine. We request that letters be limited to 200 words, and we reserve the right to edit for style, clarity, and length. All black and white and color photos (up to 8x12 inches) are acceptable, however we regret that we cannot return them. Please identify all photos clearly. Peace Corps reserves the right to use any writings, photos, and artwork in other publications.

**Pounds of Fast Food Outrage**

Editor's note:

The Winter 1993 Peace Corps Times cover continued to generate comments through the Spring. While some writers expressed irritation about the photo of a Peace Corps Volunteer in Eastern Europe teaching "fast food English," others were supportive. The following two letters are cases in point.

Dear Editor:

In the Number Two-1993 issue of Peace Corps Times, there was a letter to the Editor written by some Peace Corps Volunteers in Uruguay. It concerned the cover of the Winter 1993 issue, which pictured a PCV teaching English in Hungary. The writers were upset because the PCV was teaching her students how to order fast food.

Those PCVs in Uruguay have a right to express their opinions, but I was shocked that the Peace Corps Times staff had the gall to print the letter in a magazine read by numerous PCVs around the world. How do you all think that PCV in Hungary feels being unnecessarily slandered by fellow PCVs. As Volunteers we all work hard and undergo enormous challenges. We need SUPPORT, not insults.

Also, I think it ought to be clarified that in teaching English abroad (whether it be for environmental or business or any other purposes), teaching about the culture from where the language is spoken goes hand in hand with understanding the language. I took Spanish and German classes all throughout my school years, and my teachers always taught about the Spanish-speaking and the German cultures in class. And since ordering fast food happens to be

part of the U.S. culture, where English is spoken, I don't see any problem concerning the PCV in Hungary's teaching methods. Besides, what is the second goal of Peace Corps service?

I think the staff at Peace Corps Times owes the Volunteer in Hungary an apology. Really, you all had your nerve to print such a letter.

Pamela Hazall  
TEFL PCV/Armenia

Editor's Response:

We meant no disrespect to the Volunteer pictured on our cover—in fact, many of the letters received were supportive.

Dear Editor:

I'd like to respond to the PCVs in Uruguay who were so "appalled" at the cover showing a PCV teaching English in Hungary.

It is unfortunate that there are those Volunteers who believe they have a monopoly on Peace Corps' ideals. Nonetheless, as Americans we have the right to freely express our views, no matter how sanctimonious, presumptuous and yes, limited they may be.

As I'm sure my colleagues are aware, two of Peace Corps' three goals are in essence a cross-cultural exchange of sorts. The presentation of a single lesson on fast food (an aspect of American culture) is a far cry from culture imperialism and certainly shouldn't "appal" anyone working towards Peace Corps' three goals.

Sincerely,  
Dana Michael Hollywood  
PCV/Comoros



Winter 1993 Peace Corps Times cover.



## Lack of Coverage for Sierra Leone?

Dear Editor:

Sierra Leone has had a lot happen in the past two years: rebels, coup, evacuation, reinstatements (the first time in Peace Corps history after an evacuation) and I've never seen these stories in the *Peace Corps Times*. Even when you had the article about countries Peace Corps had evacuated, Sierra Leone was not listed.

Anyway, I'm gone (I'm actually an RPCV now); but let these new guys see at least one article about Salone in their two years. Duya (please).

Thanks,  
Linda Slonksnes  
Former Volunteer/Sierra Leone

Editor's Response:

*Thanks for keeping an eye out for your post. We try to maintain an appropriate balance in reporting activities of the countries in which Volunteers serve. We are always looking for good stories, so if you've got one, please let us know. For coverage on Sierra Leone in this issue, see page 7.*

## Want to Contribute?

Dear Editor:

I recently read the *Peace Corps Times* for the first time. I have been in Niger for a year, and have only just discovered this treasure! I found the magazine inspirational. The articles provided ideas for work during and after my Peace Corps Service. The contents of the magazine also had the wonderful ability to help me think in a focused manner, something which is all too rare in my bush village.

I would like to ask you two questions. First of all, how can I contribute an article to your magazine? Do you have certain issues you would like an article on (written by a PCV)?

Secondly, would it be possible for me to receive a copy of your magazine directly? I ask this because it is difficult to find the copy that you send to the office and I usually never get to read it.

Sincerely,  
Deborah M. Ball  
PCV/Niger

Editor's Response:

*Volunteers (and PC staff) are welcome to submit articles to Peace Corps Times for possible publication. We can't guarantee publication, but are always interested in reading about your experiences. As for the distribution of the magazine, posts are shipped enough so that each Volunteer receives one. If you are not receiving yours, please talk to the staff at your post.*

## Paper Trail

Dear Editor:

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ukraine, I regularly receive copies of *Peace Corps Times*. Although I understand that "The Director has determined that publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business" and that "Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget" I feel that paper, a scarce commodity in much of the world, is being wasted unnecessarily.

For many of us in the field, we read those items we find of interest and promptly dispose of the magazine. Would it not be better under such circumstances for the Peace Corps to use recycled paper of a lesser weight. The government could thereby save not only on paper but on postage as well. *And in the Third World, it could set a positive example by not only reducing the amount of material being*

*burned and the unnecessary pollution caused thereby but by demonstrating that the United States is truly interested in preserving the environment.*

Cordially,  
Anne Bates Linden  
PCV/Ukraine

Editor's Response:

*You are absolutely correct—conscientious selection of paper can save trees as well as postage costs. We hope you'll be pleased to know that right now we are in the process of making design changes to make our magazine more environmentally friendly. Peace Corps Times is currently printed on a 60lb. white recycled paper, which has a minimum 20% post consumer waste.*

## PEACE CORPS TIMES

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Inquiries and letters should be sent to: *Peace Corps Times*; 1990 K Street N.W., 8th Fl.; Washington, D.C. 20526; phone (202) 606-3371.

# NEWS FROM AFRICA



*Local women in Bougouni, Mali. Photo by PCV Kelley Kyle.*

In 1961 the first Peace Corps Volunteers were secondary school teachers assigned to Ghana. By the early 1970s, Ghanaian English teachers moved into the classrooms, and Volunteers moved on to assignments in teacher-training. Today

in sub-Saharan Africa, Peace Corps still has programs in education, but Volunteers are also involved in reforestation in Mali, urban sanitation in the Ivory Coast, and AIDS education and prevention in Malawi. While the economic and political

environment has made the 1990s difficult in Africa, Peace Corps continues to provide assistance, training, and skills to those nations. In the last four years, Peace Corps programs in Liberia, Zaire, Equatorial Guinea, and Burundi have been suspended, but 2,239 Volunteers continue to work in 34 African countries.

## NATIONS AT A GLANCE

### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC Unique Approach to AIDS Prevention

A number of PCVs around CAR have been working with local youth groups to present AIDS education skits which show how HIV is spread and how it can be avoided through condom use. The Volunteers are also helping small entrepreneurs market and sell condoms in areas throughout the country.

One Volunteer has worked with young artists to draw and reproduce "billboards" for the local market on STD/AIDS prevention. They produced a video in the local language, Sango, with local AIDS patients explaining how they contracted the disease. HIV/AIDS is sometimes seen as a phenomenon of the city and not something likely to happen in a small community to 'regular' people (farmers, small entrepreneurs, mothers, brothers, etc.) PCVs in southern CAR helped to establish an AIDS committee in the town of Mobaye, training young women to do AIDS education in the local high schools.

### COTE D'IVOIRE

#### PCV Designs Waste Disposal System

Karl Shultz, an Urban Environmental Management PCV, working in Cote d'Ivoire, noticed that medical waste (syringes, needles, and used bandages), were being disposed of in the same manner as usual trash. Children were often seen rummaging through the garbage in search



Ghana PCVs Jim Myers, Steven Boyack, and Keith Hubert modeling the latest in local fashion on swearing-in day. Photo by PCV Meredith Walther.

of interesting “play toys,” thus exposing themselves to all kinds of contaminants, including the AIDS virus.

Disturbed by this problem, Karl considered various options for a better disposal system and designed a low-cost medical incinerator. After some testing, he marketed and promoted it in Cote d'Ivoire to both the state hospital and clinics as well as private doctors. Ten out of twelve facilities were so interested that they asked Karl to help them construct the incinerators without any exterior funding sources. With the proceeds, Karl launched a public education campaign about the importance of proper medical waste disposal. His invention was such a success that the Ivoirian Ministry of Health now requires all new public hospitals and clinics to construct incinerators for medical wastes!

**GABON**

**WID Helps Award Scholarships**

This is the fifth year in a row that Peace Corps/Gabon's Women in Development Committee and the La Promotion Feminine (the government of Gabon's office for women's affairs) have awarded scholarships to help and encourage Gabonian girls to stay in school. Sixty-four scholarships were awarded, with the amount of each award based on the student's grade point aver-

age and financial need. The scholarship program depends heavily on the Volunteers' assistance in finding qualified, needy girls, and taking the time to help them through the long application process.

**MALI**

**Counterpart Day**

Peace Corps' Counterpart Day was held during the 8th week of Pre-Service Training (PST), one day after the Trainees returned to the train-

ing site from their site visits. The goal of Counterpart Day is to get the Volunteers and counterparts off to a good start even before Volunteers arrive to begin work in their assigned villages.

**SIERRA LEONE**

**International Volunteer Day Celebration Draws a Crowd**

Despite the unexpected declaration of Monday, December 6th as an official holi-

day, the 1993 International Volunteer Day celebration was well attended by members of the development community and the general public. Volunteers Eric Laushine, Cathy Conry, Kathleen Dinges, and Carrie Howard from the Agriculture Resources Management (ARM) project and Annette Buford from the Health Personnel Development (HPD) project prepared displays and answered questions about project activities as part of an exhibition at Freetown's City Council building.

**SWAZILAND**

**Happy 25th Anniversary**

Peace Corps/Swaziland celebrated its 25th Anniversary on January 22. A variety of activities took place to mark the occasion. Swaziland's Prime Minister Prince Mbilini addressed the Anniversary Celebration which took place at the Royal Swazi Convention Center. He noted that Peace Corps has been in Swaziland since the independence of the country itself in 1968. The Prime Minister commended the work done by

*(Continued on page 16)*



Senegal PCV John Coyle teaching neighborhood women how to construct mud stoves in order to cut down on their dependence on a dwindling supply of firewood. Photo by Casey Luce, PCV/Senegal.

## SPECIAL REPORT/AFRICA

### GUINEA BISSAU

#### The *Djunbai* Approach in Guinea Bissau

by Elizabeth Zervos, Former Volunteer/Guinea-Bissau

When the first group of TEFL Volunteers arrived in Guinea-Bissau in 1988, very little in the way of a national curriculum existed and half the Volunteers ended up leaving early. The program was having so many problems getting established that a decision was made to cancel training and wait a year before any new Volunteers would be brought in.

In May 1991, TEFL consultant Brenda Bowman came to Guinea-Bissau to work with Peace Corps. After consulting with Peace Corps in-country staff, Ministry of Education officials, and Guinean and American teachers, she concluded that it should be up to the group of Volunteers and national teachers of English to write their own curriculum and educational materials.

Brenda introduced Paulo Friere's notion of asking students to think of themselves as "agents of change" in their society. A potent combination of improved teaching methodology and the validation of the rich exchange of opinions and experiences amongst students and their teachers became the guiding principle on which the team of curriculum developers based their work.

That rainy season, the teams of writers produced a teachers' guide and students' workbook for the first year of English study. The books were completely suffused with the realities and cultural heritage of Guinea-Bissau. The process began with identifying students' concerns and interests, and then writing dialogues around these issues. Five sets of questions were then designed to lead students from identifying the central theme of the dialogue, relating it to their own experience, and ultimately, to seeking ways to improve the situation. Teachers were encouraged to lead these discussions in either the Guinea-Bissau Creole or Portuguese at the beginning of the year, and as students' language skills improved, to incorporate as much English as possible.

Next, the writers went back into the dialogues and highlighted the English structures, functions and vocabulary activities suggested to teachers.

After the books were piloted that following school year, teachers shared suggestions for improvement for a revised edi-

tion. The TEFL program was on solid ground, and two Volunteers elected to extend their contracts to continue with curriculum development.

The next step of the plan was to ensure that the Guinean TEFL teachers who had participated in the curriculum development/education materials design would be well-versed in not only how to use the books, but also prepared to take on the responsibility of continuing the project on their own.

Guinean student-teachers from Tchico Té spent an entire semester at the Teacher-Training Institute in Bissau gaining teaching experience, evaluating themselves, and providing suggestions to their peers.

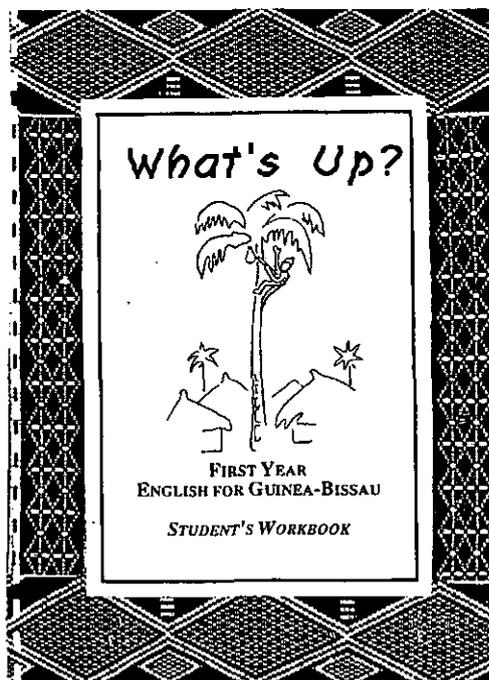
Many of the Tchico Té student-teachers participated in an experimental project called "Saturday Study Time" offered to high school students of English who wanted more class time. Upwards of 200 students would come on the weekends of their own will to see Guinean and American teachers devoting their free-time to teach. Saturday Study Time continued

throughout the rainy season vacation, coordinated and taught completely by national teachers.

Now, the first-year book, *What's Up?*, has been revised and plans are to have it printed for distribution to other Volunteers. The Guinean Ministry of Education has offered to front the money necessary to print 1,500 copies of the students' workbook, which will in turn be sold nation-wide. The second-year books are expected to be completed this year, and a plan for the third year of English study is also in the works. More extensions have been granted to Volunteers dedicated to the project, and the TEFL program has grown from a shaky seven members to a determined and successful group of 25. The number of students matriculating in English is also growing.

A National English Language Committee has been formed by members of the community to support the growing number of English speakers eager to exchange ideas and improve their language skills. The classrooms at Saturday Study Time continue to swell each weekend with students, often sitting two to a chair. The first year class at Tchico Té contains 30 people who have enrolled to become English teachers.

It's amazing what a difference it makes when people are actively engaged in an education process that reflects their interests and realities.



# NEWS FROM ASIA/PACIFIC



*Mongolians milk horses in the countryside to produce "airag," a drink made of fermented mare's milk. Photo by Small Enterprise Development PCV Kim Cooling.*

Today in Asia and across the islands of the Pacific, Peace Corps has approximately 894 Volunteers working in education, health, agriculture, small business, environment, and urban development programs.

The AP countries in which Peace Corps serves face a number of common development challenges despite the sprawling geography of the region. Educational systems in most of these countries lack modern teaching materials and adequately trained teachers. Severe health problems, including the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS, are endemic to the area. Environmental degradation and the impact of high population growth on fragile ecosystems affect the entire region. Development of the small business sector and attention to issues of underemployment, particularly for women, are needed in many countries. In addition, countries in the region are beginning to address the complex "quality of life" issues in urban areas.

## NATIONS AT A GLANCE

### CHINA

#### A Visit by RD Goodman

The first group in China finished its first In-Service-Training January 22. Regional Director Margaret Goodman made her first visit to Chengdu and Beijing following the Asia Pacific Regional Conference, attending meetings with the Chinese Education Association for International Exchanges.

### FIJI

#### A Successful Learning Experience

The Asia Pacific Language Conference took place in Debua, Fiji September 21 through 29, 1993. The goals of the workshop were to develop and improve the skills of the Peace Corps language teachers and teacher trainers (all of whom are Host Country Nationals) in

basic language teaching methods. The conference also allowed the participants to develop the skills needed to integrate grammar into the competency based language curricula found at the posts.

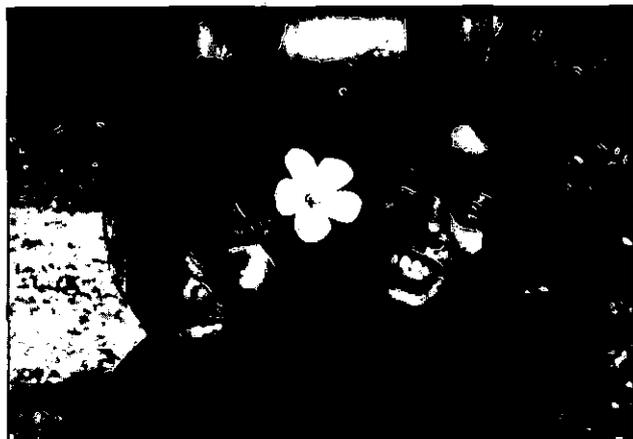
Language Coordinators from the Pacific Island countries and Sri Lanka were joined by Doug Gilzow, Language Specialist/OTAPS; Lynn Savage, Language Consultant; Elizabeth Tannenbaum, Language Consultant; and Paz Meman, Language Coordinator for Peace Corps Philippines.

### SRI LANKA

#### Celebrating A Decade of Service

On December 11, 1993, Peace Corps Sri Lanka celebrated its 10th Anniversary of Volunteer Service to the people of Sri Lanka. Over 100 people attended a celebratory luncheon, including government officials, host country sponsors, PCV counterparts, Washington staff, Volunteers and PC/Sri Lanka staff. Since 1983, 197 Volunteers have served in Sri Lanka. They have worked in small business, agriculture extension, deaf education, and English language improvement projects. The single largest project has been the District English Language Improvement Center (DELIC) Program. More than 10,000 student teachers have benefited from the program, with over 80% still active in the field of education.

Currently, Peace Corps Sri Lanka has 48 Volunteers, almost evenly split between the Education and Agriculture sectors. Seventeen new Education trainees completed their training in January 1994, and 15 new Agriculture trainees



*Two children in front of their Nikierere School on Marakei Island in the Republic of Kiribati, Central Pacific. Photo by PCV Kristin Fox.*

arrived in April 1994. Two Volunteers will also be placed in Environment assignments that will be the basis for future programming in that sector. They will all join the ranks of Volunteers, past and present, who have demonstrated their commitment to service as Peace Corps Volunteers.

### THAILAND

#### A Regional Pow Wow

Thailand hosted the Asia Pacific Regional Conference for Country Directors and APCDs in Chiang Mai, Thailand February 1-12. During the overlap of APCDs and CDs, the Thai staff hosted a culture night, with events including traditional Thai dancing, South Pacific Kava ceremonies, a U.S. song and dance team, led by Placement's Jean Seigle, doing a parody of the famous Supremes' song, "Stop in the Name of PATS!", and much laughter. Director Carol Bellamy attended the conference, participating in conference sessions and visiting and videotaping Volunteers at their sites. After the conference, Director Bellamy continued on to the Philippines and Micronesia.

### VANUATU

#### An Office of Their Very Own

For the past two years, Peace Corps Vanuatu was administered out of the Peace Corps Solomon Islands office. Because of the program's great potential and a cordial relationship with the government of Vanuatu, Peace Corps Vanuatu was established as a separate office in August of 1993.

Country Director Jonathan Lachnit has spent his time in securing an office, hiring staff, and working out programming strategies with host government officials. The Government of Vanuatu has been extremely enthusiastic about the increased Peace Corps presence in their country. A group of 12 trainees, consisting of business studies teachers, industrial arts instructors, science teach-

ers, agricultural marketing specialists, small business advisors, and rural training center instructors arrived in Vanuatu in late October for their Pre-Service Training and received a very warm welcome. They swore in on January 7, 1994, and are now working at their sites.

### WESTERN SAMOA

#### Market Days

PCV Sally Conley helped organize a four day Market Days festival in Apia, Western Samoa to help local women sell their crafts. The festival is part of a larger program to promote tourism in Western Samoa. Forty stalls were managed by women selling their crafts. Market Days allow women working out of their homes and in rural areas an opportunity to market their produce. Sally attended a Craft workshop in Nuku'alofa Tonga in early November, and as a result of her trip invited 45 women from Apia to participate in a similar craft workshop to demonstrate their handicraft skills. Sally is now applying for grant money to fund a new office and other projects planned for the future.



*PCV Roseanne Laudisio with her class on a picnic in Milne Bay, at the southeastern tip of the Papua New Guinean mainland. Photo taken by Nancy Ereki, one of her students.*

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**SPECIAL REPORT/AP**


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**NEPAL****Operation Cooperation**

by PCV Chad Cox

On July 19-20, 1993 300mm of rain in less than 24 hours caused massive floods in the mountainous regions of Eastern and Central Nepal. The floods cut off the Kathmandu Valley, leaving up to 3000 people dead and tens of thousands homeless. Landslides wiped out entire villages without warning and left the system of mountainous roads in shambles. The loss of three bridges, crossing tributaries of the Trishuli River at Belkhu, Malekhu, and Mahadev Besi, was one of the biggest losses caused by the floods. These bridges served as essential road links to the Terai plains and India, providing essential supplies to the Kathmandu Valley. With supplies cut off, the price of basic commodities such as vegetables increased by as much as ten fold.

A meeting was held with representatives from Nepal, Great Britain, and the United States to discuss the devastating situation. The result was Operation Bridge Lift. The idea behind Operation Bridge Lift was relatively straightforward: the British would donate three Bailey Bridges (prefabricated steel spans which can be assembled on site). The disassembled pieces were flown to Kathmandu and trucked to the

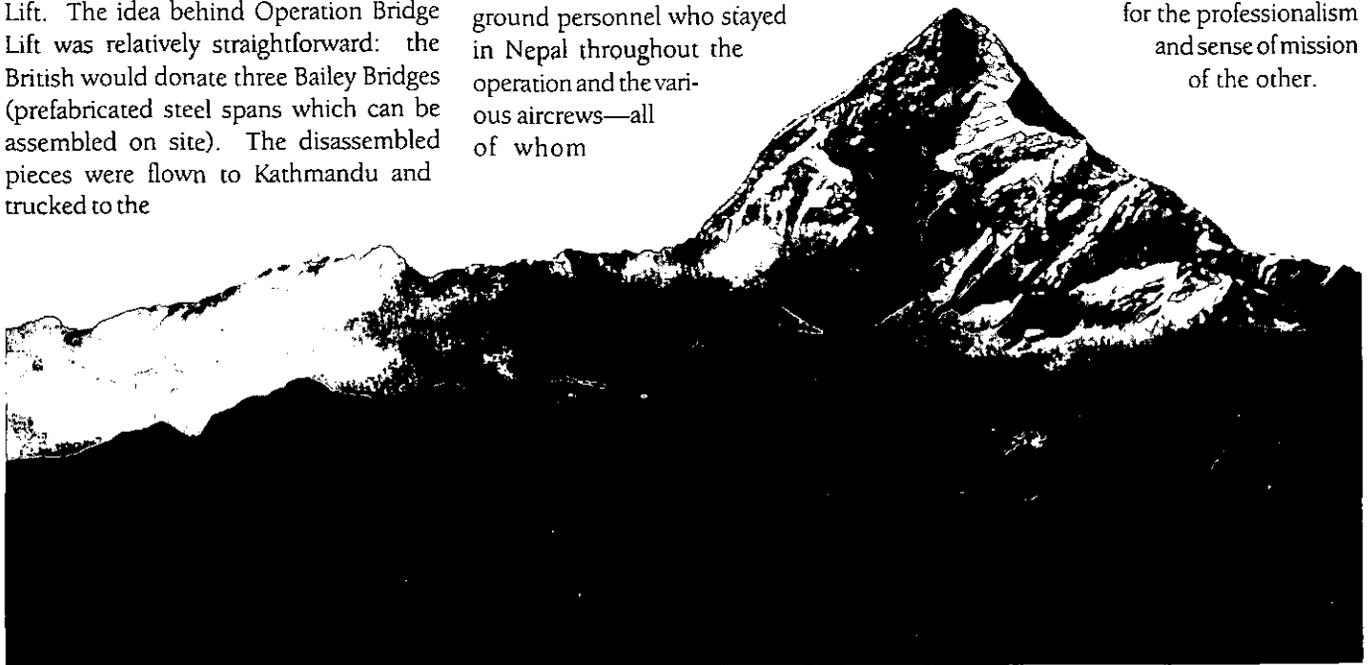
three river crossings where they would be built by a company of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers (Nepali soldiers who serve in the British military) and the Nepali army. The role of the U.S. was to fly over two of the new and state-of-the art bridges directly from Britain, while the third and older bridge was to be flown by a chartered Russian transport from Hong Kong.

Because of language barriers, cultural differences, and recent local political tensions and social unrest, the American Embassy and Defense Attaché, U.S. Army Lt. Col. James Dunn called on Peace Corps to help. Due to the nature of the disaster, Associate Director Shivaji Upadhyay asked four PCV civil engineers to put aside their normal duties in order to work full-time with the Air Force personnel. These four PCVs were Doug Gates, Scott Anderson, Mark Chien, and Chad Cox.

The main job of the PCVs was to help the ground support team and the aircrews at the airport. The volunteers were asked to work as translators, guides, liaisons, and crowd controllers. They even acted as tour guides on the day when the giant American aircraft were opened for public viewing. Yet, as important as was the PCVs' work in the actual airlift operation, possibly even more rewarding was their interaction with the 18 Air Force ground personnel who stayed in Nepal throughout the operation and the various aircrews—all of whom

were coming to Nepal for the very first time. The PCVs were often called on to answer questions about the country, its culture, religions, people, and political situation. The PCVs even led a tour of some of the incredible sights around the ancient Kathmandu Valley.

In the end, not only were the bridges successfully delivered into the hands of the Nepali government, but photos, patches, and addresses were exchanged among the PCVs and the Air Force personnel. Both organizations finished the operation with a sense of accomplishment which was enhanced by the participation of the other. For the men and women of the Air Force, interacting with the Nepali people and culture through the Peace Corps put a human face on a job which might have otherwise been routine and tedious. One of the ground crew remarked that he had been all around the world, but in no other country had he seen or learned so much. For the Peace Corps, came the satisfaction of being able to respond with flexibility and speed in a time of need for Nepal, and also the pleasure of being able to eat cake from Cairo and Popeye's fried chicken from Japan—all generously provided by incoming flight crews. Both groups came away with a greatly increased understanding and respect for the professionalism and sense of mission of the other.



# NEWS FROM EURASIA/MID-EAST

The Eurasia and the Middle East Region now includes 22 countries in Central Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and the former Soviet Union. Peace Corps was one of the first development agencies to begin work in Central and Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, as the communist empire collapsed and the move toward a market-based economy began.

Today, Peace Corps has programs in all but four of the former Soviet Republics. Peace Corps is also in all of the Central and Eastern European countries, with the exception of the former Yugoslavia. In the Middle East, where Peace Corps has worked since the early 1960s, Volunteers continue to gain understanding and appreciation of Islamic cultures while assisting in technical projects.

## NATIONS AT A GLANCE

### ALBANIA

#### TEFL Volunteers Build Libraries

On February 3rd, Albanian TEFL Volunteers were awarded certificates for their contributions to Albanian teachers. More than 200 Albanian EFL teachers have improved their English through conversation with these teachers. Volunteers have helped to create new chapters of the Albanian English Teachers Associations. Sharing ideas about the teaching of English, the Volunteers have encouraged many Albanian teachers in the use of contemporary classroom teaching methods. Instead of rote learning of academic materials, these new methods teach students to express themselves and to discuss ideas. With the aid of other organizations, the first group of Volunteers helped their schools with a fund of 16,000 books for Albanian school libraries.

### UKRAINE

#### Auctions in the Ukraine

Working as a Small Enterprise Development Volunteer in Uzhgorod (capital

of the Zakarpattia region of Ukraine), Dean D'Angelo has assisted the Director of the City Property Fund (CPF) in organizing and implementing the city's small scale privatization program. CPF sells small enterprises (e.g. cafes, book stores, shops) by auction. An auctioneer stands at the front of a room and begins the bidding. Whoever bids the most, gets to buy the assets (they do give special benefits to the existing labor collectives).

The process of organizing the auctions has been challenging, from creating the promotion and informational programs to convincing the local officials that the auctions make sense. D'Angelo believes he has been able to lend some real help to the Director and workers in the Property Fund.

### HUNGARY

#### Environmental Impact

PC/Hungary recently COSeD its first group of environmental Peace Corps Volunteers on January 28, 1994. This group of 13 environmental educators, environmental management advisors and NGO

advisors entered Hungary back in November 1991. They made great strides in laying the ground work for Peace Corps' environmental program in Hungary.

### MOLDOVA

#### Volunteer to the Rescue

PCV Rich Kimball was congratulated and thanked on the first page of the local Russian language daily newspaper for thwarting the mugging of a 16-year-old student.

Rich was walking from the bus to his afternoon classes, when he noticed four men attacking a young student. As Rich approached the group, the men told him to go away. Making as much noise as possible, Rich tried to flag down a passing car, which slowed down, but did not stop. The attackers were distracted and fled the scene. Rich escorted the student home. The next week the student's father visited the Peace Corps office to express his gratitude.

In the interest of making the path to the school safer, Rich is looking into organizing a student buddy system and meet-



*Villagers in Haifan, Yemen. Photo by lab technologist PCV Kim Langello.*

ing with the parents and students to discuss safety measures.

**ROMANIA**

**Volunteers Pair Up With U.S. Businesses**

Volunteers in Romania are working closely with the Friends of Peace Corps Romania group, which is comprised of several private U.S. companies with offices in Romania. These companies are very interested in providing funding and/or gifts-in-kind to support PCV secondary projects.

**TUNISIA**

**Planting Trees**

PCV Jessica Jordan and members of her local youth center in Tunisia planted over 100 trees in and around her village, in a tree planting campaign coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Special Education Volunteers Dennis Hood and Jennifer Brandt are collaborating to improve education for physically and mentally handicapped students. Jessica works with Dennis' students in water-based physical therapy and Dennis provides Jessica's students with athletic training.

**UZBEKISTAN**

**Small Business Development Volunteers Help With Privatization**

Business development Volunteers in Uzbekistan have been working with Price Waterhouse and the Uzbek national privatization committee in recent months training committee members in various aspects of business management and privatization techniques. In November, a very successful privatization seminar was organized by five Volunteers in Samarkand. The seminar included privatization committee members from around Uzbekistan and 14

other countries, as well as AID representatives and the U.S. Ambassador.

Other business development Volunteers will be working with women's business organizations. Although now these grassroots businesses are loosely affiliated with each other, they are interested in supporting each other and encouraging women's business efforts in the country.

**YEMEN**

**Sewing Classroom On Wheels**

PCVs Mary Lou Courier and Ann McMann have helped a Yemeni women's association in the capitol, Sana'a, receive a SPA grant to purchase a mobile sewing classroom. The project targets Sana'a's female urban poor population and works to provide the women with literacy, vocational and family health care training.



*PCV David Baum having fun with local children at his site in Termez, Uzbekistan. Photo by PCV Brian Fischer.*



*Uzbek woman selling cradles in Qarshi. Photo by PCV Carrie Sachse.*

# NEWS FROM INTER-AMERICA

The 1990s have signaled the resurgence of the Peace Corps in Latin America. New programs have begun in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, and Uruguay.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, Peace Corps is expanding into new areas of environmental protection, business, and urban and youth development.

In the more advanced countries, such as Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, Peace Corps is promoting the new concept of "vertical programming," which links grassroots organizations with government ministries.

## NATIONS AT A GLANCE

### ECUADOR

#### American Diversity Initiative Piloted

The IA region has piloted a staff training model for the American Diversity Initiative in Ecuador. The Staff Diversity Training

consisted of two 2-day events, one conducted in English for the bilingual PC Ecuador staff on June 17-18 and another in Spanish for the monolingual Ecuadorian staff conducted on November 22-23. The workshops were developed by Washington D.C. staff representatives Neil Bacon and Resna Hammer, Meri Ames and PC/Ecuador staff Robert Drickey, Berry Bem and Timothy Callaghan. In addition, the PC/Ecuador facilitators included Ana Maria Castro-Cornejo, Susana Wappenstein, and Susana Castro.

The workshops included sessions on issues of diversity, sexual harassment, Volunteer support, and issues of confidentiality. While the facilitators acknowledged that a staff training of this nature cannot resolve all Volunteer support issues we do feel that it made great strides in raising the consciousness of Ecuadorian staff to the issues of ethnic minority, senior, and gay Volunteers.

This training workshop model was used to conduct a workshop in Honduras on February 16-18. The IA region plans to

continue conducting pilot diversity workshops at posts for the next three fiscal years.

### BELIZE

#### Youth Enhancement Services

When PCV Ed Cunha came to Belize as a youth organizer, he decided to focus his work on youth and sports. He soon realized that many kids in his town were school dropouts with nothing to do but 'hang out.' He organized a group of parents and professionals to work on ideas activities that would be more stimulating and productive. The group created a training institute, "Dangriga Youth Training Center (DYTC)," to provide the youth with marketable life skills and other career information that would help them prosper.

Recruiting young people who were interested in participating in the program was not a problem, and soon Volunteer trainers in tailoring, agriculture, and home economics began their work. Community support was overwhelming, and Cunha acquired program funding and 50 acres of land to establish a permanent training site for DYTC. Education Department officials and Human Resources Development personnel in Belize have evaluated the training program and have promised continued support.

Another resourceful and dynamic PCV, Bill Frame, has taken over the program management after Ed's COS this Summer.

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

#### Improving the Quality of Banking

Although there is a dearth of well-managed credit in small towns and rural areas of the Dominican Republic available to local micro- and small entrepreneurs, Volunteers are working to improve the quality of banking and savings and loan cooperatives based in smaller cities and towns that provide consumer banking services (money orders, savings accounts, and fixed-term deposits) and credit to rural-based Dominicans. Volunteers Col-



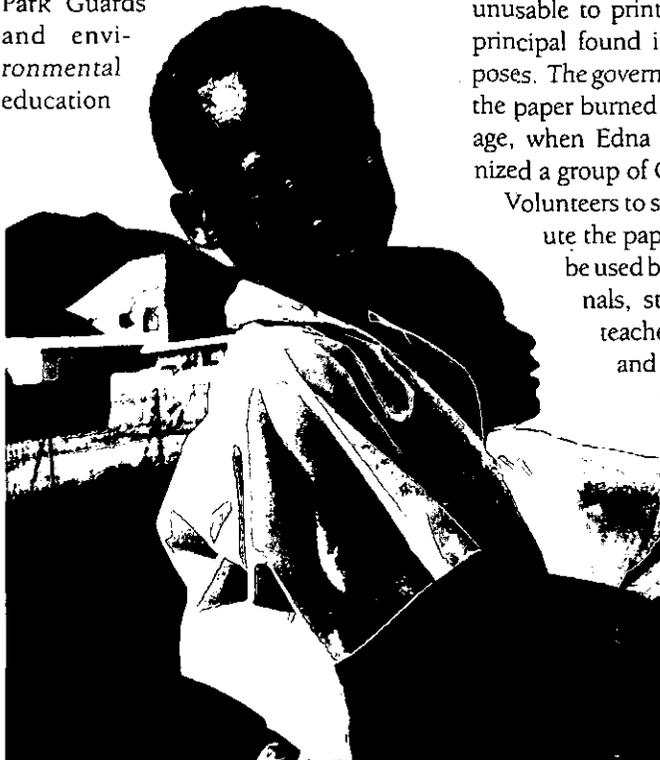
PCV David Larson with three children from the Guanacaste province in Costa Rica. Photo by PCV Mary Ellen Miller.

leen Larson, Katie Knips, Dan Cook, Alvera Gircys, Kent Bromenschenkel, and Mark Sample have organized and trained more than 66 Dominican women from rural areas at regional feasibility study workshops and a nationwide marketing conference to help their country move forward financially.

Another event, in Santiago, brought back 20 women (who had distinguished themselves in the workshops) for additional training in marketing strategies. All of these events were funded by OTAPS/WID and used the materials and methodologies from OF International's publications.

**Environmental Education Programs**

PCV Todd Miller has established an environmental education program in Ovoid, an urban community of over 1,000 people surrounding a national park. The program incorporates local women, the Farmers Association, and the Ecological Society. Todd has also helped create a group of Voluntary Park Guards and environmental education



*"Kittitian smile". Photo by Jaclyn Cantor, PCV/St. Kitts, Eastern Caribbean.*

programs in the local public school.

Todd has also been instrumental in helping a local NGO coordinate and implement a national one day workshop on biodiversity with an international speaker. More than 90 local organizations, both government and non-government, were represented by 125 people from all over the country.

Environment sector PCVs Eric Wold and Todd Miller both attended a buffer zone management course at the University for Peace in Costa Rica. When they got back to their sites they facilitated a workshop attended by more than 20 people from 15 environmental conservation institutions.

**EASTERN CARRIBBEAN  
Salvaging Paper**

In Grenada, where there is a critical shortage of materials for schools, PCV Edna Fogarty came up with an ingenious solution. Edna salvaged hundreds of pounds of paper stored in a government warehouse that had been damaged by a fire in 1991. The paper was deemed unusable to printers, but Edna and her principal found it ideal for school purposes. The government was about to have the paper burned to make room for storage, when Edna intervened. She organized a group of Grenadian teachers and

Volunteers to sort through and distribute the paper to various schools to be used by students to make journals, storybooks, and for the teachers to create lesson plans and teaching materials. In addition, Volunteers have arranged to continually get paper scraps from printers. In many schools, this is the only paper students have to work with.

**GUATEMALA  
Improving Grain Production**

PCV Robert Weary works with



*"Babysitting in the Campo." Photo by PCV Angela Giorgianne in the village of Paxtocá, Totonicipán, Guatemala.*

campesinos in Tactic, Alta Verapaz, introducing the Masal Selection technique of corn and seed selection. This project was developed to increase productivity of Guatemala's basic grains, corn and beans, which have been in constant decline in recent years.

The Masal Selection technique is a relatively simple way of choosing seeds for planting, which does not require much financial investment on the part of the farmers. The selection aims to genetically improve the different varieties of corn that grow in the immediate area. During one of Agriculture APCD José Albizúrez Palma's site visits to Robert, a campesino with whom he works had the ears of recently Masal-harvested corn lined up alongside those of another, ordinary crop against the wall of his humble house. The difference between the ears representing the Masal

## INTER-AMERICA REGION

Selection process and the others was very noticeable for both their quality and quantity. The farmer said that the Masal yield had doubled his production.

In Alta Verapaz, an area that receives considerable rain annually, post-harvest losses can amount to as much as 40-50% of the harvests. Since corn is the basis for most of the campesinos' diet, it is possible for small farmers to lose as much as half of their food supply. In the past three years, Volunteers in this project have introduced the use of cement silos that can be constructed locally by small farmers for corn storage at a cost of roughly \$12 each. The silos have storage capacities of between 1,000 and 1,200 pounds. Losses have been reduced to as low as 2% in Alta Verapaz and the other areas where the project is operating. One of the small farmers said, "Before, we finished eating the

corn around March or April. Now it lasts my family and me until August or September."

### HONDURAS

#### Volunteer Designs New Latrine

Over the last four years, PCVs have built almost 200 potable water systems and installed 4,000 latrines in rural communities in Honduras. One particular Volunteer, Matt Verilli, assigned to the small town of Jesús de Otorco, Intibucá, though, may have revolutionized latrine technology with his invention, the "hydraulic/compost latrine."

Matt, with funding from PC/H's SPA program, designed a prototype latrine that combines the hygiene and comfort of a hydraulic (flush) latrine with the versatility and permanency of the compost latrine. Disturbed by reports showing that 80% of hydraulic latrines are unservice-

able and aware of the difficulties of compost latrines (odors, less hygienic), Verilli sought to combine the two designs in order to have the benefits of both systems.

The hydraulic/compost latrine works like a conventional compost latrine. It is built above the ground and has a compartment where decomposition takes place. Dry organic matter must be added periodically to the chamber to aid in the process. A porcelain bowl is used and the urine is separated from the solid waste by an innovative device. The solids drop into the compost chamber and the liquids are washed away into an absorption pit; thus no odors. Unlike traditional compost latrines this is a closed system which is much more agreeable to the users. Since the prototype has been such a success, PLAN in Honduras is in the process of constructing 33 hydraulic/compost latrines in the Jesús de Otorco area.

## AFRICA REGION

*(Continued from page 7)*

Volunteers and the important role they have played, especially in the area of education. Over 250 people attended the festivities.

In his valedictory speech to mark the 25 years of cooperation between the two nations, James Kelley, Country Director, expressed that "Peace Corps hopes that this official Government-to-Government cooperation will endure." During the historic occasion, 28 trainees were sworn-in as Peace Corps Volunteers. Mark Pierzchala, RPCV/Swaziland and President of the Friends of Swaziland, who traveled from the U.S. for the occasion, led a memorial service in honor of the four Volunteers who died while in service. He also presented a scholarship fund aimed at assisting indigent Swazi students.

As a community service component of the Celebration, PCVs Mike Sloneker, Mitch Romero, Rumi Takahasi, Jim Benson and Alan Danielson worked together with a group of market women to design and construct a covered dining area for the Mbabane City Market. The project, funded by Peace Corps/USAID, consists of a covered dining area with cement tables and seating, using a landscaping scheme featuring indigenous Swazi plants and shrubs.

In celebration of Peace Corps' 25 years of service to



*"Bat-ka-bobs." Children cook some of the 206 bats caught in PCV Gillian Grant's attic to sell in the quartier. Photo by Gillian Grant, PCV/Central African Republic.*

Swaziland, a series of four commemorative stamps was issued by the Swaziland Postal Services/Philatelic Bureau. The commemorative envelope which accompanied the stamps was designed by PCV Chris Hoffman.

# East Meets West:

## The Journey of Azzedine Downes

by Perry Letson,  
Former Volunteer/Nepal

**A**zzedine Downes does a great Woody Allen. You might think he's part Jewish. The truth is, he's a former Irish Catholic who, as a Volunteer, converted to Islam, and then later married a Moroccan he barely knew. Is Peace Corps great or what?

Not many Volunteers undergo such drastic transformations, but the beauty of Peace Corps is that a Volunteer's world is full of possibility. Take an ordinary PCV with an open heart and mind, faith in his instincts and in the magnanimity of human nature. Send him to a place where life suddenly is terrifically engrossing. Almost anything can happen.

### Tommy: Maroc Opera

Thomas Paul Downes, Jr., went to Morocco in 1982 as a Peace Corps Volunteer. His assignment was teacher training. He assimilated easily and, you could say... fully. He didn't come home with just a tan, some nice color slides and a rug—he went through a transformation he didn't know he was capable of and, in the end, he brought back a new faith.





*Azzedine (fourth from left) at the Lmilchil bridal fair in the Atlas mountains.*

"It was not an intellectual decision," Downes says of his embrace of Islam. Enlightenment did not abruptly jump off the pages of the Koran and supplant a lifetime of Catholicism. Americans, with their inveterate rationality, have a hard time grasping why and how it happened. They figure that as a lonely Peace Corps Volunteer, cut loose from cultural moorings, he was more likely to undergo a conversion. They don't appreciate the spiritual yearning and awakening that Downes went through. However, his Moroccan friends know. They tell him how lucky he is.

People have said to Downes, "If you had gone to Thailand, you would have become Buddhist, right?" He responds, without preaching, but simply and sincerely, "It's God who opens one's heart to the truth."

Converting to Islam was not an expedient way to integrate himself into the culture. It was not whatever-feels-good self-indulgence either—being a Muslim is too involved to be taken lightly. He has had to re-educate himself and revise his diet and hygiene. The ablutions, or "minor" washing of hands, mouth,

arms, nose, ears, and feet that must be performed before prayer, takes about five minutes—and this happens five times a day. Not that these tasks are a burden. "It was hard not to do them," he says. "A Muslim is, by definition, one who submits to the will of Allah."

When he talks about these matters, it's with obvious conviction, but with a touch of sheepishness. One senses that he would not utter a word without prompting. Furthermore, he does not deny his past or the culture around him, and he is not an apologist for all Muslims. He simply says, "The strength of Muslims is living by example."

His honed adaptation skills won't be rusting any time soon. He now sports a non-mainstream moniker and membership in a much misunderstood minority. "I learned a long time ago I can't control what people think," he says with a touch of resignation. Downes and his family encounter problems every day ranging from honest, at times even laughable, miscues to outright slings and arrows of contempt. He and his wife have given up hosting dinner parties because some guests have been unbearably disappointed

at not being able to drink. They do lunches instead.

### What a strange name!

If people don't know him, the name "Azzedine" may lead them to assume he's black or female or both. They are often blinded by media-inspired stereotypes. When Downes fails to meet their preconception, they may resort to denial: "I don't believe you're Muslim!"

Of course Downes does not fit the stereotype. In fact, no wild dark hair, here. Follicly speaking, Downes might as well wear a fez. What is there is short, tawny gray. His goatee could be considered a Muslim mark, inasmuch as Muhammad said that men should let their hair grow to distinguish them from women. It was a full beard until the razor slipped. His voice is soft and slightly raspy—not the resounding instrument to issue the call to prayer or exhort the masses. He wears clothes that one would expect on a Harvard man, which he is. At times he has a bemused elfin aspect. At other times, the intelligence bristles behind his classic Peace Corps wire rims. He is very personable. He has a great sense of humor, and it's a good thing.

### Maybe You're Muslim?

Try to imagine yourself in Downes' place, plunked into a magnificent former palace in the Old City area of the great spiritual capital of Fes, Morocco? Would you be beguiled by the graceful architecture, the intricate mosaic tile work, the old cedar cupolas? Would you be stirred by the muezzin's cries from the minaret, the aura of sanctity and erudition? Perhaps you too would delve into the rich religious context of your new home.

Downes began reading a copy of the Koran that a friend had given him at a stateside bon voyage party, and as he read an energy surged within him. He had no choice but to keep reading. Eventually, racked by the notion that he was on to something far bigger than himself, he engaged in some intense soul-searching. He became so obsessive in his thinking about



*Nadia in traditional wedding caftan from Fes.*

the glory of Islam and its significance for him that he began losing sleep.

He broached the subject with a French friend who said, "Maybe you're Muslim."

"No, I'm Catholic."

"Not in your head, in your heart."

Finally, he reached a point of no return. A total commitment was the only answer. He made arrangements to declare, in front of witnesses, "There are no deities but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet."

Later, he went through a more formal, legal procedure during which an imam covered the fundamental tenets of the religion and Downes recited a liturgy of sorts and signed documents indicating, among other things, that he would bring up his children Muslim. He also formally took a Muslim name. Why Azzedine? He says, "It translates 'in honor of the religion,' and I liked that. Also, I had a friend with that name and I really liked him."

### Would you like to meet my sister?

On the long plane ride home, he met a former student from the teacher training academy, Abdul Azziz Ben Khayat. He was headed to Boston, as was Downes who

was going to grad school. Abdul Azziz was carrying a diploma signed by none other than Azzedine. It only certified the completion of a four-week course, but in the mind of this ambitious Moroccan, it was a more significant credential. Azzedine gently tried to set him straight. Fortunately he didn't strip the young man of his assured outlook, because it was to prove crucial in Downes' next great transition. You see, Abdul Azziz had a sister.

Although in graduate school in a sophisticated setting and, socially speaking, in circulation, Azzedine had just about given up on the idea of finding a suitable non-Muslim mate. He mentioned this one day in a phone conversation with Abdul Azziz, who had become his friend. The Moroccan volunteered to speak to his mother. Before Azzedine could say anything, Abdul Azziz hung up.

The night before Azzedine was off to Morocco for a vacation, Abdul Azziz said, "Do you still want to marry a Moroccan woman?"

"Sure," Azzedine said, without taking it too seriously.

"OK. I'll arrange a meeting with someone."

When Azzedine flew off, he only knew that Abdul Azziz's family would meet him at the airport in Casablanca and that he was to deliver some candy to them. However, when he arrived, nothing happened. He hung around for a while and then approached two men who seemed equally at a loss.

"Are you Muhammad?" Azzedine guessed.

"Ah, are you Azzedine?"

"Yes. I thought Abdul Azziz had sent a picture."

The father pulled out a photo of Azzedine from Halloween. He was wear-

ing full robes from the deserts of Mauritania and a blue turban that covered most of his face. Not exactly a mug shot! If these airport arrangements exemplified Abdul Azziz's planning, he was in trouble.

### Too bad I can't marry this one!

When he first met Nadia, he assumed she belonged to another family since he knew Abdul Azziz's sister lived in Tangiers. He said to himself, "Too bad this is not the woman." The next time, he discovered that, in fact, she was! He was struck by how kind and gentle she seemed. He was struck, period.

Back in Boston, Downes learned that the Moroccan family was open to the idea of a marriage, and that the mother was coming to Philadelphia for an operation. He was aflutter. This was like his earlier experience with religion—he was on another slippery slope. Again, with distinctive derring-do, he told his parents he was



*Taking a break while doing laundry on a rooftop in Fes.*

off to Philadelphia and that, when he returned, he might be engaged. Their excitement turned to exasperation when Downes met their questions about the identity of his fiancée with, "Well, you see, I don't really know her."

Arriving in Philly, Downes went right to the mother and blurted, "I want to marry your daughter Nadia." She said, "Good, the wedding will be in July in Casablanca." After a pause to regain his

senses, Downes asked whether Nadia had already consented. He was told, no, but not to worry. The mother would send a letter.

**Maybe I'll write a nice poem**

She then asked, "What will you write in the book?" He took this to be a question about immigration. He waved it off, indicating no problem. After more chitchat, she came back to the same question. He stated that he'd take care of everything, but gave a few details about visas, residency, and green cards. He was rattling on when she asked for the third time, "What will you write in the book?" This time he was tempted to tell her all about Ellis Island, potato famines, pogroms, boat people, and the great cultural mosaic that is the USA, but decided instead to carefully reiterate his earlier statements. On the train back to Boston he realized his mammoth blunder. She had been asking what his dowry contribution would be!

Fortunately, she was coming the next week to Boston to meet his family. He got the chance to explain and apologize. Warming to the subject, he told her that he was aware that dowry customs vary across Morocco. For example, in Fes, he said, the husband supplies the living room furniture and gold; the wife, the bedroom. Then, it was her turn to wave him off. She said, no, it was simple. In Tangiers, the husband supplies everything.

There was a traditional three-day wedding feast in Morocco, then a ceremony at a Rhode Island yacht club. Azzedine's father provided an Irish band which was outfitted in Moroccan



*Azzedine being carried into his wedding in Morocco.*

gondoraa, jallebas (robes) and turbans.

**You cannot cook!**

What was it like to marry someone who was almost a stranger? At first, there was shyness and formality as they waited for the relationship to unfold. Downes tells of this exchange during a conversation with another couple about morning sickness:

Azzedine had indicated that Nadia never had a problem during her pregnancies. "Yes, I did with the first one," she said.

"What? You never said anything."

"I didn't know you well enough."

It helped, he says, that they embarked immediately for neutral ground—Yemen, where Azzedine was an associate Peace Corps director. There they could learn together.

After six years and three children, Downes describes his marriage as "deliriously happy." He feels that its success is largely due to a traditional framework. Their religion

and the Moroccan culture prescribe much of their behavior and fix expectations. While many Americans would rankle at the restrictions, Nadia and Azzedine have found that they make things easier.

Of course there were accommodations. Even though he loves to cook, Azzedine was not allowed into the kitchen at first because in Nadia's mind it was a woman's domain. Gradually, they mapped out their own terms for marriage.

**Coffee Sucker**

Once, a woman came to Yemen on a contract to conduct the training of new Volunteers. Due to the lack of affordable hotel rooms, she stayed at the Downes'. Soon after her arrival, Nadia served coffee. The trainer, a self-avowed feminist, commented to Azzedine after Nadia left the room, "You are really oppressive. Look how you are taking advantage of her! You haven't taught her English so you can continue to dominate her."



Azzedine is normally mild-mannered, but this time he rose up in indignation. He said, "I just want to remind you of a few things: First, you are a guest in our house; second, of course she speaks no English because here we speak Arabic; and third, you are sucking down her coffee, too!"

He might have gone on to say that in Islam the roles of husband and wife are different, but that doesn't mean they are not equal. And of course some segments of American society don't attach a great deal of worth to staying at home with the children. Nadia, who worked in Morocco as a legal secretary before marriage, may work again in the future. For now, she is comfortable with the arrangement they have.

### You are going to be laughed at

What's the secret to fitting into a different culture? He says that it is largely a function of inner strength—how comfortable we are with ourselves. "As outsiders, we are inevitably going to be laughed at. If we can't laugh back, we are shutting down."

Although Peace Corps service is a great adventure, it is not a chance to do all and be all. A PCV has to accept a defined, formal role. Downes is concerned that many Volunteers have an overly developed sense of entitlement and an attitude that one's fate is wholly self-determined. They are often concerned with their "rights," he says, such as the "right" to run in shorts, or the "right" to sleep with whomever they please. For these individuals, adjusting becomes a matter of figuring out how the host culture impacts on them—not how they should relate to the culture. Other societies find it hard to fathom the typical American egocentrism. We often come off immature and selfish.

### Oh, Americans!

Downes criticizes Volunteers who don't keep complaints in context. They may react to a late bus by saying, "Oh, Moroccans! Isn't this typical?" However, he points out that when Washington's Metro mal-

functions, people don't decry our country's entire population.

Downes thinks that Volunteers ought to resist obsessively comparing the host culture with their own. He says, "Constantly asking 'Why?' stands in the way of discovering the 'What.' If one is patient, the 'Why' eventually becomes obvious, and a deeper understanding avails."

"If only for two years," Downes says, "Volunteers have an obligation to their host cultures analogous to the one star athletes have to their fans." As a PCV he knew how intensely he was being scrutinized, and he determined that there just wouldn't be anything bad to know about him.

### Don't look back

As one might expect of a master adapter, Downes is not in the habit of looking back. He believes in letting go of old experiences and enjoying change. He's sad that some former Volunteers are not able to take a similarly detached view and move beyond their Peace Corps experience. Former PCV's clutch sweet memories from their Peace Corps days. Especially if they were young, Peace Corps was probably the grandest thing they've ever done. The remembrance of themselves as ex-

plorers—not-yet-formed but fully-functioning—resonates with powerful charm for the rest of their lives.

The result can be a fixation—a looking at life's journey through a rearview mirror—which can handicap future endeavors. In Downes' mind these former Volunteers forsake the very skills that enabled them to thrive overseas.

What will come next for this adventurer of both inner and outer realms? You can bet it won't be staid, and it won't be an unexamined plodding forward while plaintively looking back.

Azzedine Downes is currently the Chief of Operations for the Eurasia and Middle East region of Peace Corps. Perry Letson is a marketing specialist in Peace Corps' Office of Recruitment Marketing and Resources. He hopes Downes gets a job someday as a college administrator. Then he could write a sentence that begins, "As a dean, Azzedine..."



Azzedine with his son. Ten months old at the time, Abdul Aziz is now five.

# Personal Safety—Always On My Mind

by Addie Rhodes  
Fisheries PCV/Honduras

Last week, as I was walking down a steep, muddy mountain trail populated with mule moguls, I kept my eyes focused on the treacherous road ahead. I was lost in my own thoughts about the day's work, and was very tired when I ambled into a shady area to take a breather. I had been concentrating so hard on not breaking my ankles, that I did not see the campesino leaning against the nearby fence until I was already seated on a convenient boulder.

He was a "*campesino tipico*," wearing a straw cowboy hat, black rubber boots, and chewing on a piece of straw. He had his machete propped on his shoulder, and he looked at me with curiosity. Finding friendliness to be the best approach in these awkward lone encounters, I hailed him with a "*Buenos tardes!*" Feeling this was an invitation to chat, he strolled over casually and asked me what I was doing up in the hills. He had been cutting coffee, and was returning to his home in a village in the valley.

Since I was in no hurry to continue with my knee-jarring march, I told him a little about myself and my work as a fish culture Volunteer. He was a bit puzzled why a "*gringa*" would go through all that trouble when we have everything we would ever want back in the United States. Then he told me that I was very brave to walk by myself on these mountain roads. Before he wandered off, he gave me a friendly warning about the possibility of robbers and other bad people on the road ahead.

This was not my first such encounter in the campo or first such warning I had received as a PCV in Honduras. Sometimes I go on bicycle, or catch a bus, but there are always those areas that can only be reached by walking. When I am hiking through the beautiful Honduran country-

side, so blessed with natural beauty (soaring mountains, colorful flowers, and exotic birds), I am thankful that I have escaped from the nine-to-five drudgery of the job I left behind. Although I was working in the field of natural resources, I never had the time or opportunity to enjoy being outside as much as I do in the Peace Corps. Hiking and biking are no longer weekend activities piled on top of a heavy

that there were no friends nearby? Would he be waiting down the road in another shady area?

I dismissed these troublesome fears as I stood up. I took a deep breath and reminded myself that I had made it nine months so far without trouble, that today was no different, and after all, I needed to get home. Finally, I continued my way downward through the mule ruts. This time, I scanned the road ahead, instead of focusing only on the ground. I soon got back into the swing of things, and the momentary anxiety I had encountered in the shade was soon erased by the beauty of the day. I was soon back in my town, and my friends were greeting me as I walked down the main street to my small house. I felt comfortable and secure once again, and I laughed at myself for having been so worked up about walking along the same road I had been down dozens of times.

As Volunteers, we are asked to take on many challenges to fulfill our missions.

We must learn new languages, become accustomed to strange foods, and develop coping skills to deal with the lack of technology in a developing country. In training we are given the tools to overcome these obstacles. We receive classes in language, adjusting to the culture, and technical methods relying on available resources. However, there are the more ambiguous challenges that are not easily defined by a handbook or a policy and that cannot be addressed by new rules or regulations. On that lonesome road, I came face to face with an issue that is covered up in the daily flow of events, the issue of personal safety. Should I believe the campesino's compliment on my bravery or should I reevaluate the risks I am taking?

## Survey

Have you ever felt your personal safety was in jeopardy? How did you handle the incident? Let us know in five hundred words or less. The information you share may be used to help other Volunteers stay safe.

Address to: Volunteer Safety Survey, c/o PC Times.



workload, they are a part of the job.

However, on this long and hot afternoon, the last words of warning from the campesino gave me pause. I sat on the boulder for a few minutes more and prepared for the last hour of the downward hike. The reality of my situation—being alone on a deserted road in a foreign country—had become part of the scenery which I no longer noticed. I had been cautious in my conversation not to mention my name, or where I had been living, or where I had just come from. On top of that, I had told him that I had friends living close by, my standard cover story for strangers I meet on the road. But what if he knew I was lying? What if he had seen me before and knew that I walked this stretch of road alone for three hours and

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J.M.G.

(\*excerpted from in-country Volunteer newsletter)

# They Call Me "Batman"

by Kevin Urban,  
PCV/St. Vincent  
and the Grenadines, West Indies

I don't know how I came to be interested in bats. When I was a child, growing up in Pennsylvania, I was told that bats were dangerous and if they bit me I would die. If we were playing outside until dark and we saw a bat, we would all say, "Bye!" and run quickly to our houses. Those experiences put a fear of bats in me until I actually got to do research with bats this year.

There are a lot of bats in the West Indies, where I am serving as a PCV. I wanted to find out more about them, so I sent away for a video from an organization called Bat Conservation International (BCI). As soon as I watched the video, it was obvious to me how important bats are to the health and happiness of the West Indies.

For instance, fruit-eating bats spread the seeds of many trees and shrubs around the islands. Nectar-eating bats pollinate many important wild agricultural plants like bananas, plantains, breadfruit, and mangoes. Insect-eating bats eat mosquitoes, cockroaches, and rootworms. Bat droppings are also important. Not only are they potent fertilizer, they also contain bacteria that are useful in detoxifying wastes, improving detergents, and producing gasohol and antibiotics.

The BCI video caused me to hatch a plan to have my landlady, who works for the local paper, watch it and write an article defending the unpopular creature. Sure enough, after she saw the video an article appeared in the paper.

A local man called my landlady after reading the article and said his sister-in-law, who was working on her Ph.D. on bats at the University of Bristol in England, would be on the island in two weeks to do research on the bats of

St. Vincent. He asked if I would be interested in helping. So for three weeks, I caught bats every night after work and every weekend and I learned a lot more.

We caught about 180 bats from nine different species in those three weeks. We worked primarily in the rainforest and banana plantations, but also in caves and buildings. It was exciting work, especially in the rainforest at night.

Besides the bats, I got to see different creatures like Manicou (opossum), iguanas, and snakes.

All the bats were identified, measured, and weighed, and wing outlines were drawn. We also recorded some of the bats echolocations (that their "voices" make) and photographed them.

The bats were released the night they were caught or the next day, although one day I brought some bats and a snake to the school where I teach to try and get the students over their fear of the creatures. I think it worked. Of course, I let the bats and the snake go again in the place where I caught them.

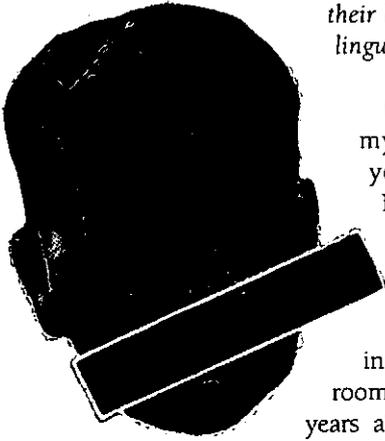
Bats need our help. I know of many people who openly persecute bats—killing or maiming them for no real



reason—and I'm sure there are many more. Numbers of bats are declining worldwide, with many threatened or endangered species. Their survival and who knows, maybe ours, depends on our recognizing their worth and taking steps to protect them.

# You Don't Say! (or wish you hadn't)

So you're learning a new language in the Peace Corps! Terrific—until it comes time to try out your newly adopted tongue and what comes out of your mouth isn't exactly what you had in mind. The following former Volunteers share some of their lessons in linguistics.



During my three years in Ethiopia, I spoke Amharic (and English in the classroom). Several years after completing my service, I introduced my aunt to some Ethiopian students. I meant to say "gobez" (smart) but unfortunately said "erguz" (pregnant). The Ethiopians—and my aunt, luckily—thought this was very funny. Nearly 25 years after leaving Ethiopia, I still speak Amharic (very simple sentences with uncomplicated verbs) but always think carefully before describing someone.

—Woody Jewett, Ethiopia

In Portuguese the words for old (velho) and ugly (feio) have pronunciations that are phonetically similar, at least to the ear of a new trainee. During a taxi ride some friends and I wanted to try out our emerging language skills in a chat with the driver. "Do you have brothers or sisters?" my friend asked the driver. "Yes," he said. Then the Volunteer wanted to ask whether the brothers and sisters were older or younger than him. So the driver was asked **"Are they all as ugly as you?"**

—Weyman Fussell, Brazil

In Thai, words for "tired" and "butter" sound similar to a Western ear, but not at all to a Thai. Teachers at my school could never figure out what I meant by being so "battered" at the end of a long day. Likewise with the words for "mustache" and "massage"—my Thai wife was not at all amused when I told her I wanted to have a "mustache."

—Jim Freer, Thailand

In Swahili the words for "three" and "tasty" are similar. A guy in my training group stated that when he has a family he wants **tasty children**. It was quite funny.

—Janet Puhalla, Burundi

I told a bunch of officials from the Thai Government's Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation that I taught at a secondary hotel. (School-rongryin; hotel-rongram).

—Nicholas Wootton, Thailand



The words aren't that similar to anyone else, but I introduced my brother-in-law (cunado) as my toilet ('scusado).

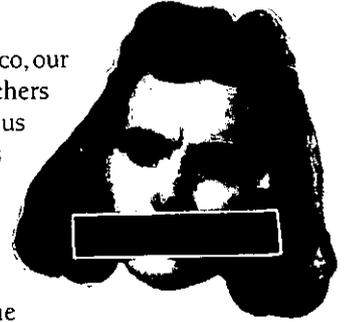
—Jeanne Harvey, Belize

My favorite is not one I said but what a friend said. This Volunteer could not make the guttural "kcha" sound. She went happily to the bakery every day thinking she was asking for hot bread but was instead saying "hot love." The baker just nodded and said "God willing."

—Azzedine Downes, Morocco

In Morocco, our Arabic teachers always took us out to cafés to practice our Arabic. One Volunteer thought she was ordering Mint Tea, which is "Atay be-nana" (Tea with Mint). What she got was a pot of Lipton and a banana. Pronunciation is the key.

—Virginia Williams, Morocco



I was introduced to two sisters. I thought I was saying, "Qui est l'ainee?" (Who is the older?) It came out as, "Qui est l'ane?" (Who is the ass?) It was

**sort of embarrassing**

—Robin Dean, Cameroon

The man who did our cooking and washing was ready to leave for the day. He opened the door, looked outside and informed me that there was a lot of "giza" out there. I didn't know what that Swahili word meant. He tried to explain. He pointed outside. It was pitch-dark, and I couldn't see a thing. After five minutes of explanations and encouraging pointing, I brought out a kerosene lamp and looked around outside bending low to study the ground. He shook his head and pointed. I remembered my Swahili dictionary and looked it up. "Giza" means "darkness." Yes, I agreed, and by now it was darker still.

—Brian Howard, Swaziland



# Reading about Peace Corps

by John Coyne, Former Volunteer/Ethiopia

I once asked a New York book editor out and she replied, "I'll have dinner with you, but I won't read your Peace Corps novel." Such was the fear and loathing that the publishing world had for Peace Corps books. That editor is my wife now, but she still refuses to read my Peace Corps novel.

While my wife hasn't changed, I am happy to say the publishing world has. In the last few years, a dozen books have been published about the Peace Corps experience, all written by former Volunteers.

Richard Wiley, author of *Soldier in Hiding*, winner of the 1986 Pen/Faulkner Award, was a Volunteer in Korea. Of his Peace Corps experience he has said; "It was the single most important 'event' of my life. It saved me, teaching me that all reality is not English-language based and that the world isn't America. I'm sure that my belief that fiction ought to be global came directly from my Peace

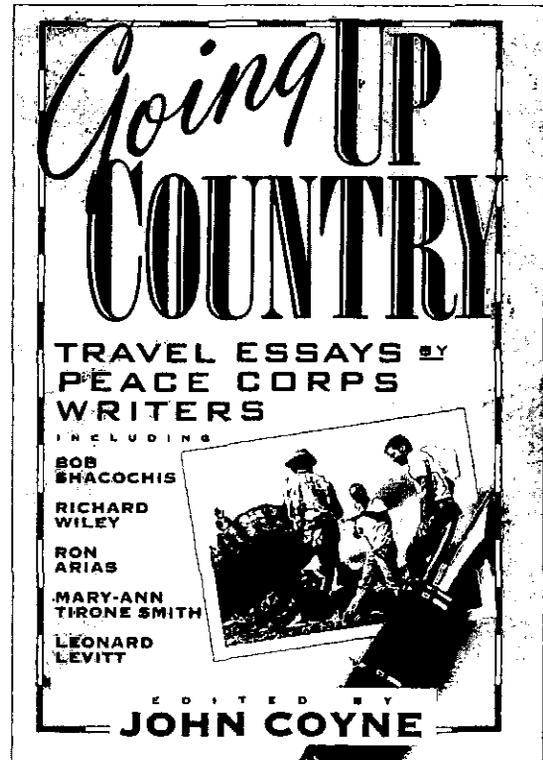
Corps experience."

P.F. Kluge, author of five books, among them *The Edge of Paradise*, nominated for a 1992 Robert F. Kennedy Award, was a Volunteer in Micronesia. He, too, was influenced by his time in the Peace Corps. "It took me to a place I'd never been, islands I've kept returning to. My life was changed. And the Peace Corps was my ticket to ride."

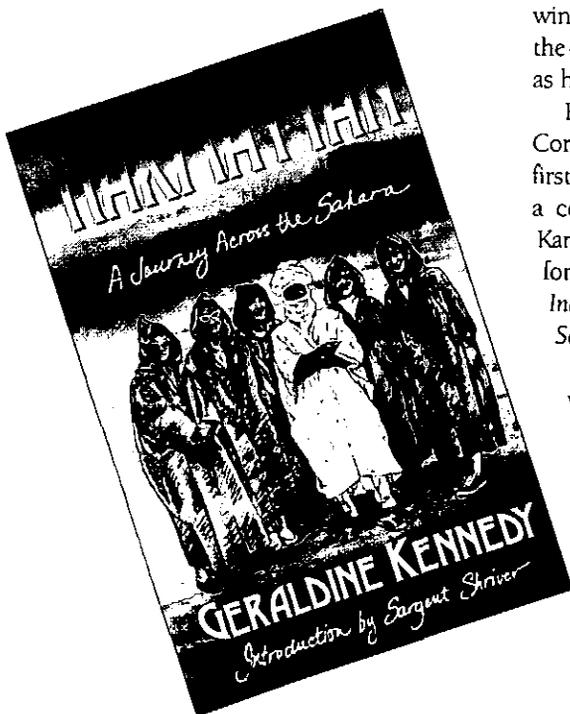
Peace Corps writer Bob Shachochis, a Volunteer in Barbados, won the American Book Award a few years ago for his first collection of stories, "Easy in the Islands." Recently, his novel *Swimming in the Volcano*, also set in the Caribbean, was nominated for the 1993 National Book Award. Norm Rush, author of a collection of stories, *Whites*, and the 1991 National Book Award winner, *Mating*, used Botswana, the country of his Peace Corps assignment, as his backdrop.

Paul Theroux, the most famous Peace Corps writer, used his African experience, first as a Volunteer in Malawi and later as a contract teacher at the university in Kampala, Uganda, as the source of material for his early novels, *Waldo*, *Fong* and *The Indians*, *Girls at Play*, and later in *My Secret History*.

The gifted writer, Maria Thomas, who was tragically killed in August 1989 in a plane crash when she and other government officials were visiting Ethiopian refugee camps, set her books, *Antonio saw the Oryx First*, *Come to Africa and Save Your Marriage*, and the posthumously published *African Visas*, in Africa, where she spent the last 18 years of her life.



Many other Peace Corps writers have called upon their Volunteer experience for inspiration or setting. Mary-Ann Tirone Smith, author of *Lament for a Silver-Eyed Woman*, wrote a story that is partially set in Cameroon. Lauri Anderson's *Hunting Hemingway's Trout* includes stories about a Peace Corps Volunteer in Biafra, and Karin McQuillan has written two mysteries set in Africa. Ron Arias used his Peruvian experience in *The Road to Tamazunchale*, which was nominated for the 1975 National Book Award. Eileen Drew's stories, *Blue Taxis*, set in West Africa, won the Milkweed National Fiction Prize in 1989. Science fiction writer Carol Severance served in Micronesia and placed her science fiction novel, *Reefsong*, on a pacific coral atoll. Kathleen Coskran, a Volunteer in Ethiopia, won the Minnesota Book Award in 1988 for her collection,



*The High Price of Everything*, which included several stories set in East Africa.

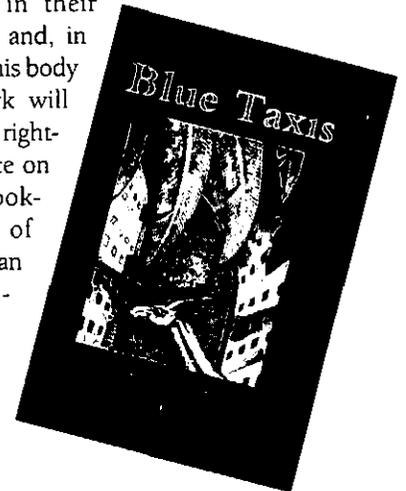
Several other Peace Corps writers have published literary non-fiction accounts of their Peace Corps experience. The best of these are: Leonard Levitt's *An African Season*, about his time in Tanzania; Moritz Thomson's *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*, his account of Peace Corps farming in Ecuador; Mike Tidwell's *The Ponds of Kalambayi—an African Sojourn*, reporting his service as a fish culture extension agent in central Zaire; and George Packer's *The Village of Waiting*, the story of his year in the Togolese highlands.



Several years ago, Bob Shachochis summed up what we can expect from Peace Corps writers: "We are torch bearers of a vital tradition, that of shedding light in the mythical heart of darkness. We are descendants of Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, George Orwell, Graham Greene, Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, and scores of other men and women, expatriates and travel writers and wanderers, who have enriched our domestic literature with the spices of Cathay, who have tried to communicate the 'exotic' as a relative, rather than an absolute quality of humanity."

All of the current Peace Corps writers were too young to have been in Paris

during the 1920s or to have written the great World War II novel. By now, three decades after the Peace Corps began, they are creating a formidable body of writing shaped by their overseas experience. Having lived and worked at the edges of the earth and on the tops and bottoms of the world, their service provided them with fascinating experiences and wonderful tales. These stories are now being retold in their novels, and, in time, this body of work will find its rightful place on the bookshelf of American literature.



## National Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Conference

The annual national conference of returned Peace Corps Volunteers will take place in Atlanta, Georgia, this July 28-31. Hosted by the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) and the Atlanta Area Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, this year's conference will feature a Volunteer Day, over 40 workshops and panels, plenary sessions, country of service updates, and reunions.

Newly returning Volunteers will find the Career Fair particularly helpful for re-entering the job market. Representatives from many public, private, and academic employers will be available to discuss career interests and job openings. Workshop topics include Mediating Cross-cultural Conflict, Forming a Non-government Organization to Assist your Country of Service, Global Education, Changing Careers after 50, Jobs 101, Resumes and SF 171s, and How to Get a Job at the Peace Corps.

A Grand Bazaar will feature booths of ethnic art and products on exhibit and for sale. Nine organizations are providing volunteer opportunities for Volunteer Day. Projects range from delivering meals to HIV and AIDS shut-ins, to helping spread the word about the need for childhood immunization in a refugee community, to helping paint a world map for public display to helping build a house for Habitat for Humanity.

Conference registration is \$125 until June 15 for members of NPCA. For more information about the Conference and other activities of the NPCA, contact them at 2119 S Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008. Phone: 202/462-5938. Fax: 202/462-5873.

# AIDS: Focusing On Solutions

by Donna Shalala,  
Secretary of Health and Human Services,  
Former Volunteer/Iran\*

AIDS is often thought of as a hopeless problem. There has been pessimism and despair as the number of infected people continues to rise.

But we must talk about solutions.

Every new HIV infection is a needless infection. We have the knowledge and technology to prevent the sexual spread of HIV. What we have lacked until now is the political will, because we have been too timid to talk openly about the prevention tools at our disposal.

As a society, we simply must place greater emphasis on AIDS prevention. The grim statistics tell us why. AIDS kills 92 Americans on average every day, and is now the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 25 and 44.

The best way to protect yourself and others is to refrain from sexual activity. If you are sexually active, use latex condoms consistently and correctly. All the scientific evidence tells us that latex condoms, used consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing the spread of HIV. But those who are sexually active must use them. And that means we must break through the despair and denial that all too often leads to risky behavior.

It is denial for heterosexuals to think that AIDS is limited to gay men and injection drug users. It is denial for young gay men to think that AIDS is limited to an older generation. And it is denial for anyone—women or men—to think that condoms don't stop transmission of HIV when used consistently and correctly.

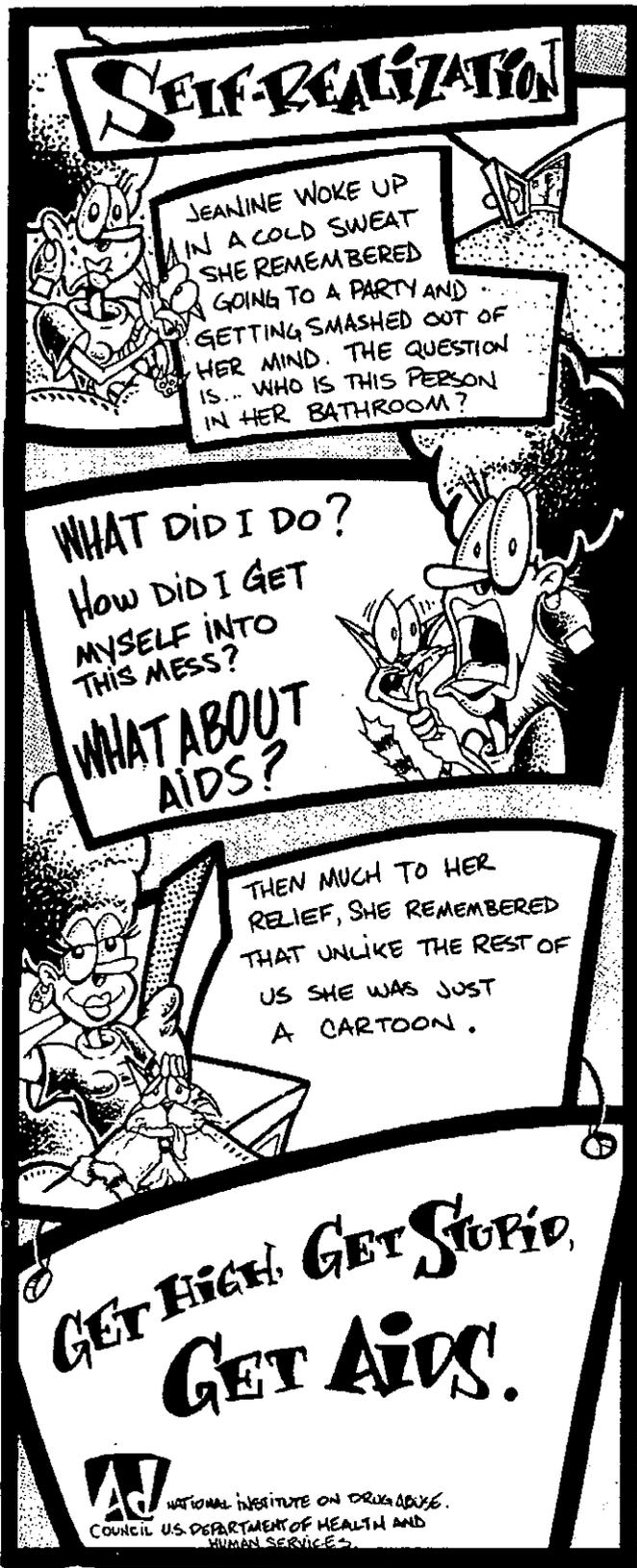
Every new HIV infection is a needless infection.

Anyone who has sat helplessly by the bedside of a loved one with AIDS understands what's at stake here. We must stop this killer, and we must stop it now.

\*Remarks made to national health care professionals, February 1994.

## How Peace Corps Is Helping

There are currently 35 Volunteers working in AIDS-related assignments in the two Peace Corps countries that have such programs: Thailand and Malawi. Many Volunteers worldwide have secondary assignments related to the prevention or treatment of AIDS.



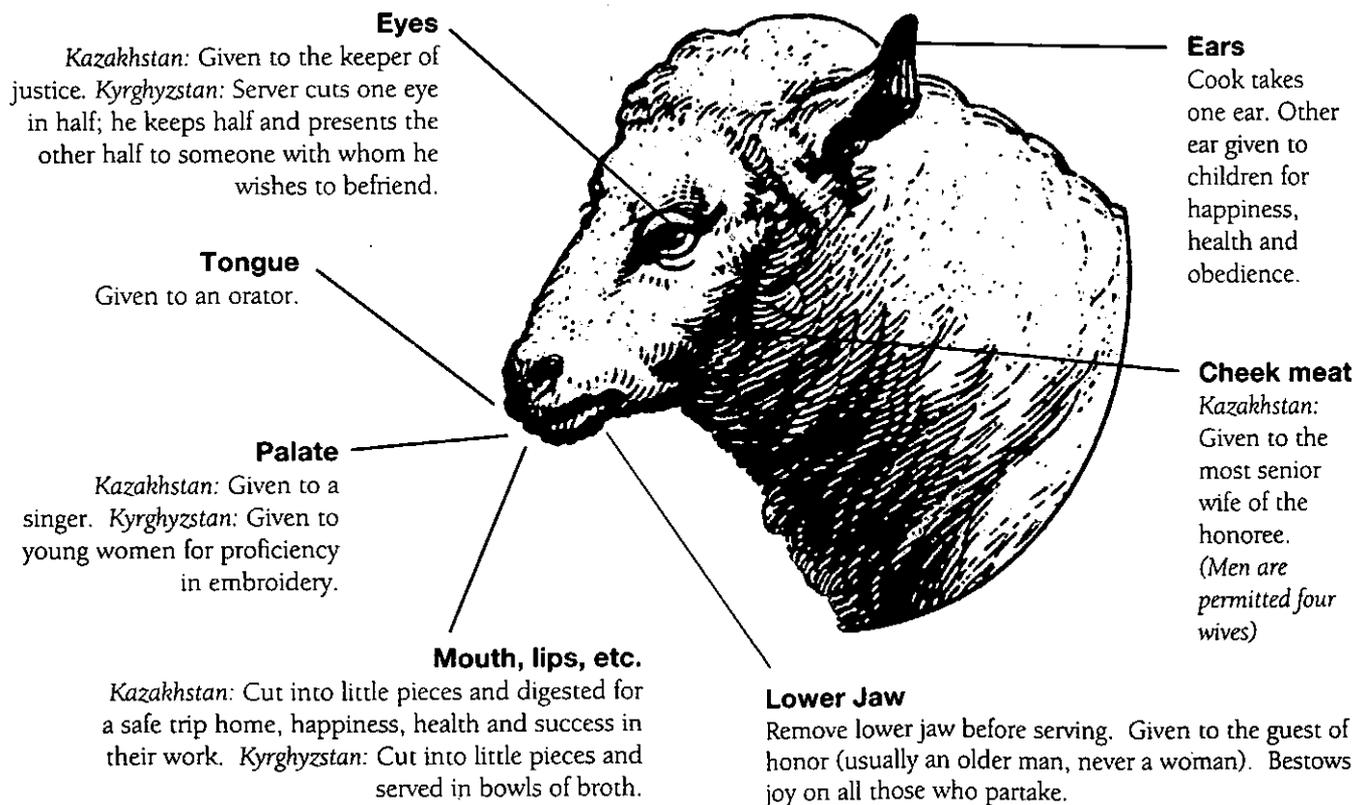
# field book

**PEACE CORPS CUISINE ...** Here are what some Volunteers are serving up around the globe. When you send in your recipes, don't forget to list any possible substitute ingredients for PCVs in other regions...

## Sheep's head

by Valorie Matthews (TEFL Trainee, Kazakhstan) and Jay Cooper (Training Officer, Kyrgyzstan)

**Preparation tips:** Remove wool and singe. Scrape off remaining burned hair, and wash well, paying particular attention to the nose area. Place in cold water and bring to a boil. Salt to taste. Reduce heat and simmer a couple of hours, or until done.



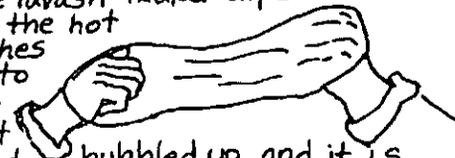
Dear Fellow PCVs,

If you have been wondering how we're doing out here in Armenia, well, we're doing fine. For those of us living beyond the capital city limits, certain sights have become commonplace: cattle and sheep raising dust in the dirt streets (or now, wading through the mud), frozen laundry on snow dusted clotheslines, and the crack of BB guns carried by men out shooting sparrows. One of my favorite things about living here is lavash-making day. The following is a description of this ingenious Armenian tradition.

-Bethany Ross, PCV/Armenia

# Lavash

is the delicious Armenian national bread. A cross between a flour tortilla and a pita, it is eaten with everything and alone, and it can keep for up to a year if stored properly. The best lavash is made in a "tonir" - a pit in the ground about four feet deep and lined with concrete blocks. A fire is kept in the bottom of this pit, using wood, dried cow dung, or dried grape vines. Balls of dough are rolled out on a round wooden table with small legs. These dough circles, about 12" in diameter and a centimeter thick, are then elongated by hand with a flipping motion much like the method used by pizza makers. The oblong dough is then stretched over a padded shape, like a stuffed oval shield, with a thong on the back that the lavash-maker's arm fits through. Some water is dabbed on the top edge of the lavash and then the lavash-maker dips arm and shield into the hot pit and punches the dough onto the fiery tonir wall. After about a minute the dough has baked and bubbled up, and it is flipped out of the pit with a long metal poker. Lavash making is reserved strictly for men, although women, although men may tend the fire or bring dough. It takes two workers - one to roll out the dough and one to handle the shield. The whole process usually takes about an hour of lavash. In the enclosed photo it may seem as if Karine (on the right) and Vergush, have no legs, but don't be fooled. Tonir pits always have two other smaller pits about 2 feet deep - for the women to put their legs into so they are in a more comfortable sitting position and don't have to kneel.



## Quick & Easy Ricotta

- 5 cups water
- 2 cups whole milk powder
- 1/2 cup vinegar

Stir milk powder into water and heat until hot, but not boiling. Remove from heat; add vinegar and stir. Clumps of 'cheese' will form immediately. Strain to collect cheese, and discard remaining liquid.

-Jean Adams,  
PCV/Papua New Guinea

## Stir Fried Pumpkin

- 2 lbs. pumpkin
- 3 tbsp. oil
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp. soy or fish sauce
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1 egg

Peel pumpkin and cut into cubes. Saute garlic in oil. Add pumpkin and soy sauce. Allow to simmer 2 or 3 minutes, then add sugar. Continue to cook over low heat until desired consistency. Add egg, stirring constantly. May be served over rice.

-PCV/Thailand

\* Attention PCVs in Africa: Annette Ayala (PCV/Gabon) is collecting African recipes. Please send her the most popular or traditional recipes from your country. (Address: B.P. 596 oyem, Gabon, Afrique)

# A Matter of Trust

By Maria Skertic, PCV/Ecuador

"Maria, please can I ride your bicycle around the neighborhood?" Diego pleaded with me, his eyes narrowing to show his eagerness. This has been his plea virtually every day for the past month.

I work with street kids in the Youth Development Program in Riobamba, Ecuador; Diego is a 14-year-old who makes his living selling newspapers and shining shoes (15 cents per shine). Unlike the rest of the boys I work with, it took me a while to warm up to Diego. He's secretive about his home life—or probably lack thereof—craves attention, is always pulling the scarf I wear to guard against the cool Sierra climate, or always asking me to loan him money—in general making his presence felt.

My bicycle is the Peace Corps issue, second-hand, works well, and I use it every day to talk to the families (usually mothers) of the boys (and a few girls) who come to our center for education, food, sports and viable job skills. Knowing Diego's penchant for not returning soccer balls, shoeshine kits and other items to his friends at our center, I had a disturbing mental picture of him taking off on my bicycle, laughing and mocking me, possibly having an accident—the worst case scenario.

Diego has an incredible amount of patience and persistence, I'll give him that. He finally wore me down, again demonstrating that anything in life is possible if one but persists and finds the correct path to pursue their dream. (Isn't our presence here in Peace Corps evidence of our own patience and persistence?)

"O.K., Diego, the bicycle is yours—for ten minutes."

Eyes wide, eyebrows raised, there was a questioning expression on his dark brown face, now showing just a hint of whiskers and approaching manhood. I could tell he wasn't sure just yet whether I was "putting him on" or not. I got off the bike saying, "Ride carefully," and Diego got on, after pausing a moment and darting a triumphant look to Carlos, his friend and work partner.

After a hesitant start—Diego pedaled faster and faster, going up the slight hill and, after a minute, passing out of sight.

My heart plummeted. No, Diego, please no... I need my bike for work, going to the market, talking to the families, exercising, transportation...

While talking to Carlos, I try not to let my growing apprehension show. Finally... fifteen minutes later—five minutes over my ten-minute time limit—here comes Diego, wide grin on his face, hair askew, panting slightly, making a show of stopping right in front of me, at the last possible second to avoid hitting me.

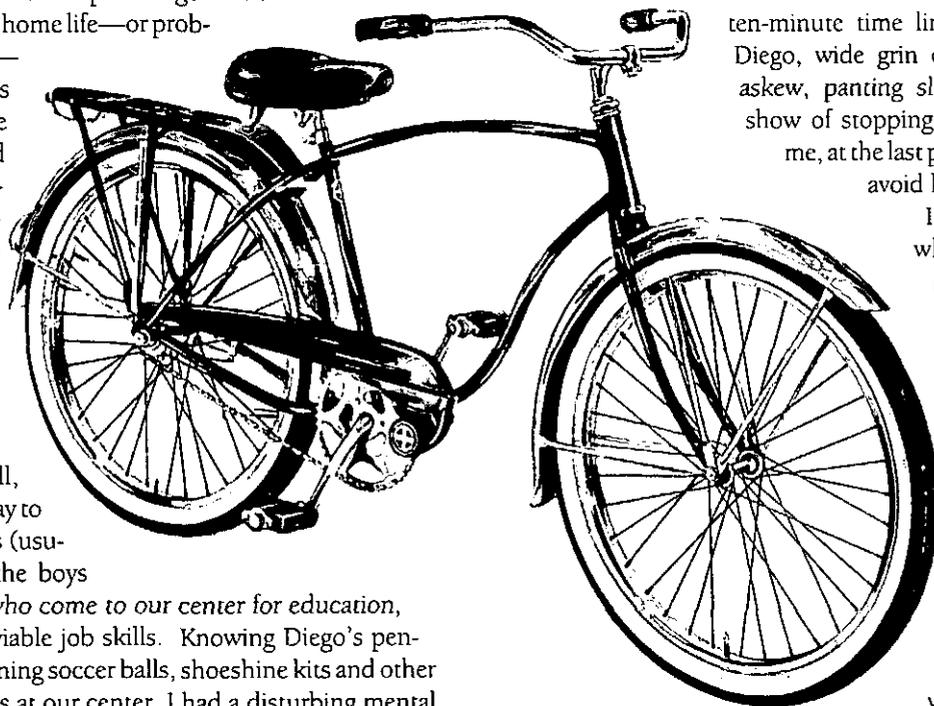
I'm still not sure who was most surprised by what happened next, Diego or myself. Suddenly, this slight *joven* (adolescent) had his arms around me, hugging me for all he was worth. His normally bright eyes were suspiciously

wet. Coming from a young

man who has learned to routinely hide his feelings and needs, I found myself touched as well.

A minute later, Diego and Carlos left, to work the streets for a few more hours. The feeling they left me with sums up the main reasons I decided to join Peace Corps: getting to know people from another country on a one-on-one basis; perhaps making a few helpful additions to their difficult lives; understanding myself much better. Still, I hadn't counted on a 14-year-old ruffian stealing my heart!

Standing on a street corner in the outskirts of the city, with a happy heart, I was secure in the knowledge that I had given Diego a small bit of pleasure in an otherwise difficult life. However, as is usually the case when you allow others to enter meaningfully into your life, you receive much, much more than you could ever hope to give.



## Night Locked

Nathan "Mpho" Emery, PCV/Lesotho  
October 5, 1993

*I wrote this poem on the occasion of my first real bad day, well actually it only lasted an hour or so, as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Being a new PCV at my site just three weeks, I may not be very battle-scarred yet, but us rookies have our tough times too. This poem represents this and many other concerns we as PCVs face as well.*

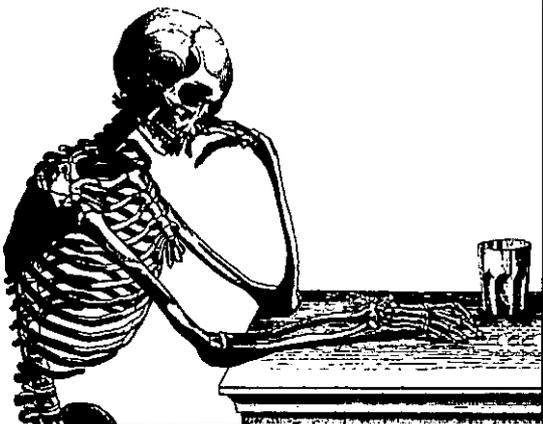
Night locked for the day  
a swirling masterpiece of gray  
the snake come relentless down the valley  
bringing life by the winds of destruction

Creeping through the cracked broken door  
where harm had fallen once before  
unto this I am a prisoner in my enclave  
wishing now I had ventured before this shrill day

But two ideas, central to the core  
accompany me, though my feelings are poor  
why have I taken this path at times weary  
and who am I to help in lives to me dreary

The first is a question of dynamic existence  
the second, one of sustainable persistence  
yet within these two, contradictions abound  
and in the dilemma I am both lost and found

So here I will sit  
and drink just a bit  
while pondering this philosophy so tangible  
yet always only a tractor away.



## Just when you think you've caught on...

Anne Lee, TEFL and AIDS Education PCV/Thailand



I am a Volunteer in Thailand. While arguably one of the most "developed" Peace Corps countries (fast food, televisions in every home), it is also one of the most difficult to adjust to in terms of culture. My first cultural experience came during training. We were placed in groups of six in tiny rural villages, living with rice farming families for a month (suffice to say, no one could speak English). It was a weird and wacky time of new sights, smells, sounds, and experiences. Every day I learned something new about my adopted Thai family and community until I reached a comfort level—towards the end of the month. Then, heady with newfound knowledge, calamity struck. From across the one-room wooden house, my 80 year old grandmother drew her last breath. All of a sudden, I was abandoned—no longer the center of attention. I realized how little I knew about my surroundings. Next, there were funeral rituals unlike any I had known in the states—from a casket adorned with Christmas lights, to Buddhist monks proceeding into the house to pray, to an all-night party featuring traditional instruments and rice whiskey.

This experience was not an anomaly, but rather reflects my Peace Corps life to date. Every time I think I understand the lifestyle around me, something happens to remind me how foreign I truly am. That's what the Peace Corps does—it stimulates your senses and challenges your sense of self and purpose. It's so exciting and rewarding. When I think I could have been holed up in some office somewhere in the States, I just about leap with joy!

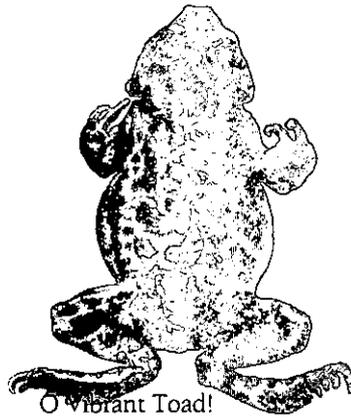
# Ode to a Toad

Chris Sutton, Forestry PCV/The Gambia  
(whose hut was home to 20 toads one night)

O Ancient Toad!  
Amphibians have reamed quite thrifty  
for millenia two hundred and fifty;  
Heed your ancestral roots, oh Toad,  
who hath come to dwell in my African abode.

O Toad, My Toad!  
For thy kith and kin, the frog and the newt,  
I care not one Gambian butut;  
"O Captain, My Captain" goes the ode,  
I prefer to substitute the noble Toad.

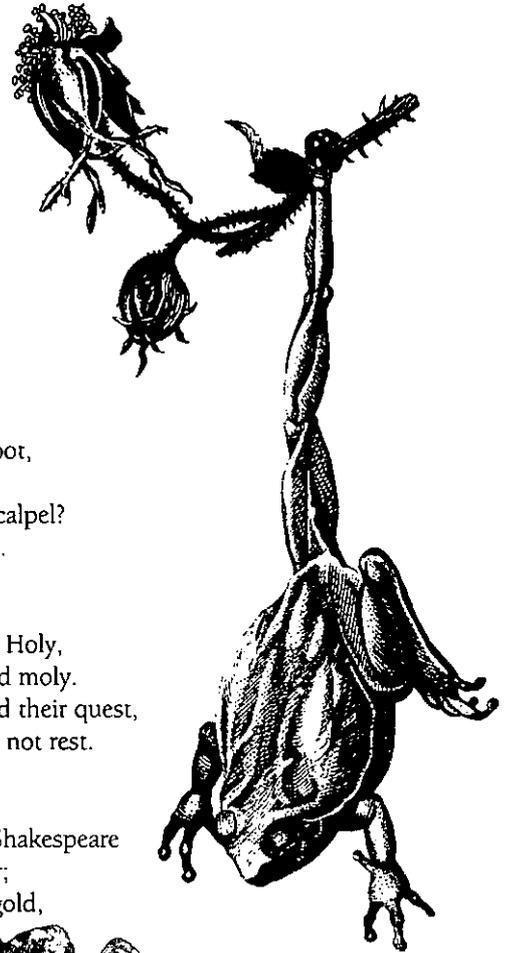
O Cold-blooded Toad!  
Me thinks oxygen lies therein,  
for in thy heart are love'n'carin';  
Grant me cold to hermy thy lot,  
but on sunny days, thy blood runneth hot!



O Vibrant Toad!  
Born of water, with lungs to boot,  
Wet or dry, the point is moot.  
Wouldst I dissect you with a scalpel?  
Never in my life, with a scalpel.

O Holy Toad!  
A plethora of words can follow Holy,  
among them, night, Toledo and moly.  
Lancelot and Galahad, they had their quest,  
E'er I spy the Holy Toad, I will not rest.

O Wondrous Toad!  
"To be or not to be" panned Shakespeare  
but not exactly his words' fear;  
Instead, it asks my weight in gold,  
"To be or not to be a Toad!"



## The Watermelon Patch

Robert Johansson, Fresh Water Fisheries PCV/Gabon

One overcast, rainy season day in Dibwangi, Gabon, I was returning from "the ponds" and stopped by the nearby village junior high school to chat with the gardener and education Volunteer who worked there. I found them out at the college garden checking over small plants sprouting from the seeds I'd donated—excess fish/integrated agriculture stock. At one raised bed, there were some Baby Boy watermelons thriving in the rainforest climate. The gardener, Badouma, and his assistants, Jean and Jean-Baptiste asked me if the "legume" was ready to eat. Surprised, I asked if they were familiar with the dark green balls. No, they'd never seen them before. Taking a machete, I split one open and divided it, giving everyone a section. The gardeners didn't quite know how to eat the strange, red fruit, so I took a large bite out of mine and waited for my friends to follow suit. I was rewarded with looks of joy and surprise following their dainty first bites. Every valuable seed was dutifully saved and I was sworn to secrecy, lest the other villagers be tempted to raid the future watermelon patch.

# Sunday Morning Stares

Daniel Laboe, PCV/Papua New Guinea

The Sunday morning walk to St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church of Sogeri is two kilometers from my little red house on the Iarowari High School grounds. Today is Palm Sunday. I'm walking the Sogeri road. The weight of the sun is like an invisible heat blanket bleaching my hair, trying to set it ablaze.

Tall kunai grass towers on both sides. Wild bushes sprouting magnificent, colored flowers climb the hills on the right side. Strange, crooked, randomly spiraling palm trees eerily look down on the tar like the background of a Salvador Dali painting. An unseen stream rolls over its rocky bed then reminds me of its presence down below the grassy hill on the left.

As I turn the corner coming up near the school rugby oval, I get the feeling. Unavoidable. It will stay with me until I'm back in my little red house. Some people are sitting on a fallen tree on the hill overlooking the rugby field and some more are walking my way. A woman and three children. I'm on stage. I'm a showpiece, a curiosity, a foreigner. Painfully aware, I'm a white man in Papua New Guinea. I don't mean to say that the Papua New Guineans never see whites. But one who lives amongst them? A man who walks the same road as they do, eats the same food, teaches their children? A white man who doesn't live in some expensive palace in Moresby going about his day beyond the barbed wire, acting as if he were back in his own country?

The stares come. They come from all directions. I pass the people on the fallen tree, but I still feel their looks on my back.

The women and children pass me. A greeting of "*moning nau*" is exchanged, but the children gawk. I give a smile and happily receive one back.

Where I came from (a small Midwestern town) did not prepare me to be at center stage, every moment of each day. I am the middle of nine children. At college I was a study in average. Comfortably packed in with the rest, a perfectly capable student, but one that never racked his brains with school. I sailed on the wave of the fat section of the bell curve. Last year, I remember thinking, "I don't want to get a job, in a few years—a wife. I want to see the world! I want to be different!" Good Lord, I'm different now.

The stares keep coming and for some unknown reason a lonely feeling creeps in. The "I wish I could talk to my family" feeling. The "far away in the middle of nowhere feeling." I fight it back down my throat. I want to sit. I want to close my eyes and imagine.

Imagine that I can lose myself in a crowd, that I can look like everyone else. I want my hair to curl up into tight little dark balls and my skin to turn brown. I want to sit somewhere and have people walk by without staring, without even noticing. This spotlight is as bright and constant as the sun that has now reached every part of my body. Sweat drips down off my nose and makes a dark wet spot on my shirt.

I'm passing the community school now and two of my students have caught up with me. They give me a happy look and prepare to absorb some of the stares. Mostly they get stares of their own which say, "You two are with him, huh?" To which they smile and nod, "That's right, he's a Taubada, but he's O.K., he's with us." I nod as if to affirm the silent conversation. I feel as accepted as I'll ever be. An appreciated stranger.

We pass an old man who has found a nice piece of shade. I recognize him.



Photo by RPCV Elisa Scola

Local guy. A Papuan with a small belly and a baseball cap on. His hair has big afro curls and his Melanesian eyes are spread apart. His teeth are stained a blackish red from a life's worth of beetle nut chewing. Even though my Motu is limited to a few words, I mix some in with a Pidgin greeting, "Ah Tura, namo. Yo Orait, eh? Gutpela, lukim."

My effort shows a lack of ignorance more than any great knowledge. He smiles and gives a quick wave of his hand. The lonely feeling makes a quick exit; I breathe in the beautiful morning and exotic surroundings.

My students turn off to the Lutheran Church after the wooden bridge that looks like it was built during World War II. The stares appear more like curious looks that make me smile as I walk on. I can see St. Gregory the Great Church.

It is a little bigger than my father's garage back in Michigan, but today it has the feel of a cathedral. All kinds of palms decorate inside and out. The colorful flowers have made their way into the church. They cover the altar and crucifix. I'm early. I sit down and place my elbows on my tanned knees to brace my head. More stares come my way, accompanied by the muffled giggles of some young girls in the back of the church. A thought enters my mind. All these stares, every look shot my way by the dark eyes of the PNG, they are 100% curiosity, 0% animosity. They just want to know something about me. They want to feel my hair, pull my beard, touch my arm. They want to hear stories from the land of Rambo and Arnold Schwarzenegger. They want to see my pictures of New York and find out if

people actually kiss in public in my hometown. They want to hear about a football stadium filled with 100,000 screaming fans or ask how many times I've seen Mohammed Ali. Pure curiosity. Racial hatred hasn't come alive here yet. They just want to know something about me and my place.

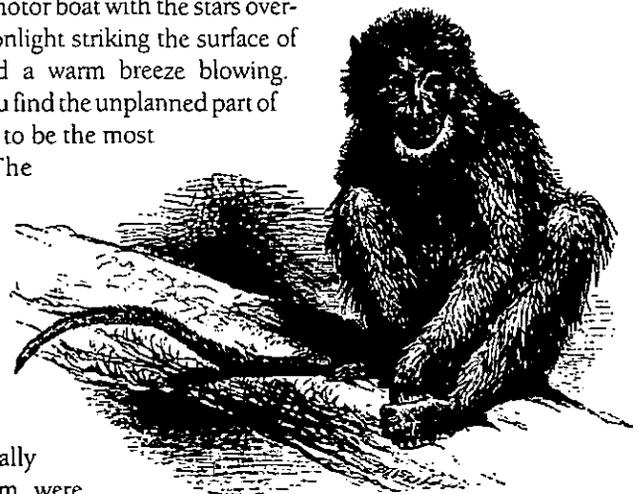
Mass is starting and we all move outside to form a procession into the church, traditional Palm Sunday style. I've made a decision just now. Occasionally a loneliness that lessens over time and being on stage most of the day are small prices to pay for knowing this country and its people. I suddenly feel good about today, St. Gregory's Church, the Sogeri Plateau, Papua New Guinea and, yes, even the look the man sitting beside me gives me right before he shakes my hand and says, "Peace be with you."

## A Vacation Adventure

Jane Joyce, PCV/Zaire

One of the best times I've had in Africa was our vacation to visit the chimpanzees at Gombe Stream. It got off to a rather inauspicious start. We caught a ride to Lake Tanganyika (Zambia) in a car with 15 people crammed every which way, and very little in the way of brakes or gas. The gas tank they had rigged up was a plastic jug with a hose. I have no idea how this worked, but it did! After a grueling eight-hour ride (where we managed to get stuck in the mud for two hours, trying to avoid the police who surely would have pulled us over had they seen the number of passengers), we pulled over the last hill just in time to see the ferry pull away. The ferry is a once-a-week occurrence, so we decided to head south to try to catch a cargo boat. As it turns out, we never did catch a cargo boat. We ended up hanging out at the

lake, swimming, sunbathing, and enjoying the company of the friendly Zambian people. We went for a beautiful ride at night in a 20-foot wooden motor boat with the stars overhead and moonlight striking the surface of the water and a warm breeze blowing. Sometimes you find the unplanned part of the adventure to be the most rewarding! The ferry showed up a week later and we were able to reach our destination. And the chimpanzees, when we finally got to see them, were great too!



# The Cotton Trenches of Uzbekistan

by Beatrice Grabish  
TEFL PCV/Uzbekistan

On the fifth day of "barf" (Tadjik for snow) this November, the troops surrendered. The war, a.k.a. the cotton harvest, lasted eight weeks this year and yielded (only) 87% returns.

I had watched my students pile into a 25-vehicle motorcade and wind around the mile long university boulevard amidst handkerchief waving and cheers from teachers and other onlookers. Two days later, much to the horror and surprise of my women colleagues at Samarkand State University—"There are no modern conveniences"—I joined their work camp.

On October 5, I arrived at the collective farm called Guzelkent, about 40 km outside of city limits—a collection of brown-streaked whitewashed houses made of mud brick, rising like Oz out of acres upon acres of cotton fields. It was a scene framed by purple mountain peaks and a flawless blue sky. The first day I walked with a fellow "demlow" (Uzbek for teacher) through the cotton fields, trying to pick out my own students from brightly colored hunched over backs.

"There they are," my colleague's well-trained eye spotted them, "Just like the enemy hiding." And there sat three Uzbek girls, their white kerchiefs bobbing at boll-level with the cotton stalks. The women look like mummies as they pick, their mouths and noses wrapped with gauze. The men face off unprotected. Crop dusters disgorge defoliant which shrivel the greenery and expose the cotton for clean picking. A yellow residue remains on the cotton. Hearing the advancing buzz of the plane, I ran and hit the deck, covering my head. Everyone laughed and the domla reassured me that it was "only salt."

At lunch time the brigade assembles on the sidelines, huddling around a wood-burning samovar. One student is the

designated "cooker" for the group, and spends the whole morning fetching water from the community well, gathering food, and mixing up a pot of potato or macaroni soup. Before eating students weigh in their cotton, hooking their bulging aprons onto a wooden tripod with a sliding rule scale. Each sack contains up to 20 kilos. (Students strive to meet a 100 kilo quota per day.) After the tally the cotton is tossed onto a rising mountain, and then picked up by a flat backed truck and carted away. The domlas and collective farmers dine atop the cotton; the students sit on the ground sharing one bowl of soup among six and passing around a cup of tea.

I expected the students to grumble about the conditions, as I knew American students would. But, instead of rebellion there was an overwhelming sense of resignation at the camp: the cotton is here to pick and we are here to pick it. University studies span five years instead of four, so the students can spend a full year picking cotton during their tenure. The government orchestrates the effort; and, every

night, President Karimov appears on national television to read each region's returns like a roll call of war dead. I realized that forces greater than my own mild contempt were at work: The Soviet System manifest.

Students are quick to defend their Republic, saying that "Okotin" (white gold, as cotton is known) is the only currency that Uzbekistan's got right now. They are picking for future generations. Picking is a right of passage: their parents and grandparents picked, and so will they. For the collective farmers, I was the first American that they had ever seen, much less the only American to participate in a Soviet Agro campaign. Villagers peered at me, grade scholars touched me to make sure that I was real. One group of tenth form students shyly approached me to give me a handful of walnuts and a piece of bread. "Mekmonlar" (guests) are treated with the utmost care and respect in Central Asia. My own students displayed their hospitality by giving me the thickest slabs of kielbasa and bread, though they had



PCV Carrie Sachse and two Uzbek women share a break during the cotton harvest, known locally as "barf."

next to nothing to eat themselves.

I slept with nine of my 4th year Uzbek girls in one room. At the end of the day, we dined on the bedroom floor. And after dinner, vanity ruled. Preening in a hand held mirror, some girls rolled their bangs in curlers, others bridged their brows together with black paint. Some girls read, others knitted, and a few boogied to a boom box in the corner. I felt like I had parachuted into a "Grease" slumber party, Uzbek style. Boys were on everyone's minds. All of my students will marry next spring, though none know their future mates.

Communal living was intense. My back ached, my skin burned. The squatton



was located in a sheep stable out back. No baths, no gas, no beds. The students sleep on collapsible cots, the same contraption that I mistook for a lawn chair in GUM, the Soviet department store in Samarkand.

Uzbekistan no longer belongs to Russia. My friend Ulugbek tells me, "Our

Republic is just a baby and we must teach it to grow up." But cotton monoculture is firmly entrenched. Irrigation networks drain the feeder rivers to the Aral Sea and cotton flourishes in a desert. University students pick it. I teach English. Such is life here in Uzbekistan.

## Bamba

I had a second childhood called the Peace Corps,  
In a country called Mali, I'd never heard of before.  
I had a new family and an odd new name,  
I learned a new language, a new honor and shame.

Yes, we were all babes in Africa, eyes big and wide,  
A new birth it was, our first world had died.  
No toilets or running water, no lights or AC,  
No movies or TV, no automobiles or anything fancy.

A bucket for a bath, an oil lamp for a light,  
We cleaned with our left hands and ate with our right.  
And I'm here to tell you, it's not primitive or vile,  
For good friendship we had, and always a smile.

Yaala yaala, they said, eat and take tea,  
Dooni dooni, you work, and be a farmer like we.  
Oh sure, it was hard, no love is ever easy,  
But what began as privacy happily ended in company.

Long nights under the moon, under straw or tin,  
We longed for the rains to renew us again.  
But I'd grown older, my planting was done,  
I rode the preliminary winds into the setting sun.

Ah, what work I did is nothing to tell,  
I held my own, on their terms and well.  
Looking back now in wonder, their old proverb I still recall,  
How never a log in water can ever really a bamba become, at all.

*bamba-crocodile*  
*yaala yaala-walk around, wander*  
*dooni dooni-little by little, slowly*

Sanjay Mathur  
PCV/Mali



duced by a local pottery shop, Paragon Ceramics. The text and colorful drawings on the tiles provide interesting interpretation: what makes a turtle a turtle, how sand-dwelling fish breed, and why fish and turtles are called 'cold-blooded'.

All the visiting students are kept busy, not just with new things to see (like the terrapinarium), but more importantly, with new things to do. Paper recycling is a popular activity. Tom waste paper is soaked overnight, and then pounded with a large wooden mortar and pestle, traditionally used to grind maize. The resulting pulp is further pulverized with hand held wooden

beaters equipped with big teeth, especially for this task. When it's ready (or when everyone is tired), the pulp is dumped into a large tub of water. A rectangular notebook-sized sieve pulled through the water picks up a thin layer of suspended pulp. Next the sieve is laid pulp side down on a smooth cloth. The excess water is sponged up, and the sieve is lifted, transferring the pulp to the cloth. After completely drying, a new sheet of paper can be peeled off the cloth.

Students, who are initially skeptical of the process, quickly get creative with their homemade paper. They press flowers and

leaves into the pulp, sometimes spelling out their names with stems or grass. Adding water soluble paints (mankhwala) tints the paper.

Stuart and I left the environmental education center in the hands of a new PCV, Joe Kemmer. He'll continue the work that Volunteers before him started, and find some pet projects of his own. Hopefully Joe will train a Malawian parks officer to take over when he leaves, so that future PCVs will go to that place they're dreaming of — Cape Maclear — but, only on vacation.

## Volunteers Featured in New Peace Corps Film

Volunteers in all regions will be featured in a new Peace Corps film, currently under production in the field and debuting in July.

On March 13, Peace Corps Washington's Communications Director Celia Fischer, and Public Affairs Liaison Tom White hit the ground in Costa Rica, followed two days later by Marketing Director Steve Abbott and a film crew from Luminair Communications of Chicago.

The filming will continue through April and will include stops in Senegal, Poland and Thailand.

The footage will be edited into several film and video products. World Wise Schools will turn out, "What is a Peace Corps Volunteer?" for use in its domestic programming that targets students in grades 3-12. Peace Corps will replace the 1986 35 minute recruitment film, "Let it Begin Here," with a new, faster paced 15-minute film. We will utilize footage for television public service announcements and a variety of products for newscasts in the States.

Each region of the world will be uniquely featured, and will highlight different Peace Corps programming. In Tortuguero, Costa Rica, Jim Kinley and Mary Bell are working in Environmental Education, helping the region protect the endangered green turtles. Melanie Kwan, in Diourbel, Senegal, continues Peace Corps' traditional work in health education, while Bob Matt in Opole, Poland is helping businesses to grow in their emerging economy. In Nakhon

Sawan, Thailand, Scott Maul is helping his community with innovative AIDS and HIV prevention and education programs, as is Jennifer Cook in Bangkok. Other PCVs filmed

during the project include Liana Cassar, Pils de Bejuco, Costa

Rica; Lisa Chavez, Opole, Poland; and John May, Kaolack, Senegal.

Robin Rutledge, President of Luminair Communications, is serving as Producer/Director of the film, working with Scott Dummler (sound) and Robert Long (cameraman).



*Crew from Luminair Communications Inc. of Chicago films the work of PCV Jim Kinley and PCV Mary Bell and resident tour guides on the beach of Tortuguero, Costa Rica. Photo by Celia Fischer.*



# Layne Pfaffenberger, PCV Guatemala

*November 23, 1993 will be the toughest day in my Peace Corps life. I was returning from my site to enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday with my fellow Volunteers and friends when I was notified that my very closest and dearest friend Layne Pfaffenberger died in a plane crash on the 21st while returning from the Ruins of Tikal, El Peten. We are all heavy hearted and mourn for her. And we miss her. Below is the tribute I presented at her funeral in Guatemala City. I would like to share it with you.*

*Daryl Victor  
Isla El Chico, Retahuleu*

My first memory of Layne was in Miami. Peter Lara had given the different groups a project in which we had to fill a blank piece of paper with pictures about what we expect to do or see in Guatemala. While the rest of our group hesitated to be the first ones to pick up a marker, Layne and I were already on the floor bickering about what colors were a Quetzal's feathers. During that session, Layne looked up at me and said, "You know, you're either going to be my worst enemy or my best friend!" And that spirit carried on through our training. When I was feeling down about

something, Layne would flash that smile and remind me just how many days were left until swearing-in.

Even though Layne had faced adversity



at times, her strength and determination to work with children and her community far overcame these matters.

During our first three weeks in service, I went to visit Layne in Santa Cruz, Alta

Vera Paz. I was overwhelmed by the genuine love all the children had for her. They ran up, shouting her name and grabbing her hands, we ended up sitting there for an hour just talking.

In those subsequent visits to see Layne, we grew closer by sharing our humorous stories, thoughts, and frustrations. We would usually bake something at these times—we could never get that brownie recipe right, though the birthday cake she made for me was excellent.

Though this is a solemn occasion for all of us, I believe in my heart that Layne would want us all to continue with the same energy that she possessed. And I know even though she has been taken from all of us, she will be remembered and loved not only by her friends and family in Texas and Guatemala, but in a small town tucked high in the mountains of Alta Vera Paz. And with that in mind, she did not only fulfill the philosophies of Peace Corps, but surpassed them.

How will I remember Layne? Well, to me there is a phrase written on a flag of Texas in her house. It simply says, "Layne—Increase the Peace!" And I know she has and will.

Layne we will always love you and we will miss you but we will never forget you.

## Michele Sylvester, PCV Senegal

Along the path of our Peace Corps experience here in Senegal we lost a dear friend, Michele Sylvester. The tragic accident of August 10, 1993 changed many of our lives and left us with sadness and loss. The most unfortunate people, however, are those who were never lucky enough to have known her.

Michele could make you smile on the worst of all days. She rarely put up with a bad attitude, but if you needed to let off steam she was the first to lend an ear and offer comfort. She professed that "It's the little things" that make us happy. "She could find or create fun in any situation." Her role here professionally was central. She was a health program district coordinator, which called for leadership as well as support. Michele was perfect for the job. Peace Corps and her position within it also showed us her outstanding courage. As a new Volunteer she was to coordinate the living situations and work of the others in her district while still just beginning to learn the local languages. In her short time at her site, Michele and another Volunteer had begun work to improve the monthly reporting system used by health post supervisors in the

region, in order to better define needs and focus resources. She was also interested in revitalizing the system of village-based health huts in the area, so that health care could be more widely distributed throughout the population. Her strength and intelligence led many of us to look up to

just party. We were also reminded by her that we deserved some recreation and that sometimes it was just plain necessary.

We knew Michele Sylvester a little less than a year, but her existence in our lives was profound. Our hearts go out to her family. We hope to somehow share with them the love we had for her. We will miss her so much. We are lucky because we knew Michele Sylvester for a short special time in our lives.

Michele Sylvester was from Anniston, Alabama. She held graduate degrees in business and public health. She turned 28 five days before the auto accident. With the help of the U.S. Military and our beloved Peace Corps staff, Michele and two other Volunteers, Melanie Kwan and Jennifer Broom, were quickly evacuated to

Madrid, Spain, where they received excellent medical attention. Michelle passed away on August 25 as a result of her injuries. Melanie and Jennifer survived the accident, but their lives have been fundamentally changed by the event. We all owe tremendous gratitude to those who provided their emergency medical care.

Michele is survived by her parents, Larry and Sheila Sylvester, and her sister Debbie. Our thoughts are always with them.



*Michele Sylvester with Senegalese sisters.*

her and let her take care of us. We were all welcomed into her home and heart. She enjoyed making things special for people and seeing to it that her fellow Volunteers were happy.

Most importantly, however, Michele Sylvester was a real big "kick in the pants." She was famous for being cute and fun to be with. Michele really knew how to celebrate life and make the good times stay forever in our memories. She never held back when it was time to let loose and

# Peace Corps Partnership Program

## On the Road Again

by **Bethany Fitch, Intern and Eric Hornberger, Program Specialist, Office of Private Sector Relations** with contributions from **Former Volunteer Christine Citrini**

Recently returned Peace Corps Volunteer Christine Citrini once again voyaged from her home in North Carolina. This time her travels were not nearly as distant as West Africa, where she served as a small enterprise development advisor to cooperatives in the Togolese capital of Lome. Mid-November, Christine made her way to Oak Park, Illinois as a direct extension of her service and her personal commitment to realizing the Third Goal of Peace Corps.

Christine Citrini was in the business world for six years, giving up a lucrative career track to become involved in small business development in Togo. According to Christine, she joined Peace Corps because it was a chance to "jump off the merry-go-round of the corporate world, learn new pieces on my guitar, and take some time for personal enrichment." PC/Togo's SED program placed Christine in one of the oldest and most populated quarters of Lome, where she came into contact with many of the community's business and civic leaders on a daily basis.

While serving in Nyekonakpoe, Christine unknowingly became involved in a secondary project that ultimately provided one of the most rewarding experiences of her Peace Corps service. During Christine's first few months at her site, a prominent member of one of the community cooperatives came to her requesting assistance with the enhancement of the Nyekonakpoe District Reading Center. The community had been involved for four years autonomously developing a modest

library to supplement the woefully strained public education system in Lome. Abikeigny Ibrahim, the community leader who initiated the project in 1988, approached Christine in hopes of finding a means to modernize the library's meager and out-of-date collection of books and to equip the reading room with furniture.

Christine was so busy with her SED work that it was nine months before she could give her attention to Mr. Ibrahim and the community's project. Midway through her two year service, however, the political situation in Togo began to impact her program. When 250,000 people emigrated from the city, many with which she had been working, Christine decided to take on the Nyekonakpoe library as her secondary project. Fortunately for the community, Christine commented, "Mr. Ibrahim was very tenacious and took a lot of initiative." Christine found his perseverance and leadership invaluable in the development of the project. While still in

the planning stage, Christine was encouraged by a fellow Volunteer to submit a project proposal to the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

According to Christine, not a lot of sources fund books, even textbooks. The Partnership Program was the only, or one of the very few, that thought education was to be

encouraged. "It is a tremendous resource, but very unpromoted. I never heard about it in training. I would encourage other Volunteers to apply. I was very happy with their quick reply."

Christine said that she "received a cable about a week after the proposal was sent and had all the funds in a couple of months." Christine discovered another advantage of the Partnership Program, its emphasis on forging relationships between the project's community and their supporting U.S. Partners through cross-cultural exchanges. The host community profits not only from the completion of their project, but also through the attainment of a deeper understanding of an American community. In Christine's case, she found herself the facilitator of exchanges which included letters, artwork, and photographs from the Nyekonakpoe community to the project's Partners in the United States. Christine's project was supported by Partners which included Christine's former

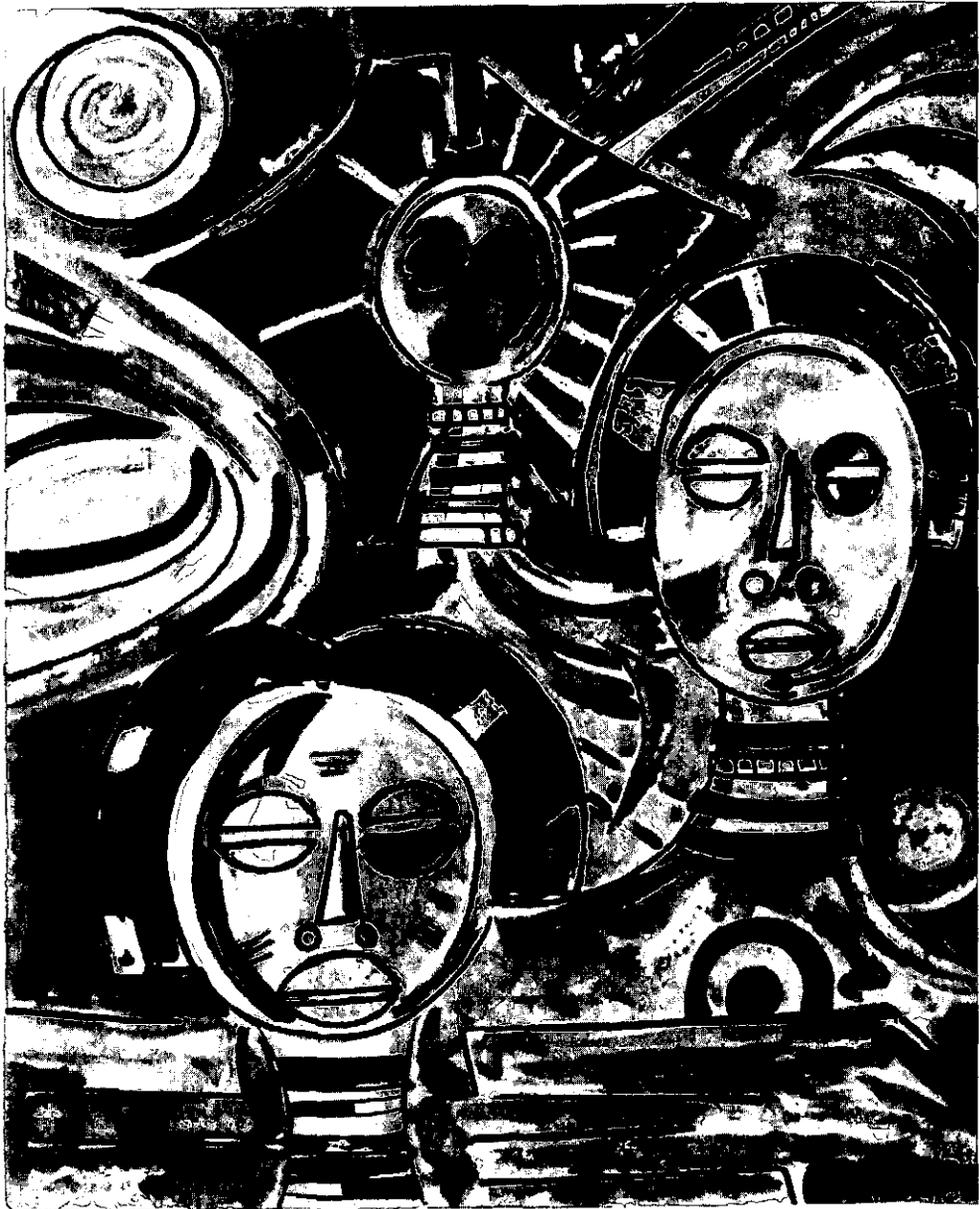


*Judy Harrington, Associate Director/Volunteer Support (RPCV/Venezuela) with Dr. Donald Offermann, Superintendent of the Oak Park/River Forest High School District.*

employer, the North Carolina RPCV organization, and the Oak Park Council on International Affairs. The Oak Park Council on International Affairs enjoyed their participation in the Nyekonakpoe District Reading Center Project so much that they invited Christine, upon her close of service, to appear as special speaker at their 30th Annual Benefit Dinner for the Peace Corps Partnership Program. For the past 30 years, the Oak Park Council, a community service organization which coordinates the activities of many organizations, schools, and individuals in the Oak Park area, has assisted over 160 community-based education projects through the Partnership Program. Every fall, the organization holds a fund-raising dinner in Oak Park, Illinois, complete with ethnic food, speakers, and entertainment, to benefit future projects.

On November 17th, Christine addressed and presented a slide show at the Oak Park Council's annual event as a capstone to their involvement in the Nyekonakpoe District Reading Center Project. Christine's presentation of her experience, working with the people of Nyekonakpoe through the Partnership Program and serving in Togo as a Peace Corps Volunteer, brought a fresh perspective of development to the 250 people in attendance, fulfilling her commitment to Peace Corp's Third Goal.

The Partnership Program enabled Christine to help a group of highly motivated people within her host-country gain access to a whole new world through an improvement of their local reading center and the development of a deeper



*Cross-cultural exchange art from a local Nyekonakpoe reader.*

understanding of Americans. It also helped communities in the United States actively participate in the development process, while at the same time, fostering a relationship with the people of a developing community. Christine takes pride in having been a part of this process, for the benefits of the project will continue long after Christine's close of service. "After all," Christine proudly

stated, "the project did not come from me. It will last decades."

If you and your host community are interested in learning more about the Partnership Program and/or how to prepare a Partnership project proposal, talk with your Peace Corps Country Staff or write to the Peace Corps Partnership Program at: 1990 K Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20526.

# TAPESTRY

Support, Information, Sharing

## New Publications

If you check with your In-Country Resource Center, you'll find a list of publications ICE has acquired in the last few months. Since that list was published, ICE has added a few more titles. These are some of them:

Those of you impressed with *The Poor Die Young* (HE243), which ICE purchased and publicized several months ago, will be pleased to know we now have two other books in this Earthscan series on urban conditions in developing countries: *Environmental Problems in Third World Cities* (FC189) and *Squatter Citizen: Life in the Urban Third World* (UD0 10).

For Small Business Volunteers, ICE has recently reprinted *Your Marketing Plan* (SB158), a workbook on market planning and promotion originally produced by the Oregon Small Business Development Network and similar in format to its *Workbook for Small Businesses in Oregon* (SB118), which ICE distributed in the past and will be distributing once again in a revised form, along with the Spanish translation, *Su Plan de Negocio* (SB126). ICE also will be reprinting a fourth volume in this series: *Your International Business Plan*.

Small Business Volunteers, especially those living in the Pacific region, also should keep their eyes out for

*Women and Money in the Pacific: Income Generating Projects for Women* (WD103), available in their IRCs, which is based on women's experiences in the South Pacific and offers a simple guide for developing money-making projects anyplace.

Volunteers working on women's issues generally will welcome *Women in Development: A Resource Guide for Organization and Action* (WD092). This update to the 1981 ISIS Catalogue and Resource Guide focuses on women's concerns and the organizations that deal with them in such fields as health, rural development, education and communication. Volunteers concentrating on health may want to review *Developing Health and Family Planning Print Materials for Low-Literate Audiences* (HE256) to get some useful tips in planning their extension activities.

Finally, we should note one more addition to the TEFL collection: *Teaching English Overseas* (ED176), written by Sandra Lee McKay and published by Oxford University Press. Presenting case studies of five different countries in Asia and Africa, this thoughtful book examines how English-language teaching varies depending on social, political, economic and cultural conditions, as well as educational and institutional structures.

TAPESTRY is produced by the Office of Training and Program Support (OTAPS) for Peace Corps Volunteers and staff. OTAPS provides technical support to Peace Corps programs throughout the world through a wide range of quality programming, training and technical information services. Compiled and edited by Information Collection and Exchange (ICE), a division of OTAPS, TAPESTRY is designed to present some item of interest for every PCV working in any country or project.

ICE Director..... David Wolfe  
TAPESTRY Editor..... Judy Benjamin

# Working at Peace

by Roz Wollmering, Former Volunteer/Gabon

***"It isn't enough to talk about peace, one must believe in it.  
And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it."***

***– Eleanor Roosevelt***

## A PCV Teacher's Perspective

I entered the school doors brimming with ideas, innovative teaching methods, and the desire to have an effect. Today was the first day of school in Guinea-Bissau, the tiny West African country where I had been assigned as an English Teacher with the Peace Corps. After completing an exhausting and demanding twelve weeks of training in language, cross-cultural, and teaching skills, I felt more than adequately prepared for the demanding challenge of teaching in an under-resourced school system designed on a colonial model.

Even as I entered the pink pastel building, I noticed a strange absence of noise for the first day of school. A few isolated students wearing white school jackets rambled about in the dimly lit hallway. As I climbed the stairway up to the administrative office, I heard a distant mango drop to the ground with a thud and a chorus of children's voices break out in glee. Hoping to catch a glimpse of the fastest one carrying off the ripe prize in pursuit by the others, I looked out into the school yard and saw instead piles of old desk fragments, broken bricks, and tree branches. They must be cleaning the school grounds, I thought to myself. When I entered the office, the principal and his assistant were looking at a

class schedule posted on the wall and discussing the large number of teachers still needed to be hired by the Ministry. After greeting me warmly by inquiring about my health, my family back in America, and my life in general, they informed me that my teaching load had been increased by eight hours since the previous week. "No problem," I joyfully responded: "I love to teach."

Undaunted, I glanced at my watch, excused myself, and hurried to my first class. The classrooms where I taught were located a short walking distance behind the main building. Three lines of classrooms were arranged in rows much like military barracks. Since today was the first day of classes, I hopped on my bicycle and coasted right up to the door of classroom number 19—my classroom. "Always wiser to be punctual and prepared than be tardy and unequipped," I told myself. Two students were sitting inside the classroom playing cards when I entered. I looked at the official enrollment number of 47 and asked earnestly, "Where are the other 45 students?" The card players faltered a bit and then mumbled, "They'll come, by and by." "Well, let's begin without them," I suggested with a disapproving stare at the cards. They shrugged their shoulders and offered instead to go and find the students. It certainly didn't seem reasonable to me to teach two students and then have to teach the same material

### Tapestry Editor's Note:

Currently a Placement Officer in Peace Corps' Volunteer Recruitment and Selection Office in Washington, DC, Roz Wollmering spent two years as a TEFL Volunteer in Guinea-Bissau. She wrote the two-part article that appears here to illustrate her own progress as a PCV and a teacher. The pessimistic outlook embodied so vividly in *A PCV Teacher's Perspective* reflects her first three months teaching in a Guinean secondary school. In her second year, she was instrumental in getting local teachers temporarily relieved of their classroom assignments and replaced by PCVs so the teachers could attend her classes at the national teachers' training college to which she had been reassigned. By then, she had gotten over her initial culture shock, become acclimated to life in Guinea-Bissau, had learned to accept what she couldn't change, and understood where her students were coming from, to portray so sensitively, as she does here, their perspective as well.

again when the others showed up later. Be flexible, I reminded myself, and so I agreed.

One week later, there were 26 students outside my classroom still waiting for the rest of their classmates to appear, by and by. They refused to enter until all the enrolled students had showed up. I noticed that not only students were absent, but teachers as well. Meanwhile, the principal and his assistant were still discussing the schedule on the wall, moving multi-colored pins, and deliberating how best to resolve the shortage of teachers. That morning I had stopped by the Administrative Office again just to make sure that I had understood correctly the radio announcement made by the Minister of Education the previous evening. I thought he had announced that classes were in session and was quite relieved when the principal verified my assessment.

He assured me that I had understood the Minister's announcement to the word and then asked me to teach an additional two hours a week. Lacking an experienced rebuttal to his statement "When there's a lack of teachers, we all need to pitch in a few extra hours," I nodded my head in consent. Considering that I wasn't actually teaching any students at the time, two extra hours didn't seem to be much of a burden, and I left, feeling only the slightest premonition that I might regret it later. I'm a hard worker, I reminded myself in a self-congratulatory manner.

By the end of week three, I had managed to convince, cajole, and beg my students to enter the classroom. What other teachers did was their decision, I figured, but as for me, I was itching to do something other than wait on shore like a seafarer's wife. Once the students had entered, I discovered to my amazement that I couldn't get them to quiet down. Heedless to my requests to pay attention, they continued to socialize. Daisy painted her nails and chatted with Aminata about the new discotheque called

"Temptation" which had just opened across from the Mosque. Bebe took Nanda's notebook and wouldn't return it. Fatu gave me the peace sign and went outside to urinate. A few others followed. Students wandered in late with irrelevant excuses like "It's hot" or "I'm tired." Nelson and Marcelino held competitive jive talks while their classmates gathered around encouraging first one and then the other. Other students, whose teachers were absent, hung around the open windows, throwing in crumbled up bits of paper to

their friends. Others simply came to stare at me, a white woman who rode a bicycle to school. They shoved up against the outside wall, clambered over each other's backs, and stuck their heads in for a peek yelling, "White woman, white woman, there she is!" The next day, still more "window students" ap-



*PCVs Roz Wollmering & Maija Talso with the students of the Tchico Té Teacher Training Institute who are helping in the design of "What's Up?"*

peared to torment me. Such behavior continued daily and eventually, I began to yell at them—"Get away from the windows!"—and resorted to physically pushing them out of viewing range. After one month at my new post, I reigned over thirty hours a week of complete disorder in a pseudo-classroom kingdom. This is madness, I thought. How can anyone teach in this environment? Why didn't they shut up?

For the next month, I devoted the first 20 minutes of class solely to establishing order and quiet. I was determined. I did this with gentle coaxes at first, but gradually evolved to using threats ("I'll call the school disciplinarian") or offering sweet enticement ("If you're good, I'll let you out early"). Late students were not allowed to enter, regardless of their excuses. It seemed the only way to control the chaos. Once I had my students' attention, I made them copy page after page of notes from the blackboard into their notebooks. I planned to inundate their minds with grammar rules and vocabulary lists so they wouldn't have time to talk. Other times, I made

them repeat sentences in unison as if they were Berlitz parrots. Audio-lingual theorists proposed that language is acquired through repetition of recurring patterns, as effectively demonstrated when I overheard my students mimicking me: "Be quiet! Go sit down!"

When the drudgery of memorization and repetition bored even me to death, I resorted to playing Bingo, Simon Says, or Do the Hokey-Pokey. I went to elaborate means to make nifty prizes for positive reinforcement and spent numerous hours designing creative, educational posters to hang on the walls. For a time, I concentrated on visual stimulation and drama to reinforce right-brain learning, but the posters disappeared overnight and the drama idea erupted one day during a production of a local folk tale. Other teachers disapproved of thrashing crocodiles, bellowing hippos, and trumpeting elephants during school hours. The students whined as eight-year-olds and threw verbal tantrums when they could no longer perform or play gregarious games. I rather enjoyed their drama productions myself, and I figured they were reviewing English grammar and vocabulary by playing the games, but deep inside arose a persistent, nagging voice: "Surely, you can do more than baby-sit."

Gradually, as my disciplinary measures evolved to resemble boot camp philosophy, my classes began to develop a catatonic personality. Somber students stared back at me or out into space. Apathy replaced the boisterous noise I had become accustomed to combating. They refused to open their notebooks until I had repeated the request three times. Orders and instructions mollified them, sure enough, but now they didn't seem to have opinions, concerns, nor even interests. Some simply put their heads down and slept. Sit and listen, they did, but *participate and discuss and collaborate, they didn't*. I wrote in letters to my friends back home that paper plates had more personality than these kids did. Their passive resistance soon infuriated me, and I yelled in frustration at them, "I am here to help you. Don't you understand that?" They stared at me in dazed disbelief. "What do you want?" I implored them with open hands: "Do you want me to entertain you? To treat you like military recruits? To punish you?" They shrugged their shoulders and sighed, "Teacher, we are pitiful. That's life." "Go," I told them. "Go home. Get out." They refused, of course.

Against my usually discerning judgment, I finally called in the school disciplinarian. The moment he arrived, every single student in the classroom jumped up on their tip-toes to attention. They greeted him in perfect unison with a resounding "Good morning, Mr. Disciplinarian." When he ordered them to sit down, an immaculate silence spread throughout the classroom

like a divine fog. I was astounded. They looked so serene and innocent as they waited attentively for his words. Their pristine, woeful eyes and composure made them appear as mere harmless babes, and I began to imagine that they would convince him of their purity and that I was the evil abuser. I began to wonder, in fact, if this wasn't perhaps partially true.

The disciplinarian picked out several students who were not wearing their school jackets. In addition, he selected students who were wearing jackets, but had not buttoned the top button. He accused and convicted them of intent to belittle their American teacher and expelled them for two weeks, dismissing them with a disparaging comment. He then read a list of seven students' names. Since these students had registered for classes but had not yet paid their school fees, he expelled them for the year, adding yet another insult as they crept out of the classroom. He then turned to me and said, "If any one of these students ever gives you a problem, even the smallest problem, you tell me and I will expel the entire class for the entire year. Not one of them will pass, and they will all have to repeat the year next year." As I struggled to come up with an appropriate response to his comment, he turned back to the students, held up one finger, and challenged them, "Just one of you try it. Just one, and I'll whip your ass." He left, but not before making an attempt to reassure me with a vindictive smile. *I stood in horrified shock and embarrassment.* I had just lost 13 students. The students said nothing. They stared at me and waited to see what I would do next. I felt angry and stupid and offered a feeble apology. I fumed all the way home.

That night I dreaded ever going back into the classroom again. I contemplated terminating my Peace Corps service and going home. I was sure I could find a justifiable excuse to allow me a graceful exit. What had I accomplished? I asked myself. It was now the third month of teaching and quarterly grades were due in ten days. All I had managed to teach were two review units. Two review units! My god, I realized looking at their grades. Most of these students couldn't even meet the standards of the previous year's curriculum! How did they manage to pass? I was tempted to flunk them all myself this time around, but what would that accomplish? I looked in dismay at the stack of 25 lesson plans I had diligently prepared during the late night hours the past two months and realized that I would never implement them.

So, I switched strategies. That night I drew up a "No More" list. No more colorful visual aids to catch their attention. No more fancy vocabulary and grammar handouts for them to grab eagerly. No more games and no more

prizes. No more school disciplinarian to resolve the ongoing state of classroom crisis, either.

My next unit began with the following dialogue.

Teacher: I am angry. I cannot teach because you do not respect me.

Students: No, no, Teacher. Please, Teacher, please.

Teacher: I don't want to teach you. I'm leaving.

Students: No, Teacher, no. Please, Teacher. You see, you don't understand our situation.

Teacher: Well, tell me, just what is your "situation"?

This time the dialogue was theirs to complete and resolve.

### Her Students' Perspective

It was Tino and Mando who came and told us that a skinny, sickly white woman had jumped off a bicycle, ran into our classroom, and tried to teach them English that morning. Tino and Mando weren't even in our class: They were just sitting there waiting to use the soccer field when she rushed in like the rains. They weren't sure what to say because she looked so strange. Her hair was all falling down, and she wore a dress that looked like an old faded bed covering that one might have bought from a Mauritanian vendor in the used clothing market. We all walked over to Nito's house and found a few more of our classmates sitting out back drinking frothy tea. We decided, even though school hadn't really started yet, that we'd go the next day to see what this new American teacher looked like. Tino and Mando assured us that she was as ugly as a newly hatched, greedy-eyed vulture.

We knew that practically no one would be at school yet. Most students were still on the farms finishing the harvest, and others were still trying to register and pay their fees. The Ministry had changed the admission rules again. All registrations completed at the end of last year were now declared invalid, and so we had to wait in line, get new photographs, show our papers, and pay fees all over again — either that, or pay some official to put our names on the list, which actually was much easier than completing the registration process. We listened to the radio broadcasts by the Minister at night reminding parents to register their children for school and smiled. Everybody knew he sent his children for good reasons to the private, elite Portuguese school. Teachers at the public schools never showed up until the third week. Didn't she know that?

As it turned out, we agreed to enter the classroom just when everyone else did. We always say: *Cross the river in a crowd and the crocodile won't eat you.* From that first day, she

never demanded our respect. She didn't seem to care if we wore our school jackets or not. She didn't write the teaching summary on the board like our other teachers did, and she was always in the classroom before the bell rang. That meant we could never stand up and honor her entrance. She should have known not to enter until after the bell rang. And she never took roll call first, as she should have, and so we continued chatting and doing our homework. Of course, by this time, other students had heard about our white woman teacher and were coming by to look at her and watch our class. We couldn't resist joining in the fun. At times, we believed she was serious when she told the students outside class to leave. But where were they supposed to go? The area in front of her classroom was the designated student recreation area. Instead of ignoring them and us, she berated them with gestures and scolded us in Portuguese. Her Portuguese wasn't bad, but it sounded so amusing when she said "spoiled brats," you just had to laugh. We laughed even harder every time she said "Peace Corps" because in our Kriolu language, "Peace Corps" sounds like "body of fish." We called her the "fish-body teacher," after that.

Classes were interesting because they were so confusing. She kept switching her methods, and we were never sure what to expect next. For a while she insisted that the mind equips itself and a teacher must not interfere in the process. She called it "The Silent Way." After "The Silent Way" came "Total Physical Response." We gave actions to everything and pretended to be desks, pencils, and other classroom articles. We contorted our bodies into their defining characteristics and played "What am I?" Then we role-played imaginary dialogues between, for example, two books fighting to get into a book bag at the same time. One day she taught us the song "In the Jungle." We loved that song and still sing it after school when we walk home. No, you couldn't really call her a consistent person, but we all have our little ways. *Even so, a cracked calabash can still be mended.* Obviously, she cared about us because she worked so hard to prepare for class. Most of our teachers were so busy at home or working a second or third job, they often missed class, and when they did show up, they never prepared anything. It's true that we've already learned more English this quarter than we learned all last year.

We always wanted to do more activities and play new games, but she seemed to think we needed to write. Because we didn't have books, she kept demanding that we copy information down on paper. But Guineans are oral people. We learn by talking; we make discoveries by sharing our experiences; and we help others by listening and contributing to conversations. Our history is a collective memory, and we are continually passing our knowledge on to others in our speech. She wanted us to raise our hands, one by one, and then talk individually.

That to us seemed artificial and disruptive to the storytelling flow of human conversation. Only wolves howl individually.

She confused us even more by saying pointless things with vigor — “Wake up! Discover yourselves!” — or asking questions that had obvious answers: “Why are you here?” or “What are you going to do?” Then she’d wait with such an intent expression on her face that we’d say almost anything to try to please her. We always enjoyed her facial expressions because they foretold what was soon to follow in speech—anger, joy, disappointment, praise, or contentment. She really should have learned by then how to hide and disclose her reactions in order to suit her goals more effectively, but she didn’t seem to care. In some ways, she was just like a child.

We just didn’t understand why it was our thinking that needed to change, and never hers. She wore a “bad eye” charm around her neck, so we thought she believed in superstition, but when we asked her, she said she wore it not because she believed in superstition but to show respect and affirmation for our culture. We asked her if that was why foreigners always wanted to buy our ritual masks and initiation staffs, but she didn’t respond. She told us we didn’t need World Bank handouts and International Monetary Fund debts. What we needed, she said, was to learn how to grow fish. Was she crazy? We need computers, not fish! Balanta women always know where to find fish. “Teacher,” we told her, “You will come and go, but we stay here.” How could she understand our culture? She had only seen the rains fall once.

After a while, the novelty wore off, and we got tired of even a white woman’s ways. It’s hard—waking up at daybreak, doing morning chores, and then going to school for five hours without eating breakfast. Her class was during the last hour and we were as hungry as feral street cats by that time. Some of us lived far from school and if our step-uncle or older cousin-brother told us to go to the

market before school, we had no choice. We were forced to run to her class with only a belly full of worms because we knew she wouldn’t listen to our misfortunes even if we arrived two minutes late. It’s true! In America, time is money, but here we don’t respect time. Time is just now, nothing more.

It wasn’t only that we had responsibilities at home which came before school—sometimes we were sick. If we had malaria, we’d put our heads down and sleep. And if we had “runny belly,” we’d just run out of class when the cramping started. The dry season was so hot we faded away like morning song birds. One day she yelled at us. We admit, we weren’t cooperating, but people are like that. We forgive each other and just go on. “That’s life,” we’d tell her. A log as long as it stays in

the water will never become a crocodile. Many things we just accepted as natural and impervious to change, but she considered such an attitude “fatalistic.”

Finally, she called the school disciplinarian on us. She should have done that much earlier in our opinion. We played our roles and allowed him to throw out a few students, because we all knew they’d be back as soon as he got some cashew wine money from them. Anyway, that’s the right of elders in our culture, and we’re taught in the bush school to abide by the established hierarchical roles. We didn’t understand why she apologized after he left, and we couldn’t believe it when she undermined his authority by apologizing for his “poisonous pedagogy,” as she called it. Like a Guinean woman, she certainly had courage.

Today she did something different again. She came in and wrote a dialogue on the board. She asked questions about the dialogue that made us disagree. We had a lively discussion in English and then got into our groups and began designing some resolutions for the problem presented in the dialogue. We always say: *When the ants unite their mouths, they can carry an elephant.*

We know she’ll stay, too. We saw it in her eyes.



*The Kwame N’Krumah Secondary School students.*

# Environmental Education Goes to Africa

by Greg Wooley, U.S. Forest Service

As an environmental educator, my first impulse upon arriving at Malalotja Nature Reserve was to scout out the site for teaching biology field studies. Before the trainees arrived, I walked up the dusty road that wound above the education center looking for opportunities to conduct wildlife and plant investigations. As I wandered into a grove of eucalyptus trees, I noticed the treetops begin to sway gently, as if a mild breeze had entered the canopy. Suddenly the swaying grew more dramatic, pandemonium broke loose, a barrage of screeches and chirps ensued, and acrobatic monkeys began jumping from tree to tree in mass exodus from this invasive human. A quick scan of my field guide revealed that these tawny gray primates with black and white faces were vervet monkeys. They were the first monkeys I had ever seen outside of a zoo, and I soberly realized that I had arrived in Africa.

The stone lodges and Environmental Education Centre of Malalotja are nestled in the rolling dry grassland of the high veldt region of Swaziland. Barely the size of New Jersey and surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique, Swaziland boasts six nature reserves and game parks. The massive extermination of wildlife by European settlers in the 1800s necessitated the creation of these gated, patrolled, electric-fenced reserves.

I was in Swaziland to conduct an environmental education In-Service Training session for Volunteer math

and science teachers, at the invitation of Peace Corps/Swaziland. Earlier in the year, I had been 1 of 25 Forest Service employees at the National Park Service Training Center in the Grand Canyon, attending a training session led by the Peace Corps Office of Training and Program Support (OTAPS) and the Forest Service International Forestry Program to learn the Peace Corps Programming and Training System and the agency's methods of facilitating its In-Service Training sessions.

My group of trainees consisted of 16 Peace Corps teachers and eight Swazi curriculum specialists and science teachers. All were hungry for curriculum material, teaching tips, and anything else they could get to aid them in their teaching assignment. Over four days, my students and I addressed local environmental issues, with games, simulations and field investigations; discovered learning and teaching styles; and took a ranger-led interpretive field trip to learn how to use the reserve as a tool for teaching science.

Conducting a training session, however, was only a part of what I experienced in journeying to Swaziland. I enjoyed meeting the Swazi people, whom I found to be warm and friendly, and was awed by their colorful dress and unique mix of Western and native tradition.

I ventured into Mozambique and South Africa on public transportation, and saw another side of Africa. From the back of a pickup truck, I entered war-torn

*Editor's Note: For more than a dozen years Peace Corps has had formal agreements with several federal agencies — the U.S. Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Parks Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — to strengthen its environmental education program. These agreements have made it possible for Peace Corps to have a battery of specialists to do In-Service Training of Volunteers and counterparts engaged in environmental work. In some instances, besides providing specialists, these agencies have also funded Peace Corps activities. Environmental Education Volunteers in Poland, for example, were housed through funds made available by EPA. An even more substantial contribution came from the U.S. Forest Service, which through its Tropical Forestry Program, financed or helped finance 60 percent of the training activities for environmental projects in 1993.*

*In this article by Greg Wooley, a U.S. Forest Service Environmental Education Specialist, we get a chance to see how an outsider working with Peace Corps views the experience. As an adventurous traveler, he is enthusiastic about this first, brief encounter with Africa and Peace Corps — an interesting contrast to the culture clash Roz Wollmering illustrates in her article portraying the reactions of a PCV teacher and the students she confronts every day.*



*PCVs and Swazi teachers learn from games. Animal Population Biology comes alive; the Project Wild Game "Oh, deer" becomes "Oh, Zebra" in Swaziland.*

Mozambique along a road strewn with the burned-out, twisted-metal corpses of vehicles that had been blown up during 15 years of bombing. A ferry trip to the coastal island of Inaka, with its white sand beaches, coral depths and transparent water, revealed a tropical paradise in stark contrast to the deteriorated mainland. Then, a journey to South Africa brought me face-to-face with the effects of apartheid. Passing by posh Johannesburg neighborhoods, walled and gated, I saw white South Africans living in homes and gardens tended by black South Africans, who had to commute by bus from townships many miles away. Yet throughout Southern Africa, I also was inspired by seeing the smiling faces of black African children, playing with their only toys, made from scrap metal found along the roadsides.

It was a short stay, but the contrasts, the beauty, the laid-back pace of African life made the experience so unforgettable that I can't wait to return to Africa.

## Presenting IRC Network News

Have you been to your In-Country Resource Center lately? Stop in and see the latest addition from ICE, an electronic newsletter — *IRC Network News*.

ICE is sending the newsletter on a disk to all IRC Managers. The disk includes information about the Internet, the latest publications from ICE, briefs of field-generated materials in the ICE Resource Center, bookmarks from Namibia and The Gambia, tips for organizing and marketing the IRC, and two issues of the electronic monthly, *DevelopNet News*, put out by Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA).

The newsletter is geared to IRC Managers, but Volunteers may find much of the information useful. The newsletter is on Macintosh Microsoft Word. Any section of the disk can be printed.

ICE also is asking for contributions to its newsletter logo contest, so if any of you have an eye for design, start sharpening your pencils now — and be creative!

Ask your IRC Manager for details. The deadline is June 30th.

# Numbers

Year Peace Corps was established **1961** - Number of people who have served as Volunteers since 1961 **140,000** - Number of Volunteers currently serving **6,529** - Number of languages and dialects spoken by Volunteers **200** plus - Average age of today's Volunteer **31** - Number of Volunteers age 50 and over **579** - Age of oldest Volunteer currently serving **81** - Ethnic minorities three years ago **7%** - Ethnic minorities serving today **12%** - Female Volunteers in the 60s **33%** - Female Volunteers today **53%** - Female Volunteers currently serving **3,365** - Male Volunteers currently serving **3,164** - Married couples currently serving **242** - Inquiries about Peace Corps in 1993 **137,000** - Number of people who filled out applications in 1993 **13,628** - Number of people who accepted invitations **3,580** - Volunteers serving in Africa region **2,451** - Volunteers serving in InterAmerica region **1,852** - Volunteers serving in Asia/Pacific region **1,007** - Volunteers serving in Eurasia and the Middle East region **1,219** - Current members of Congress who served as Volunteers **6** - Volunteers working in Education **35%** - Volunteers working in Environment and forestry **13%** - Volunteers working in Health **17%** - Volunteers working in Education **40.5%** - Volunteers working in Business **9%** - Volunteers working in Urban Planning **3%**

