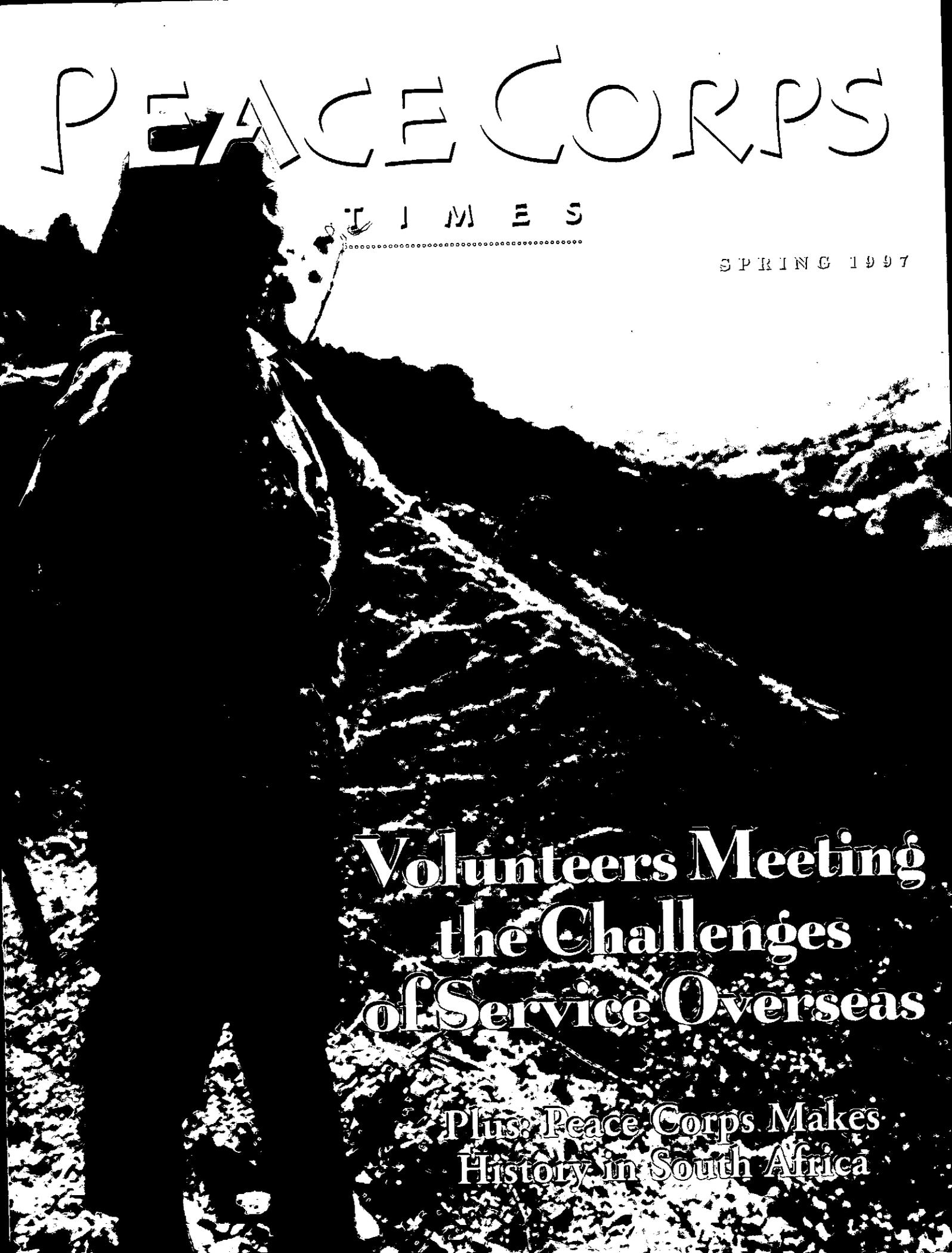


PEACE CORPS



T I M E S

SPRING 1997

Volunteers Meeting the Challenges of Service Overseas

Plus: Peace Corps Makes
History in South Africa

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Looking to the Future



Director Gearan visits PCV Stephanie Piepmeier at a child development center in Darió, Nicaragua.

A few weeks ago, I was able to do what I enjoy most about the job of Director of the Peace Corps: to get out of Washington and see Volunteers. I recently spent eight days in Central America, traveling by car through Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Over the course of my trip I visited with nearly 200 Volunteers and Trainees, many of them at their sites. I saw first hand some of the excellent work they are doing and the extraordinary

difference they are making in the lives of so many people in Central America. I also got to listen to, and learn from, their views about service as Volunteers. I returned to Washington inspired by those Volunteers and the spirit of commitment that they bring to their jobs.

Most importantly, my trip confirmed for me what all of us back here already know: that Volunteers serving in the field represent the future of the Peace Corps. As we prepare the Peace Corps for the challenges that lie ahead, I would like to expand on what I learned from the Volunteers in Central America. If you haven't already, you will soon receive a Volunteer survey that asks for your views and perspectives on a variety of issues, including what you think is the single most important issue that will confront the Peace Corps in the next century. Your thoughts are important to me, so I hope you'll take the time to respond to this survey.

Since I became Director in August 1995, I have valued the chance to travel to many countries and visit with some of you, and I hope to see more of you throughout the year ahead. We have an exciting future because of what each of you does every day in the field. As always, I welcome your letters, and I thank you for your service.

Mark Gearan

PEACE CORPS TIMES

PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR

Mark Gearan

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Andre Oliver

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Patricia Cunningham

PUBLICATIONS MANAGER

Annmarie Emmet

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Chapman

Amy Coffaa

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Wendy Henderson

PRINTING

Rose Green

The *Peace Corps Times* is a publication of the Peace Corps. Views expressed in the PEACE CORPS TIMES are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Peace Corps. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Government.

The *Peace Corps Times* welcomes Volunteer submissions to *Notes From Around the World*, *Fieldbook*, and *Letters*. Accounts of Volunteer experiences, adventures, or general perceptions of life overseas will also be considered. Submissions cannot be returned. We reserve the right to edit for style, clarity, and length. Black and white and color photos are acceptable. We regret, however, that we cannot return them. Please identify all photos clearly. Peace Corps reserves the right to use any writing, photos, and artwork in other publications.

Inquiries and letters should be sent to: *Peace Corps Times*, 1990 K Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20526, or pcunningham@peacecorps.gov or pctimes@peacecorps.gov

PEACE CORPS

T I M E S



PAGE 18



PAGE 28



PAGE 15



PAGE 30

A publication for Peace Corps Volunteers serving worldwide

NUMBER ONE 1997

Departments

From the Director 2

Letters to the Editor 4

Notes From Around the World ... 6

An educational face-lift in Eritrea; mangrove mania in Fiji; casting ballots in Kazakstan; Costa Rican cuisine.

FieldBook 26

An eco-friendly way to zap your bugs; a recipe for dehydrating your fruits and veggies; advice for travelers; and how to get a hold of those materials you need.

In Memoriam 30

The Peace Corps' most ardent supporter and dynamic director, Loret Miller Ruppe, will not be soon forgotten.

Program Updates 32

The Crisis Corps: RPCVs respond to humanitarian crises and natural disasters.

Life After Peace Corps 34

Staying in the Field: PCVs continue to work overseas as United Nations Volunteers.

Remembrance 35

PCVs Nancy Coutu, Annika Rodriguez, and Kyrstin Sharninghausen.

Plus, Your Contributions!

Respect, Life with a Wild Old Woman, When Simbu Comes, The Concert.

Features

Toughing It Out 10

BY ANNMARIE EMMET—*No one ever said it was going to be easy. Peace Corps service: how the greatest adventure of your life is also the most challenging.*

Finding Family Away from Home 14

BY ELLEN SHAW—*Peace Corps host-country families provide much more than room and board. Volunteers share stories of support and friendship.*

The Marriage Twist 18

BY ALLISON LEE—*Loving, honoring, and setting up house in the rainforest. Marriage definitely puts a twist on the traditional idea of being a Peace Corps Volunteer.*

It's the Real Thing 22

BY PATRICIA CUNNINGHAM—*Is your only source of transportation an underfed donkey? Are you brushing your teeth by candlelight? Volunteers testify to having the "Real" Peace Corps Experience.*

Letters

Where Wisdom Counts

YOUR ARTICLE, "IT'S A SIXTIES Thing," (Number Two, 1995) clearly expresses my feelings and the experience of my age group, the senior citizens. We are considered unemployable in our own country, and in the other world that we learn to love, we are welcomed with open arms.

Janet Klepper
RPCV, Guatemala

Second Chances

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR PRINTING the story, "Missing Nid," (Number One, 1996) and the photo of the endearing Thai children. My fellow PCVs from Thailand were thrilled to see an article from Thailand, and I was ecstatic.

On the flip side of the page, there was a picture showing President Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, and Sargent Shriver. My ex-husband and I applied to the Peace Corps in the sixties and were accepted. However, we were teachers and, at the time, couldn't break our teaching contracts. Thirty years later I had a second chance when Massachusetts State Senator David Magnani, who is an RPCV, presented a bill that allows a teacher who goes into the Peace Corps to return to his or her other job!

I am so happy to have had this second chance and send my praises to the Peace Corps for taking such good care of PCVs and constantly updating programs the world over.

Anne Branon
Thailand

Gaffe Patrol

IMAGINE HOW PLEASED I WAS TO see the picture of my parade float on page eight of the *Peace Corps Times*, (Number One, 1996). And then imagine

how disappointed I was to be listed as a PCV in Jamaica! Monción is in the Dominican Republic.

Kate Wallace
Dominican Republic

Editor's Response: Sorry, our mistake. We regret the error.

A Far-Flung Wish

I AM A FORTUNATE/UNFORTUNATE Volunteer who had recently experienced the "suspension" of a Peace Corps country program. Fortunately, I get the



San Jose de Isnos revisited:
Tom Tafel at his old site.

opportunity to experience two very different countries. I served on a small tropical island that I otherwise would never have known about called São Tomé e Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea. I met a dynamic, wonderful group of people (Peace Corps Volunteers and host-country nationals) that I also would not have known. Unfortunately, we were forced to say painful, premature "good-byes" to each other.

Now our small "PCV family" is spread throughout the globe, continuing service, traveling, teaching, or working. To all other former São Tomé e

Príncipe PCVs, I wish you strength, courage, endurance, and love.

Susan Hanson
Namibia

Small Victories

AT TIMES WE THINK WE CAN change the world, and many PCVs try to do just that. I, too, had a grandiose vision of re-foresting the bleak, wind-swept plateau on which I live in north-central Ethiopia. I began in earnest to gather all the necessary documents and to contact all the right people. The idea was to open a small nursery in order to demonstrate tree-farming and small-scale distribution. Our plateau had

been completely deforested some years ago, causing problems with soil erosion, poor crop production, and rapid water run-off. I was sure that I was the one to help our land recover and become the highest crop-yielding part of Ethiopia ever! It would be an amazing success story. My director would praise me. Barbara Walters would come to Ethiopia and do a story on me. Our community would be saved from a disastrous drought, and everyone would be happy and instantly wealthy. Or maybe not.

It certainly began well enough. My colleagues were enthusiastic. The agricultural department was backing us. The budget was being prepared. I felt as if the Ethiopians were in control and not me, which is what I wanted. Then reality reared its ugly head. Appointments were not kept. Wrong numbers were given. The three people I talked to about land grant permission all told me to talk to "the other office." My closest colleague moved away. Needless to say, the project was not working.

I have learned that things do not always turn out as planned. It's best to start small, and although people advised me to do so, I didn't listen.

All was not lost, however. The nursery in the largest town near ours, with whom I was working, donated 12 lonely seedlings to our school. My English Club students and I had a lovely tree-planting ceremony to celebrate "environmental week." I planted the excess trees in my family's yard where they are cared for by my neighbors. Large scale disaster can turn into small scale success.

Marc Neilson
Ethiopia

All the Way from Tulsa

I AM A PCV IN GAMBIA, A country roughly the size of Delaware, where we have around 65 Volunteers. Recently, I was reminded of the phrase, "It's a small world after all," when I was laid up on a cot in the Peace Corps medical unit reading the *Peace Corps Times* magazine article, "Path to Empowerment" (Number One, 1996). The writer, Melissa Johns, is a member of my church family in Tulsa, Okla., as well as part of my Peace Corps family!

When I saw her name under the title, I was immediately interested because of our home connection. When I read the ideas on Women in Development (WID) projects, I realized how similar the challenges are to women around the world and to PCVs as facilitators.

Thanks *Peace Corps Times* for making the world seem a little smaller. And, Millie, if you are reading, *I Nid Barra* (good work)!

Carrie Koewing
The Gambia

Going Back After Many Years

AFTER 30 YEARS, I RETURNED TO my site, San Jose de Isnos, Columbia. Disappointment was my initial emo-

tion. This was not the same place I remembered so fondly. I didn't feel a part of it any longer. They had survived without any help from me or any other Volunteers. Nothing that we felt we accomplished and built was visible.

Gradually recovering from my bout of self-pity, I began to look at things more objectively. Perhaps the children from our schools grew up with a better education, prospered and built newer and better schools for their children. Perhaps the community groups started with the help of Volunteers who had taught them to organize themselves to seek assistance from local and state entities. Perhaps they remember their parents being kind to these strangers and feeding



The Actor's Studio: PCV Carol Wilkerson leads a drama camp in Nevis.

them at every visit and learned kindness and tolerance themselves.

Being there and giving support can provide a boost or impetus that will perhaps carry them forward to a better future through their own efforts long after Volunteers are gone. I'm glad San Jose de Isnos does not need us any more. Maybe we did our job.

Tom Tafel
RPCV, Colombia

Our Honorary Stringers

I'M WRITING IN HOPES OF RECEIVING an assignment from *Peace Corps Times*, a publication I devour like air-

mailed M&Ms! Albania, my host country, provides a plethora of story fodder. Not only is my "hometown," Pogradec, the site of the country's first and largest all-English library, but it is also features Lake Ohrid, the deepest lake north of the Balkans, which is also home to the unique "Koran" salmon trout.

Kathleen Stolle
Tirana, Albania

Editor's Response: No need to wait for an assignment from Peace Corps Times. We enthusiastically welcome Volunteer submissions. Write away!

Spreading Goodwill

MY WIFE AND I RECENTLY VISITED our son and his wife who are Peace Corps Volunteers on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. As RPCVs (Fiji, 1986-88), we were pleased to see how well they adapted to life in another culture and how warmly they have been accepted by the Solomon Islanders with whom they live and work.

When we stopped at villages where Peace Corps Volunteers had once been assigned, the villagers talked about the Volunteers themselves instead of how many water-sealed toilets, smokeless stoves, or waterlines were installed.

What this tells me about the Peace Corps experience is that its essence is the Volunteer interacting with the people and becoming part of their community. No doubt the objective of the Volunteer to transfer skills is achieved, but the great value of the Peace Corps is in its spreading of goodwill throughout the world.

Ralph Bellas
Normal, Illinois

.....
Editorial Policy: Letters and photos are always welcome, but for space reasons, we cannot 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.

NOTES

FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Peace Corps Makes History in South Africa

WHEN SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT Nelson Mandela visited the White House in October 1994 and asked “for America’s geniuses” to help his country make the transition from apartheid to freedom, President Bill Clinton promised “to send some of our best. The Peace Corps will establish a presence in South Africa.”

On February 14, 1997, the Peace Corps took the historic step of opening a program in the new South Africa. The first group of 32 Trainees touched ground in Johannesburg after a rousing send-off by Reverend Jesse



South Africa Trainee C.D. Glin gets a word of encouragement from Reverend Jesse Jackson before departing for Johannesburg.

Jackson and more than 500 people at Howard University in Washington, D.C. When they reached South Africa, the Trainees met with Vice President Al Gore and South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

“Today you assume this burden, this task, this obligation, this privilege to go across the water to connect nations, to connect peoples, and to make this a more peaceful and secure world,” Reverend Jackson told the Trainees on the eve of their departure.

Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan told the audience that “our celebration today is about the future—about how these extraordinary people, with their spirit of service, their idealism, and their dedication, will work with the people of South Africa to help them build a better future. Just as importantly, this celebration is about how South Africans will change and influence the future of these Trainees.”

The diverse group of 32—which includes four RPCVs—will put their skills to use as teacher trainers and community development workers in the Northern Province of South Africa, an area hit hard by the legacy of apartheid.

Other news...In April, the Peace Corps will open a new program in Jordan. Thirty Trainees will head to the Middle Eastern country where they will help rural Jordanian communities protect the environment and work with existing women’s cooperatives on local income-generating projects.

PHOTO IN THE GLOBE:

PCV GINGER WONDENBERG AND FRIENDS IN KATHMANDU, NEPAL

AN EDUCATIONAL FACE LIFT



DURING Eritrea's struggle for independence, the

junior and secondary school in Tsaeda Christian became dilapidated. There was also an overcrowding of classrooms, as well as a shortage of teachers and textbooks. Noticing that school spirit was in a swift decline, PCV Jennifer Vieley put her eighth

ERITREA

grade students to work to find a solution. "Of

the existing problems in our school, it was apparent that some overlapped to the extent that, with one step, several problems could be solved," says Jennifer. The solution: educational murals. "The murals increase the students' knowledge of science and geography and solve other problems at the same time, such as the boring walls, lack of school pride, and the idleness of school clubs." They give the school a much needed face-lift. "Painting the murals is fun and exciting for both teachers and students," says Jennifer. "They want to take pride in their school. Educational murals are the first step in learning the benefits of working together to improve the community."

The Healing Gardens

IN MALI, WHERE ONLY 15 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION HAS ACCESS TO CONVENTIONAL medical care, a lot of people depend on the home remedies of traditional healers. Using rare tree and plant species with therapeutic properties, healers concoct low-cost herbal remedies that are sold in pharmacies alongside conventional medicines. Unfortunately, the effects of a decreasing rainfall are making it difficult for healers to find the ingredients necessary for creating their remedies. Agriculture PCV Kris Hoffer is lending a "healing" hand by working with the Bandiagara healers on the cultivation of a collectively-managed herb garden—one that all the healers in the region can rely on for their medicinal ingredients. "The medicinal garden will benefit the poorest residents of Mali, because it will facilitate treatment of illnesses and injuries for those with no other health care alternatives," says Kris. Mali's Regional Department of Forest and Water Management contributed land, a pump, and a semi-operational irrigation system for the garden. "As a bonus the garden will benefit the environment by reducing the harvesting of wild species, and it will serve as a training site for sustainable harvesting techniques."

MALI

Water for Thailand's "Hill Tribes"

AFTER BEING RELOCATED TO THE EDGES OF THE NEWLY CREATED DOI LUANG NATIONAL Park, the women of the Akha Hill Tribe in Thailand spent most of their time walking to a nearby river to collect water for washing, cooking, drinking, and sanitizing. PCV Carol Spark recognized the community was in serious need. "Water is life," she says. "Imagine yourself walking in 95-degree heat down to a stream to wash your hands, your face." The Akha village is now working with Carol to install a water delivery system that will bring water from the river to their homes. "They started planning for a water delivery system long ago," says Carol. "But up until now, they lacked the financial means." Carol

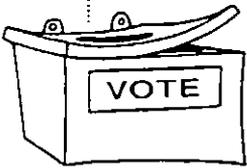
THAILAND

helped the villagers secure funds from a local NGO and a Peace Corps Partnership grant—the villagers also contributed \$20 per family. All the villagers are involved in the labor. "The water delivery system allows the women to spend more time raising animals and growing vegetables for food." It has also taught the villagers about self-sufficiency, Carol notes. "The villagers now realize that they have to help themselves."



Members of the Akha Hill Tribe will no longer have to haul water from the river.

CAST YOUR BALLOT



PCV Mary Angela Rivers is giving students in Atyrua, Kazakstan, a lesson in the democratic

process through the development of student-elected student councils. "In the days of communism, student councils were led by teachers, and the students were given assignments such as cleaning the school yard or painting the walls," says Rivers. "I thought student-led student councils would give them a chance to have an impact on their

KAZAKSTAN school by working with other students to resolve school issues that were important to them." Mary concentrated her efforts on one local school, enlisted interested students as candidates, and helped them organize an election day. After an explanation of the voting process, the students elected a president, vice-president, and secretary. At their first meeting, the new student council set up an agenda to plant trees and organize a school dance. "Equal to the work of the student council were the things that they learned about: compromise, free expression of their opinions, and the questioning of things they do not agree with."

Cutting Deals in Harare

NO WONDER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEERS IN ZIMBABWE HAVE SUCH A GOOD reputation. When local entrepreneurs needed a way to drum up business and make contacts, PCVs staged the "Small Business Expo 96" in Harare, the first-ever trade show devoted to the needs of Zimbabwe's business community. **ZIMBABWE** PCV Sarah Leimbach led the charge by contacting local NGOs and gauging interest—which turned out to be very high. About 120 businesses, NGOs, and banks set up stands at the Expo, which featured a "Best New Products" competition and five seminars. Roughly 1,200 entrepreneurs attended over a two day period. "At the conclusion of the show, the exhibitors were overwhelmingly positive about the business conducted and the contacts they made," says Sarah. A number of other business development and trade organizations have already signed on to sponsor "Small Business Expo 97."

Service Above Self

WHEN PCV Kathy Starotska STOPPED BY THE ROTARY CLUB IN VLADIVOSTOK, RUSSIA, she had no idea she'd be tagged honorary "mother" by the local Rotarians and charged with setting up a second Rotary Club for the burgeoning business community. "Although the first club was doing well, there was a need for a second club in the area, so I said, 'Why not?'" Kathy, the former chief of Sitka, Alaska's Rotary Club, was the perfect person for the job. Rotary Club Vladivostok Eco now **RUSSIA** boasts 38 members, and with support from clubs in the United States, its members have ambitious plans to conduct workshops on maternal and child

health, business, and the environment. Kathy would like to see the service club become an integral part of the community. "Like any proud parent, I am happy to see the club begin its valuable work as it follows the Rotary International motto 'Service Above Self,'" she says. "I am already looking forward to its first birthday party."



The Vladivostok Rotary Club's proud parent, Kathy Starotska, with new Rotarian.

Café Los Huetares



WHEN THE LOS HUETARES, AN indigenous tribe who live on a reserve halfway between Pursical and San José, Costa Rica, began

COSTA RICA

plans to share its culture and its traditional ways, PCV Luisa Heymann realized that visitors might want a taste of Los Huetares cuisine as well. Luisa helped them get a new small business up and running—a café to service the needs of the eco-tourist site. She secured a Small Project Assistance grant to help finance the café. It now proudly serves indigenous foods for visiting groups and provides jobs and training to members of the Los Huetares tribe.

MANGROVE MANIA

Congratulations to PCV Norman Schoenthal and over 500 Fijian students who greened the seashores of the coastal city of Suva with more than 3,000 mangrove plants!

Depletion of the tropical trees is an urgent environmental problem in Fiji, and the event not only helped restore the shores, it also got the attention of many people in the country. It seems that mangrove mania has spread—so much so that the Ministry of Education is encouraging more schools to set aside time for planting.

Pitching In

PCV Cindy Morrison PUT A CARE package from home to good use in her community. Cindy's mom, whom Cindy describes as an "ultra-ambitious package sender," sent over 100 large garbage bags to her daughter in Pravetz, Bulgaria. Cindy decided to use the surplus



The clean-up crew.

supplies to give her students a lesson in environmental clean-up. "I had the garbage bags, and Bulgaria had the garbage," notes Cindy. She rounded up the students in her 10 classes, and despite a chorus of moans and groans, they hit the streets. The community was confounded by the trash picker-uppers. "What do you kids think you are doing?" we were asked numerous times in an accusatory fashion," says Cindy. The students were no less confused. "We're not going to pick up garbage," they protested. But after green areas began to emerge where there was once only mounds of debris, even the most vehement protestors felt a little self-congratulatory. Before long an Eco Club was formed to clean up the school grounds and plant trees. Cindy knew her project had made a difference when she saw members of the school baseball team cleaning garbage from the field between innings. "It was one of those projects that you take up because you feel like you should, and you have to wonder if any good will come of it, and this time it did," says Cindy. "A classic case of a little bit goes a long way."

BULGARIA

Freeing Minds

AS ONE OF THE FIRST VOLUNTEERS TO LIVE AND WORK IN ONE OF POOREST neighborhoods in Asunción, Paraguay, Youth Development PCV Mike Binks had his work cut out for him. Not only were the living conditions harsh, but

PARAGUAY

the sense of defeatism they fostered among the neighborhood youths seemed all but insurmountable. Mike realized job-one was to find a way to buoy the boys' self-esteem. After gaining their trust, he began organizing field trips. On one trip, he took the boys to a park in the interior of the country where, for the first time, they swam in clean water. On another occasion, he accompanied them to an international conference on children's rights in Buenos Aires. He tried to instill in them a sense of self-confidence as well as provide them with a positive role model. His lessons seemed to have taken effect. One of the youths, Cesar Britez, who has worked with Mike for over 18 months, was recently elected Paraguay's national delegate to an annual youth development conference held by Uruguay, Argentina, and Paraguay.

TOUGH

B Y

IT OUT

When PCV Ann Jenkins arrived at her village secondary school, she couldn't wait to hit the books with her English students. With a bachelor's degree in English Literature, a handy Strunk & White pocket companion, and a portable typewriter hauled from her home in Wilmington, Del., she was poised to embark on the two-year tour of her dreams, working as a Peace Corps English teacher in Botswana.

During her 12 weeks of training, Ann wrote and re-wrote practice lesson plans. She spent hours sitting in the backs of the classrooms observing Botswana teachers and critiquing fellow Trainees as they tested their new language teaching skills. The whole experience energized her as she witnessed the students in the model school eagerly re-tell the plot of the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. By the time she was dropped off at her site by her Associate Peace Corps Director, Ann felt enthusiastic and fully in gear to teach English to junior secondary school students.

Ann's headmaster greeted her warmly and invited her to see her classroom in the direction of a dilapidated shed which stood behind the school, adjacent to the school garden. Ann became a little apprehensive as she grew closer to a concrete storage building that had one small chicken-wire window and a corrugated tin roof. It was filled with broken chairs and garden tools covered with an

inch of dust. The principal enthusiastically pushed open the door and switched on the single, bald light bulb hanging from the ceiling. He grinned, panoramically swept his arm through the dusty air, and introduced her to her future classroom—the art room.

*Volunteers meet
the challenges
of service
overseas.*

“Art?! All I could think was, ‘I don’t know how to teach art!’” Ann recalls, laughing.

After three months of Peace Corps training to be an English teacher, she

was faced with the daunting task of shifting gears, changing expectations, and finding a way to be successful. “I was prepared to deal with changing my expectations, but I couldn’t deal with the sinking feeling of inadequacy and lack of preparedness,” she remembers. Ann left the school with a sense of dread. Glass-blowing had been her only foray into the art world. Along the path home, a mile across the village, she concluded that quitting was her only out.

No one ever said it was going to be easy. Perhaps you’ve had a similar experience. Maybe you just swore in last week, or three months ago, or even a year ago this month. If you are a Peace Corps Volunteer and it’s not going the way you thought it would, relax—that’s part of the experience. Whether it’s the job, your living situation, an unidentifiable sore on your foot, a relationship at home, verbal harassment, fear of failure, or a combination of the above, you are experiencing the most challenging aspects of Peace Corps service: toughing it out.

When your recruiters nailed up the “Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love” poster at the job fair, they weren’t just hanging up a catchy advertising gimmick. Volunteers always face obstacles and usually hit low points—times of stress, loneliness, and depression—when it seems like the only avenue for relief is to call it quits. When times get tough, many Volunteers ask themselves

N N M A R I E E M M E T

if it's worth sticking it out, but with most worthwhile endeavors—and Peace Corps service is that—you've got to take the pain with the gain.

FINDING A WAY TO CONTRIBUTE

Ann Jenkins, our English teacher-turned-art-teacher, got through a sudden switch in job direction by looking at the task ahead of her and breaking it down. She befriended the school supply guys who drove her to the capital to purchase art materials. She then arranged to have the storage shed cleaned and painted. Her next step was to visit art teachers at other schools in Botswana who were able to guide and direct her in developing a curriculum and lesson plans.

"The key for me was to just start doing," she says. "In the end, I'm so glad I decided to stick it out. In retrospect, it was better to start the art program than to just go in as a regular English teacher. After I left, the school built an art room and replaced me with a certified art teacher from England. What I did was unique to the school's history. It was a way to really contribute."

It can be hard to immerse yourself immediately. Upon arrival in your community, you may feel uneasy about your language skills or your ability to figure out your job. According to a recent Peace Corps report, almost two-thirds of early Volunteer departures occur within the first year, most within the first three months—when everything is exciting and new, yet formidable and confusing.

"The first three months are, without question, the toughest part. If you can make it through the beginning part, then you reach a level to deal with the difficulties," says Morocco Country Director Ellen Paquette, who served as a Volunteer in Liberia.

Volunteer Patrick Atagi who served in the Central African Republic describes the emotional tumult of his first year. "It goes in stages. It's initial-



Ann Jenkins, pictured outside a hut in her village, found a way to contribute her skills.

ly exciting when you're finally at post, but over the first six months you're asking yourself 'What am I doing here?' Over the next few months you collect your thoughts and start a project, decide on a mission. Once you get going on that, you begin to wonder if you're really making a difference."

Paquette tries to help her Volunteers gain perspective. She says frustration with the job is one of the most commonly heard complaints from Volunteers thinking about leaving. In many cases, Ellen finds that the job assignment is the Volunteer's first full-time job after college. Some of the

challenges, she has found, can be attributed to normal on-the-job irritants: it doesn't meet your expectations; you and your boss don't see eye-to-eye; their methods seem outdated and antiquated; or you don't feel appreciated. "If Volunteers are unable to see that it's the job and not their service, and if they've placed an immense amount of pressure on themselves to succeed, it can be overwhelming," she says.

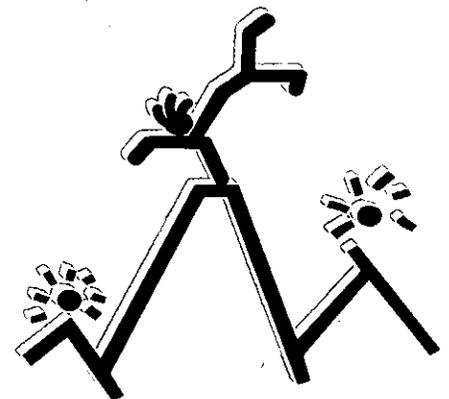
"Volunteers arrive with very high expectations of themselves, so they get frustrated," says Ellen. "It is difficult for them to slow down and cultivate relationships. They have to change their attitudes about how to get things done. They find there are new ideas out there about what constitutes an accomplishment."

Shauna Blanchard, who served in Cameroon, said she changed her ideas and expectations when she started her job at a coffee cooperative project. She realized many local farmers, who had not been included in determining the project's goals, were uninterested in participating.

"The reality was very different than what was written in my project plan and what we had been taught in training. But I got over it by readjusting my expectations and realizing that the work is only part of my experience."

HITTING THE DOLDRUMS

The Peace Corps has studied the attrition rate of PCVs and explored ways to reduce the number of Volunteers who leave early. Statistics show that since the early 1980s, the



RPCVS SIZE IT UP

What do Returned Volunteers think of service overseas? Tough days aside, 94% say they'd do it all over again. That's not all. Here are some highlights from a recent RPCV survey.

When Volunteers were asked why they joined the Peace Corps:

- 75% said they wanted to experience a different culture.
- 74% said they wanted travel and adventure.
- 73% said they wanted to help others.

For the vast majority, the Peace Corps fulfilled their expectations:

- 92% met their expectation of experiencing a different culture.
- 91% said their desire for travel and adventure was met.
- 94% said their expectation to help others had been completely or partially met.

When Volunteers were asked if they would make the same decision to join the Peace Corps:

- 94% would make the same decision to join.
- 93% would recommend joining the Peace Corps to others.

Most Volunteers believe they contributed to the fulfillment of the Peace Corps' goals:

- 94% believe they made a positive contribution to the development of their host-country,
- 58% indicating they contributed a lot to individuals.

What do Volunteers think about service and commitment?

- 85% of those surveyed completed or exceeded their two years of Peace Corps service.
- 26% had thought at some point about ending their service prior to completion.
- 77% of this group stayed with the Peace Corps and completed their tour of duty because they had made the commitment.

rate has hovered between 29 and 32 percent for each training class. Volunteers often cite their jobs and personal issues at home as major reasons for leaving. One reason for the steady rate of attrition may be that Volunteers just hit the doldrums, or personal crises occur that are beyond anyone's control.

One Volunteer who decided to leave Senegal after 10 months said she was unable to find the kind of support she needed among fellow Volunteers. Soon after arriving in her village, her host-family father and one of the children on the family compound died. News from home was that two uncles were dying of cancer. Her two closest friends in the training group had already early terminated, and the Volunteer living nearest to her was over a half-hour drive away.

"My CD recommended I take a vacation to the States. I knew I would never return to Senegal if I went home. I wonder if I had had a friend if I would have stayed," she said.

Reflecting on her decision, she recognizes that her situation was an exceptional one. "The circumstances which made me decide to leave were not Peace Corps' fault. There was no way the Peace Corps staff could have anticipated what I would come up against."

Joe Ruland was the tenth of the 15 teachers in his training group to early terminate from Niger in 1983, after one year in his assignment as an English teacher. Joe, who now works at the Peace Corps in Washington as a Placement Officer, reviewed his reasons for leaving. After a year in an atmosphere he describes as "austere, austere, austere," he decided that staying would have been ludicrous.

"At first I felt it was my fault, but I don't feel that way now. I remember being in country at the hostel telling other Volunteers I felt I had failed. They wouldn't listen to me. It's hard. You want to succeed so badly, but it's just not in the cards. It's a growing experience,

and you need to give it your all. But you also have to realize that you aren't going to win every time. I am so glad I went, and I am so glad I came back early."

Universally, staff and Volunteers agree that Volunteers shouldn't sabotage themselves by concentrating on what they cannot accomplish. But,

THE KEY
WAS TO JUST

Paquette says, "We cannot save everyone or cure every ailment. This would be an overwhelming responsibility and a set up for failure." As a Country Director, counselor, and friend to Volunteers, she recognizes that some Volunteers have good reasons to go. Sometimes Volunteers never get comfortable with Peace Corps service or their host country.



**An emotionally tumultuous first year:
Patrick Ataği in the Central African Republic.**

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Country Directors and staff believe that providing support to Volunteers in the first three months and at holiday time is critical. There is a fine line for staff in providing the support and feedback necessary. Howard Anderson, former Volunteer in Gabon, and Country Director in Zaire, and now

FORG ME START DOING.

head of the Office of Training and Program Support at Peace Corps headquarters, cautions that it sometimes seems easier to process a plane ticket than to work delicately through a complex array of Volunteer problems, but the issue should be dealt with first.

Staff and Volunteers offer a variety of strategies for Volunteers who are hitting bumpy periods. Most agree that the first step should be to get the Volunteers to talk about what is bothering them. This is most useful if "you get out of the heat, or the rain, or the cold and go to talk to a staff person or fellow PCV," says Anderson.

Guatemala PCV Carolina Cullinan says she has definite downer days. Her advice is to deal with it. "Go with it. Pity yourself. Then bounce out of it."

Carolina can recall one "blue, dark-blue" day. She was cash poor; someone told her she was getting fat; her water project was delayed for six months because of inadequate engineer drawings; and her date for a pueblo's dance canceled. To deal with it, she consulted the "To Do" column of her "To Do, Not To Do" list and made herself extremely busy.

Ari Kaufman, a Volunteer in Sri Lanka, says it helps to establish something to look forward to as a means to combat down periods. "You will never know how to react when those monsoon floods come rushing in and wash out your bridge or that unexpected curfew hits the island." Ari's trick is to devise activities and, as much as possible, to plan ahead.

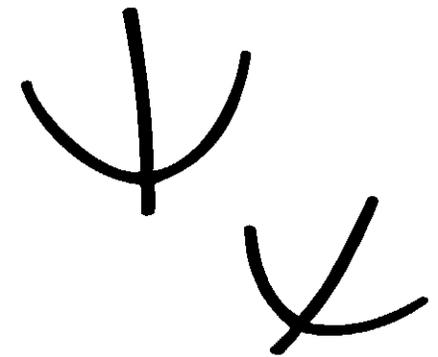
"It's hard," says Scott Kelly, a Volunteer in Ghana who saw a few friends depart after the three-month mark. "Life as a Volunteer is hard, the conditions can be rough, and it's not meant for everybody. You have to learn patience and keep a sense of humor. Rely on other PCVs for support."

Many Peace Corps posts have established a system for peer counseling. Whatever the issue—job dissatisfaction, a relationship at home, disillusionment with the Peace Corps or the host country—Volunteers are the best resource for other Volunteers because they know what you're going through. One Volunteer in Morocco was especially disturbed about an overwhelm-



Scott Kelly (back row, center) relies on other PCVs for support and keeps a sense of humor.

ing amount of attention and unwelcomed comments she received from local men in the market. After a discussion with her Country Director, she decided to form a support group of Volunteer peer counselors to address a spectrum of issues, including verbal



harassment. She led two training sessions on basic listening skills and developed a set of criteria for Volunteer counselors to use in determining which Volunteers should get additional counseling from staff. In talking through her own difficulties, she not only developed a system for herself but she also put a system in place to help her fellow Volunteers.

There's no denying that the job of a Peace Corps Volunteer is tough. You face more challenges in a given day than some people may encounter in a lifetime. "It's a test of mettle," says Ann Jenkins. "You are constantly questioning your commitment, your ability to take risks and make mistakes. But after you make it through, you look back on the greatest adventure of your life."

Annmarie Emmet served as a Volunteer in Botswana from 1987-89 and works in the Peace Corps' Office of Communications.

Finding

IT WAS A COOL DAY FOR NIGER, PROBABLY ONLY 95 DEGREES OR SO. MY PEACE CORPS COUNTRY DIRECTOR AND A COUNTERPART HAD JUST INTRODUCED ME TO THE 400 PEOPLE OF DOLLE, A FISHING VILLAGE ON THE MANGO TREE-LINED BANKS OF THE NIGER RIVER. I HAD JUST COMPLETED THREE MONTHS OF INTENSE LANGUAGE CLASSES IN THE CRAMPED TRAINING CAMP NEAR THE CAPITAL CITY. AFTER PRACTICING MY ZARMA CONSTANTLY THROUGH CONVERSATIONS WITH MY TEACHERS, WITH TESTS AND EVEN WITH FLASH CARDS, I HAD MY BAGS PACKED, AND I WAS READY—OR SO I THOUGHT —TO GO.

Family

BY ELLEN SHAW



RCV Tim Saldana embraces her host-country mother in the Dominican Republic.

As I watched the Peace Corps truck speed away and turned to look at the large group of people who had gathered around me all I could remember of my extensive language lessons was: "How much for this soap?"

"Ka," said one woman at last, as she grabbed my hand and led me to her house next door. She sat me down in the only chair available and started to cook—chicken and rice, a delicacy in those parts. She killed the chicken and gave a detailed liturgy about how to pluck, clean, and cut the bird. For three hours she pounded spices, stirred pots, and shouted commands at her seven children. Finally, she laid a feast at my feet and said, "First

thing, I'm teaching you Zarma." That was the beginning of my relationship with Talu and her family.

Over the next few months, the family became not only my language teachers, but also my dearest friends. They even saved my skin a few times.

One night after a particularly trying day learning about words that sound alike, such

as *gunde*, *gunda*, and *gundi* (belly, under, and snake), I had just gone off to sleep when the neighbors's dog started growling and barking angrily. I turned on my flashlight just in time to see a long, black snake slip through my gate into my yard, slither around a bit, and then slide underneath my bed. I sat, hair on end, wondering whether it would creep into my bed to snuggle up or just lie and wait to bite the first foot to hit the floor. Finally, I leaped out of bed and hopped over to Talu's house.

"I have a belly!" I cried in Zarma. "You have a what?" came Talu's voice from under the mosquito net. "I have a belly," I repeated. "It's big! Come help me get rid of it!" After some confusion and then a little nervous laughter, she said, "You mean a snake, my child." We trudged on back to my place with a fishing spear, lifted the bed, and found a five-foot-long spitting cobra curled up, fast asleep. The next day, my family concentrated even harder on teaching its newest member how to communicate.

Throughout my time in Dolle, my host-country family did more than rescue me from snakes and teach me Zarma,

Away from Home

"If ever there was a problem, I knew I had someone to turn to."



A source of sympathy and great food! Elizabeth West with members of her host-country family.

In a time of crisis, the host-country family, being physically closest and an integral part of the Volunteer's daily life, is often the Volunteer's sole source of support. Elizabeth West was Volunteering as an English teacher in Thailand when her daughter got married. Because of problems in communications systems between Thailand and the States at the time, Elizabeth didn't hear news of the wedding until after it happened, and by that time it was too late to participate in any of the festivities of her own daughter's marriage. "I was devastated," says Elizabeth.

When her housemate, Nin, saw how upset she was, she asked what the problem was. Elizabeth told her and found not only a sympathetic ear, but also a wonderful meal, which Nin cooked for her in honor of the occasion: a favorite Thai dish called "Eggs Son-in-Law."

Occasionally, however, the experience does not always live up to its promise. Lou Avenilla, a former Volunteer in Poland, tells the story of a Volunteer there who, during training, was matched up with a nearby family. In Poland, the Peace Corps matches all Trainees with a host-country family with whom the Trainees then live and take meals. The Peace Corps

provides that family a small sum of money to cover the extra expense of caring for their American guest. Lou's friend was matched with a local woman who referred to him constantly as "my refrigerator." He was puzzled about why she would call him a refrigerator and then discovered the woman

was saving the money she earned from the Peace Corps to buy one.

Lou was more fortunate than his friend. Like many Volunteers, he found himself a part of a family that was not only supportive, but was also interested in his life and work. Lou's family gave him

they became *my* family, the place where I went for support. As many Peace Corps Volunteers discover, host-country families provide more than just room and board—they are a foundation, a springboard into the life and activities of the community, and a source of comfort and friendship. Being a part of a family is one of the unexpected treasures of life in another country.

"If ever there was a problem, I knew I had someone to turn to," says Penny Anderson, who taught English in Hungary and lived with a closeknit family during her training period. "They were so concerned about my well-being."

One night, after a grueling day of classes, Penny wanted only to spend an evening alone with a good book. On arriving home, she announced to her family that she was going to her room to read. They looked at her strangely and asked how she was feeling.

"Fine," she said, and went upstairs. Ten minutes later, her host-country mother, Zsuzsa, peeked into her room. "Are you okay?" asked Zsuzsa.

"Sure, I'm fine," said Penny. Long pause.

"Would you like something to eat or drink?" asked Zsuzsa.

"No, thank you," said Penny. Pause.

"Okay," said Zsuzsa, with a look of distress.

After a minute, she closed the door without another word or a smile. Penny continued to hear footsteps and whispers outside her door every few minutes.

Finally, Penny emerged and went downstairs to where the family was sitting at the dinner table. There they were, waiting for her in silence. When she sat down, they treated her as if she had just survived a terrible ordeal.

"I learned later that in Hungarian, the words for 'privacy' and 'loneliness' are the same. Nobody spent time alone, and if you did, it meant there must be something wrong." Penny realized that being a member of a family in Hungary meant opening up and letting go of some of her American individualism.

"I had an identity with that family, and it provided a gateway into the larger community in Poland."



Penny Anderson (left) and a friend in Hungary.

indispensable insight into Polish culture, something he utilized as an English teacher. His host-country mother, Gdynia, having lived and studied in England, would compare and contrast Polish cultural and social issues with Western ones. Not only did she enrich his cross-cultural experience, she advised him on how to navigate the bureaucracy at his school.

"She understood some of the things I was going through," said Lou. "She took the time to tell me the administrative logistics nobody else was able to explain—everything from developing the school curriculum to getting my salary."

In Poland, Lou had an advocate, an

advisor, and, most importantly, a family that accepted him. "I felt comfortable in their home," he said. "The kids always wanted to see me because I would sit with them and draw pictures of airplanes and zoo animals. I was their artist. And the family was generous in setting aside time for me, too. That relationship made things a lot easier for me. I had an identity with that family, and it provided a gateway into the larger community in Poland." Instead of feeling like a stranger in town, Lou felt at home.



again, and she has a new son-in-law. At times I wonder what Niger would have meant to me had I not met and become part of that group, if I hadn't had them to sit under the stars with at night, to tell stories or cook with or go to weddings.

For so many other Volunteers, these stories will sound familiar. As language teachers, support systems, and lifelong friends, host-country families enhance the whole experience of life in another country.

The families Peace Corps Volunteers find while living overseas are the people who make daily life often just a little bit more like home.

Ellen Shaw served as a Volunteer in Niger from 1994-96.

"They were so concerned about my well-being."



It is this kind of relationship that helps make the Peace Corps experience worthwhile, both while Volunteers are living overseas and when they return to the United States. Although Manhattan is a world away from the life I lived in Niger, I often think about my family there. Talu has just become a grandmother

Volunteers Write:

Earning Respect

Very early on I told a group that studied with me the full two years of my service—who became absolutely my favorite students—not to stand up for me when I came into the classroom. "Stand up for me, if you want, when I've really earned your respect."

Since then the group and I have been through much together: pro-seminar four hours a week, many papers, volumes of literature from Shakespeare to Joyce and beyond; arguments, disappointments on both sides of the podium, and above all two plays, in the most recent of which five or six of

them played principal roles in English in front of a big ex-patriate and faculty audience.

For the last class, I didn't have much to say, a word or two of wrap-up business, some papers to give back, a forecast of where their studies might go next. And then I released them. "Go study now for your other exams. You know how important you have been to me." I expected them all to leave then, maybe one or two to confer, as usual, or ask me to go for coffee at "JH's Office," the little bar-buffer next to the door. But they just sat there. One or two of them,

I could see, even teared up a bit.

"Well," I said again, "you can go." But they didn't, so, a little puzzled, I grabbed my briefcase and started out. And then they all stood up, in beautiful, solemn, and loving unison. I didn't actually remember till some hours later about telling them 20 months before not to stand up. Then I remembered and realized all it meant. And the feelings are mutual.

John Hunter is a Volunteer in Tirana, Albania.



The



Marriage



BY ALLISON LEE

Twist



Doug and Anita Weisburger flew from their village in a remote mountain area of Papua New Guinea to the provincial capital to meet with an official at the Ministry of Commerce. Aboard the plane they discussed their mission: to gain government support for a handicraft export business. With the official blessing of the government and a registration certificate to trade abroad, the handicraft cooperative could finally begin to operate on its own. Doug and Anita, as envoys to the ministry, recognized the importance of their roles in the deal.

But a funny thing happened during the meeting. As they sat across from the government official's desk and explained, he refused to acknowledge or recognize Anita.

"We got the government to support us. The company was registered, and it's still up and running, today," Anita explained. "But we never would have been able to get the job done if Doug wasn't there."

"He wouldn't look at her; it was as if she didn't exist!" Doug adds.

As Peace Corps Volunteers, and more accurately, as Peace Corps Volunteers married to each other, Doug and Anita were able to combine the advantage of their skills—and the advantage of their union in some cases—to be successful Volunteers.

Marriage definitely puts a twist on Volunteer service. Today, almost eight percent of Volunteers serving in the field are couples. Married couples have signed up for the Peace Corps since the agency's beginning. But times have changed since the days when couples could serve with their children, or when only one member of the couple would fill a Peace Corps job while the other sought volunteer work

once they arrived. Over the years, the Peace Corps has evolved in the way it selects and places married Volunteers. Today, the emphasis is on finding countries where both members of the duo can work effectively together and contribute to the local community.

A Great Adventure

The reasons couples decide to give two years to serve overseas do not differ greatly from single Volunteers: the desire to have an adventure before settling down, to share skills and culture, or to take advantage of the new found freedoms of an empty nest or retirement. And though it's a joint undertaking, many Peace Corps couples say they nurtured the dream to join the Peace Corps before they even met their spouse.

Anita and Doug were interested in the Peace Corps before they were interested in each other. Doug was several months along in his application process when he met Anita. As they grew closer, he started having second thoughts about priorities.

"We had been dating about a year and were on vacation in North Carolina when we first started talking about the possibility of joining the Peace Corps together," Doug recalls. "It was early on in our relationship, and we were speaking very broadly. I had already submitted my application, and Anita was filling one out on her own."

Anita adds, "We sort of said, 'Wouldn't it be great to join Peace Corps together?'"

Living in Paradise

What do Melanesia, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Suriname have in common? Well, for one they're all beautiful palm-dotted islands or coastal nations, but in Peace Corps parlance they are the PCV couple's dream countries. While Peace Corps couples can serve in many countries, it is not always easy to find two viable, interesting, and challenging jobs in the same community. These countries

have identified needs for married Volunteers who can take on a variety of small, catch-all type projects. So the majority of Peace Corps couples find themselves setting up house in a place that looks a lot like paradise.

Anita describes her surroundings for two years as awe-inspiring, lush, and green. The rainforest of Papua New Guinea where she and Doug worked in everything from health education to small-enterprise development was set amidst an area of immense, biological diversity. There was a waterfall outside their door. Birds of paradise lived all about them. The rain-forest floor was covered with moss, and thick vines hung from the trees.

The Right Site at the Right Time

PVC couples are only half the story. A number of Volunteers—around seven percent, according to a recent survey—met their spouse during service. A transcontinental dating service it surely is not, but on more than a few occasions, the Peace Corps placed people in what Shauna Blanchard, who met her Cameroonian husband while Volunteering, calls "the right site at the right time." What follows are a few highlights of those chance encounters:

I can still remember the day I left Philadelphia to join the Peace Corps. I was concerned about whether or not I had packed the right clothes, if I would enjoy my work, and if my fellow PCVs would provide me with the support I needed to get me through the next two years. At the time, the farthest thing from my mind was marriage. How was I to know that my Volunteer assignment would introduce me to the man I would marry?

Clockwise from top left:
Shauna Blanchard with husband,
Nelson, in Cameroon; Dan Schaub
and wife, Ann, in Thailand; Solomon
Islands PCV couple, Libby and Mark
Slout; Doug and Anita Weisburger
with a friend in Papua New Guinea.

Like a few other lucky Peace Corps Volunteers, I met my spouse during my service—specifically while he was driving a taxi. (Needless to say, I got to sit up front.) Whether it happens on a remote hillside, the village post office, or at the local market, Volunteers like me will attest that it was the Peace Corps that put them in the right country, at the right site, at the right time.

I met my husband while I was still in pre-service training in Cameroon. I was going on a weekend trip with several other Trainees, and we were traveling by taxi. The Cameroonian taxi driver and I talked for the duration of the trip. It was a strange coincidence that he was from the village where I was assigned to live and work. There weren't any sparks the first time we met, nor the second, nor third. However, after several months, our friendship turned to romance, and half-way through my service, we were talking about the future.

Shauna Blanchard
Cameroon (1991-94)

Eduardo and I didn't meet by fate, but by accident—literally. I was thrown off a horse and was sent to his clinic in San Jose for physical therapy. Little did I know then that this physical therapist would change my life forever.

During the month of daily rehabilitation, we became friends. I grew to enjoy his positive outlook on life, his adventurous spirit, and his humility.

Following the one month in therapy, we kept in touch and began a closer relationship. Three months after I left the Peace Corps, Eduardo came to the States to travel around the Southwest and meet

But Papua New Guinea is a nation that has undergone major changes over the past 60 years. Rapid development and an influx of unemployed youth have



"Wouldn't it be great to join Peace Corps together?" Doug and Anita in their host-country father's cabbage garden.

led to increased crime in the urban areas. In the remote, rural areas of the country, it is unfamiliarity with the concept of single, adult women that has raised concern about the safety of single, female Volunteers. While walking around alone or at night, a woman might be accepted and fairly safe in rural areas, the general acceptance of a single woman is not. It is remote. And in a culture where marriage is not optional for young women, a female American Peace Corps Volunteer would be viewed along the spectrum from bizarre to immoral.

"It was more comfortable for the people we worked with. We were accepted more because we were married," says Doug. "Anita wouldn't have been able to work with men at all if she were single. Being married opened some doors."

Although security concerns are not as intense in Papua New Guinea's neighbor to the southeast, Solomon Islands, there is also more willingness in communities to accept married Volunteers than single ones.

"A single woman in the Solomon Islands would be viewed as clearly in need of a partner, and Volunteers might construe well-meaning villager's efforts in this area as offensive," according to

Joan Giesemann, spouse of the former Peace Corps Solomon Islands Country Director Elwin Guild.

Current Solomon Islands Country Director John Roberts says staff have fewer worries about the welfare of couples, and their presence alone in communities often sets a good example. "Married Volunteers often serve as good role models," John says. "They show that each can stand on their own, and that women can do things for themselves."

Married PCVs are preferred in parts of South America, as well. Ed Staples and his wife, Rachel Tausend, who transferred from Solomon Islands to Suriname, observed that the Surinamese, like the Papua New Guineans, have difficulty grasping the American or "Western" notion of female independence.

"In the Solomon Islands, a woman never does anything alone," according to Ed. "If I were traveling, we would ask a young woman friend to stay with Rachel. This is to avoid the risk that Rachel would 'get talked about' if she were to stay home alone."

Suriname is situated on the northern coast of South America. Although half a world away from the Solomon Islands, it is another example of a lush land secluded by thick forests and abundant vegetation. Volunteers in Suriname face issues similar to those in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands: communities so isolated that drinking water can come from a cut branch, and the idea of an American living among them can raise suspicions.

Tony Kaperick and his wife, Carol Yawner, are in the first group of Volunteers to go to Suriname. Their site in the middle of the rainforest is isolated, and communications to the outside world are weak.

"When we first arrived, villagers greeted us with ambivalence and questions like, 'What are you doing here?'"

"Being a part of a couple provided a sanity check."

Tony says. "Being part of a married couple provided a sanity check. We ended up using each other as a combination of psychologist, social worker, and friend."

Although married Volunteers often have separate projects, they frequently end up working closely together. Solomon Islands Volunteers Glen Heller and Laurette Cucuzza found that out pretty quickly. Although their assignments are not directly related—his is a transitional development plan for an old coconut plantation and hers is with women's community groups—they spend a considerable amount of time on joint projects.

Living and working in such close quarters can, however, cause nerves to fray. The Peace Corps experience can compress into two years things couples would not have learned about each other until perhaps their golden years.

"Working closely together can put a lot of strain on a relationship. It is not for everybody," according to Joan Giesemann.

Ed Staples echoes this idea. "While it is nice to spend so much time together, you also may show a side of yourself that you may not want to be seen." Ed cites the high stress example of pre-service training. "You may never have encountered your spouse's reaction to a

Lasting Benefits

One of the major benefits of placing married couples together is that they can serve as an example to all members of the community. "In the Solomons, where men have their place and women have their place, Volunteer couples can better access information," notes Joan Giesemann. "The Volunteers can share ideas on their separate activities and provide a communication link between various community groups."

Anita Weisburger says serving in the Peace Corps with her husband gave her a key into the Papua New Guinean culture, especially when it came to taboo subjects. One of the Weisburger's triumphs as Volunteers was their successful delivery of a health planning training.

"We held a training at the health center and invited everyone. After the initial discussion, we divided the group into men and women for two smaller group discussions. I went with the women and Doug went with the men," Anita describes. "We did Q&A, and it really worked. They asked a lot of really personal, potentially embarrassing questions that they never would have asked in the bigger group."

The stereotype of the lone soul taking on the world may fit most Volunteers, but there are others out there doing it jointly. It definitely puts a twist on service. When Doug and Anita Weisburger finished their service, they had been Volunteers together for the same amount of time they'd been married. If they do it again in 40 years, maybe they'll learn even more about each other that 40 years

couldn't uncover, or maybe two years might just seem like a walk in the park.

Allison Lee served as a Volunteer in Cameroon from 1988-90 and is an Associate Peace Corps Director in Mauritania.

my family. Soon my family embraced Eduardo, picked up a few Spanish phrases, and was asking him to return to Arizona!

We ping-ponged between the United States and Costa Rica for nearly a year. The decision wasn't easy, but we decided to move to Washington, D.C. and go from there. Our relationship grew and our decision to marry was soon made. My Peace Corps friends got quite a chuckle out of it since I was always the one cautioning them about the difficulties of inter-cultural relationships.

Soon we were in the throes of immigration and on the steps of the Justice of the Peace. Our vows were made, and a new chapter began in our incredible adventure together. In hindsight, I can see that our meeting by "accident" was, perhaps, fate after all.

*Susan Musich
Costa Rica (1992-93)
Phillipines (1989-90)*

My wife, Rapeeporn, "Ann," and I first met quite by accident. I was a second year PCV, and Ann was completing her bachelor's degree in Political Science at Chiangmai University in Thailand. She also taught Thai language and culture to local university English professors, one of whom also happened to be my roommate. Their class usually met at the university but decided to meet at our house one afternoon. After Ann and I discovered that we spoke each other's language, we began having extended conversations. Our first "date" ended with a crash, literally. Ann and I, along with eight of her closest friends, went driving through the mountains in a new Land Rover. During our descent, we slid off the road, smashed into a concrete barrier, and rolled down a hillside. Needless to say, the date, and Ann, made quite a first impression!

*Dan Schuab
Thailand (1992-95)*

Joint quarters and joint projects: PCVs Glen Heller and Laurette Cucuzza with Allison Lee in Solomon Islands.



line at the showers or the intensity of early morning language class. It's not unusual to act out under pressure in a way you have never acted before. It could be eye-opening."

IT'S THE REAL THING

BY
PATRICIA
CUNNINGHAM

What Made Your Peace Corps Experience Real?

When you decided to join the Peace Corps, you knew you were kissing your electric garage door goodbye and that the living conditions would be harsh. Armed with your trusty pocket knife and your mefloquin, however, you convinced yourself there was no trial you couldn't handle—no 10-hour bush taxi ride you couldn't endure, no monsoon you couldn't survive, no smoke-belching radiator you couldn't fix, no mice infested bed you couldn't spruce up with your positive attitude. Who knew you'd end up traipsing to the capital city wearing your deprivation like a badge of honor? "Oh, you think you've got it bad," you'd say to your fellow Volunteer, the one with the access to a streaming faucet, a television set, and a toilet before you laid in with a belly-aching litany of life on the mud hill and assured everyone within ear shot you were having The "Real" Peace Corps Experience. Here, Volunteers weigh in on how they had it *bad*.

I lived in an abandoned house that was infested with bats. This was in the town of Mbuyapey, Paraguay, about 180 kilometers southeast of the capital, Asunción. The road was paved except for the 40 kilometers of dirt road leading up to the town. The town was at a dead end, and was used, in those years during the rule of General Alfredo Stroessner, as a place of internal exile for political opponents.

The house I lived in had once housed a tobacco factory. The old tobacco press was still inside (made out of wood so hard that it was impossible to move), and I used it as a makeshift closet for my clothes. The house was considered to be haunted because someone had been murdered there many years before. I used the house because it belonged to a friend of mine who let me live there at no cost.

It had a hole in the roof in which bats had made a nest. They would fly around inside when the windows and doors were all shut and it was dark. When I would come home in the afternoon, the light from outside would cause them to go crazy and start zig-zagging around. I kept a towel and machete by the door. As soon as I entered the house, I'd cover my head and neck with the towel (in case there were any vampire bats), and go after them with the machete.

Bats are unable to take off from the ground. They would knock themselves against the wall and eventually fall on the floor. Once they were on the floor, I would go after them with the machete and chop them up. Gruesome, to say the least. But I eventually eliminated my bat population!

Anita Friedman
Paraguay (1983-86)



Mongolian winters could get *cold*. I lived in a nine-floor concrete building that was built according to the Soviet "block building" design. My building was situated in the best city in the best neighborhood in Mongolia, but I was still cold. It was nothing for me to wear two layers of clothes inside my

apartment. At one point, I got so frustrated with drafts that seemed to be everywhere that I bought some felt, cut it into strips, and nailed it around every window and door. I then ran tape around the inside of all the window and door casings. I got so frustrated that I would put my nose to the frames to see if I could feel the draft come across the bridge of my nose. If I did, I would immediately add another layer of felt and tape to the offending spot.

Roger Albaugh
Mongolia (1994-96)



My first tour brought me to a village of 240 people in southern Senegal. I got to have the prototypical Peace Corps experience of living in a round mud hut with a straw roof. I loved it until harvest time when grain and peanuts began to be stored in the village. This was like an invitation for thousands of rats to come in from the countryside to dine in our village. I would lie awake at night listening to them scurrying around the inside of my roof and hoping they wouldn't drop down on my mosquito net. I put out poisoned peanut butter, but after a few days I realized the morning ritual of corpse disposal wasn't making a dent in the incoming tide of "Rattus Africanus." Finally, I decided to move outdoors at night where I at last got some sleep, undisturbed by the patter of little feet racing around the inside of my hut.

My second tour was in Cameroon. This time my enemy was mice, and the attraction was peanuts stored by my landlord in a locked room in my cinderblock house. Daily, I would have to clear mounds of peanut shells from my cement floor. These mice were



"It's amazing what you get used to!"
Charlottw Utting in Senegal.

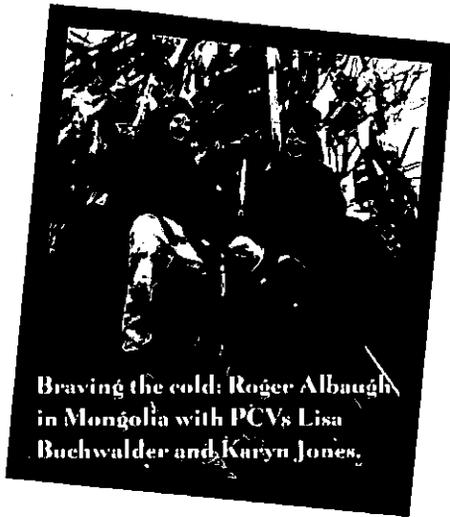
omniverous: they ate my toothbrush, my underwear, and books as well as my food! I finally learned to live with them by hanging all my belongings from the window suspended by bungee cords or keeping them in zipped duffel bags. It's amazing what you can get used to!

Charlotte Utting
Senegal (1980-82)
Cameroon (1989-90)



Soon after arriving in Sofia and beginning our Volunteer service in Bulgaria, many of us realized how complex this issue of deprivation can be. Most of us were disappointed to see modern buildings and conveniences rather than exotic animals. Our idea of Peace Corps and our role in it was challenged from that point onward.

Slowly, most of us came to the conclusion that having running water, electricity and an apartment had little to do with being deprived. The running water was nice, when it was working. Many cities had water regimes that alternated several days without water with an afternoon or evening with water. In fact, even the capital city was on a tight regime because of old pipes that needed to be repaired and a budget that couldn't afford it. The radiators in my flat *looked* nice, but never worked. The electricity was fantastic!



Braving the cold: Roger Albaugh in Mongolia with PCVs Lisa Buchwalder and Karyn Jones.

Upon closer examination, however, one could see that sockets were melted shut, and light bulbs frequently exploded overhead without warning. There is more than meets the eye behind almost everything, and the Volunteer experience in Eastern Europe is no exception.

*Stephanie Humphries
Bulgaria (1993-95)*



Before the *Route Nationale* was completely paved, a 12 hour or more trip of 500 kilometers on top of a peanut or, God forbid, onion truck was common between Madaoua, where I lived, and the capital, Niamey. A bus got there in two days, but it didn't travel at night. The trucks did, thus avoiding the incredible heat. A savvy traveler got accustomed to checking out the tires before buying a place on any vehicle, even if that meant waiting hours for another truck to come by. Better to be waiting for a ride in a village than be stranded between towns because of a blown tire. Drivers would turn off the headlights on a moonlit night and kill the motor, coasting downhill to save gas.

When traveling on top of the huge transport trucks, there was a certain camaraderie among the passengers—and a considerable amount of praying if a dangerous altercation with another vehicle or,

more likely, an animal was imminent. You'd definitely join in when people started repeating "*Allah gyara*" (God will fix it/take care of it/repair it)!

*Janet Donaghy
Niger (1968-72)*



In Thailand, I had to share my house with four-foot-long blue, green, and red lizards. They were very good at eating mosquitoes, but every morning they'd leave me with a "present" on the floor in the exact same spot. At least I knew where to look!

*Concetta Bencivenga
Thailand (1992-94)*



I had a rat and bat infested hut in the village on Tshisenge in Kasai Occidental, Zaire. The rain leaked through the roof. It was dark, and you could not walk standing up without hitting your head on the rafters. When I arrived in the village for the first time, the regional political chief moved the village chief, his three wives, and five children out of this fine piece of real estate so that I could move in. This was his punishment for not providing me with housing.

I stayed for three months, even after finding that the stench I had smelled for weeks came from the carcass of a dead rat that was within feet of my bed on the floor. Had I adequate lighting, even a window, perhaps I'd have discovered it earlier. I simply accepted my situation as "Well, this is Peace Corps."

*Geoffrey Brown
Zaire (1984-86)*



Coming in as a member of the first PCV group in Armenia, we expected to face challenges of all sorts. The natural gas pipeline—the source of most of Armenia's fuel for cooking, heating, and running water—was blown up shortly after we arrived, and it was the worst winter in 50 years. But I think I felt most deprived during pre-service training.

About half-way through training, our training director decided we needed some "R & R." After six weeks of freezing classroom temperatures, snowy days, grey buildings, and grey food in the cafeteria, we needed a break. He arranged a one week "working vacation" for us in the mountains outside the capital city. Spirits were high as we drove into the countryside for the first time. The hotel manager had promised heat, running water, and a working sauna, which meant our first hot baths (hot anything!) since arrival. We couldn't wait to get there.

As we unloaded at the hotel, the manager met us at the door with a big smile and the news that the heating system was not working. Just a few hours, he assured us, and everything would be up and running. "*Problem ch'ka*, (no problem)" he repeated over and over in Armenian.

Hoping desperately that the manager was right, we trooped up to our rooms, determined not to let this news dampen our spirits. After discovering that half the rooms were without blankets, had waterless toilets and balcony doors that wouldn't close, we headed off for lunch. Food first.

In a drafty, cavernous, concrete dining hall built to feed 300 plus at a time, our group of about 45 huddled together looking forward to a hot meal. A brawny, cheerful cook greeted us from the kitchen. We were eager to see what would be served. When the meal finally came, we each had a small portion of cold rice and two slices of fat on a plate. Babushkas in house slippers brought out rounds of dry, hard bread, chunks of frozen butter, and small dishes of jam. Tea was the only hot thing in the whole meal.

The heat remained off. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner were uninspired variations of rice, sliced fat, bread, and tea. Every once in a while they would substitute the sliced fat with half of a cold fish. At one point, another PCV spilled some tea. By the end of the meal, his spoon, laying in the spilled tea, was frozen to the table. It stayed there for the rest of

the week! Desperate PCVs went foraging into the nearby village for supplementary food, occasionally bringing back cookies and candy bars.

Despite the freezing temperature, the meager food, and the inconsistently running water, however, we had a good time. Two days before leaving, the hot water came on. No heat, and no additional food, but the

sauna was working, and there was hot running water in the showers. We all baked ourselves in the sauna until we were red.

Sueko Kumagai
Armenia (1992-94)

Patricia Cunningham is the Editor-in-Chief of Peace Corps Times

Volunteers Write:

Life With a Wild Old Woman



I have never met anyone quite like her, and even though we crossed paths only twice, she has left me spellbound and desiring more. Many times I find myself staring at her with amazement. She has that intoxicating combination of beauty and danger that can drive a sane man crazy. Although she lives close to town, the residents never think of visiting her. It is out of respect and downright fear that they keep their distance. But the temptation of her secrets is too great to keep me away. I wonder if it is okay to feel this way about a volcano.

That fateful day in training arrived when we learned where our sites would be. On my wish list was a site with portable water, good people, and, if possible, one near a volcano, better yet, an active volcano. The names were called out, “. . . Jeff, Gavilán de Dos Rios.” Anxiously we checked the map for the exact location. To my surprise, my site lay very close to the Volcano Rincon de la Vieja. My mind started spinning with images.

Excitedly, I wrote home describing my site to my parents: “Gavilán is surrounded by rainforest and is within five miles of an active volcano!” Later, I learned that my father could not sleep for three days because he was worried about my living conditions. My mom calmed him down, but they still worried about me and my volcano.

I arrived in Gavilán in the height of the rainy season, which meant it would be impossible to climb the volcano until summer arrived. This was like being trapped in the San Pedro Mall for three months with no cash: it's all there but so out of reach. My problem is if I look at a mountain or volcano long enough, I have to climb it. My parents are lucky Peace Corps didn't send me to Nepal.

I passed the months talking to people about the history of the volcano and its past eruptions. The volcano erupted in 1991 and took out a bridge. I told my friend Marcel that it would be great to see it erupt. She looked at me bewildered. Surely she thought this gringo was *loco*, crazy. She's half right.

Summer arrived, and with the sunshine came the opportunity to meet the “old lady.” The guide offered two choices: a long, safe route or a quick, risky one. It was unanimous. We took the quick, risky way. After four and a half hours, we were looking into the heart of an active volcano. It was, to say the least, absolutely incredible. The volcano's walls dropped a

steep 200 feet down. At the bottom was a lake as blue as the sky. I was blown away watching the clouds and steam roll in and out of the volcano and by listening to it bubble. Little did I know that within eight months, that spot on the crater where I sat would be blown to smithereens.

The unforgettable day arrived with an ominous start: a morning radio broadcast. “The residents of Buenos Aires, Gavilán, and Dos Rios should take the necessary precautions as an eruption of the Volcano Rincon de la Vieja is imminent.” Disbelief overcame me but was soon shattered a few hours later by a gigantic eruption. The following day was incredible. Huge eruptions occurred practically every 30 minutes. The volcano sounded like a rocket taking off and looked as if an atomic bomb had exploded in the center of it as a mushroom cloud rose from the crater. Naturally, this drove all the sane people out of the town, but being *medio loco*, I stayed to watch the fabulous show.

The volcano is calm now, and the images of the last eruptions seem like a dream. They say to be careful what you wish for because it just might come true. Well, I wouldn't mind if the “old lady” blew her top again. Who knows, maybe lightning will strike twice.

Jeff Levon is a Volunteer in Gavilán de dos Rios, Upala, Costa Rica.

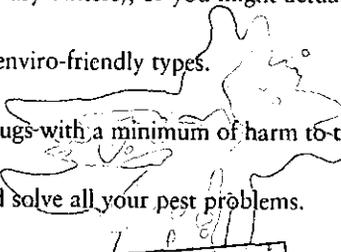
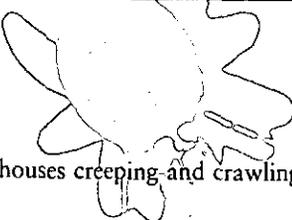
FieldBook

Tips for Making the Most of Your Tour

Planet-Safe Pest Control

For those of you who find your houses creeping and crawling with all kinds of nasties, here are some suggestions: First, you could just get used to having them leisurely peruse your cabinets like customers at the grocery store, or you might place the legs of your table and/or food safely in bowls of water (cute little swimming pools of death for unwary critters), or you might actually go to the extent of buying toxic spray—not the best idea for you enviro-friendly types.

Well, guess what? There is a way you can get rid of the bugs with a minimum of harm to the planet and yourself. Here's the recipe for a concoction that could solve all your pest problems.



8 ounces of powdered boric acid
1/2 cup flour
1/8 cup sugar
1/2 small onion, chopped (optional)
1/4 cup shortening or bacon drippings

Blend well, then add water to form a soft dough. Shape into small balls. Place balls throughout the house in places normally inhabited by bugs. (If balls are placed in open sandwich bags, they'll stay softer longer.) When the dough becomes brick hard, replace it with a fresh batch.



Oh, and if you're frightened by the term "boric acid," no worries. It is virtually harmless to humans. It's even used as an ingredient in some cough drops!

Reprinted from "The Occasional Coconut Wireless," the Fiji/Tuvalu Volunteer Newsletter.



Packing Faux Pas

What was the most useless item you brought for your Peace Corps service?

"My father convinced me that it made much more sense to wear my winter coat than pack it," says Penny Anderson, who served in Hungary. "Result: in the middle of June, right off the plane, I'm going to our reception with the Hungarian Minister of Education in a little summer dress covered with several yards of iron gray wool."

Peace Corps Times wants to hear about your packing blunders.



All Dried Up

The Peace Corps library is full of resources on the benefits of the conservation of fruits and vegetables—drying, canning, transforming, and preserving. Not only does it make high nutrient food available throughout the year, but it also reduces post-harvest waste and offers the potential for an income-generating activity. In a one-day seminar in Lambaye that focused on teaching village women how to preserve fruits and vegetables, we put theory into practice and aired out our fruits and vegetables with a simple solar drying technique. Here's a brief "how to" of the technique in case you might be interested in dehydration too.

The key factors in drying are sanitation, ventilation, and temperature. There are many types of dryers, but the tent dryer seems to be the easiest and cheapest, and it can be made with locally available materials. To make one, construct a tray out of tree poles or wood, and tack a screen or a piece of netting to the wooden poles. It is best if the tray has legs to enhance the air flow. On the ground, place a piece of black plastic with larger dimensions than the tray. Place the tray on top of the black plastic and cover with clear plastic. Make sure to tuck in the sides of the clear plastic to prevent insects from getting inside.

VEGETABLE PREPARATION

All vegetables to be dried should be peeled and washed in chlorinated water. They should be sliced as thinly as possible and blanched (scalded or boiled briefly in water or steam in order to remove the skin) for three to five minutes except for onions, garlic, and tomatoes. Onions and garlic only need to be sliced and laid in a single layer on the tray. Tomatoes do not need to be peeled. Small tomatoes or Roma tomatoes are best and should be quartered, and all seeds should be removed. After blanching the vegetables, drain and lay a single layer on the tray to dry.

Set up the tent dryer in direct sunlight. The vegetables may need to be turned over mid-way in the drying process. Because of the variable factors, I can only give an approximate amount of time of six to 10 hours for drying. Without sophisticated instruments, it is just a matter of trial and error—simply look and touch. The textbooks say moisture content should be reduced to 15 percent to prohibit microbotic growth.

FRUIT PREPARATION

Peel the fruit, remove the seeds, and slice into thin strips (about five mm. or less). Submerge the fruit slices in a sugar-water solution (approximately one tablespoon of sugar per one cup of water) for three to five minutes. Lightly grease the drying tray with vegetable oil to prevent the fruit from sticking. Drain and place a single layer on the tray. The fruit should be turned from time to time during the drying process. Depending on the width of the fruit slices, it will take one to two days to dry.

The dried products should be stored in tightly sealed plastic bags and perhaps then put into a covered plastic or ceramic container. If sufficiently dried, the product should last six to eight months.

By Dana Backer. Reprinted from "Tea Times," the Senegal Volunteer Newsletter.

Squatter's Etiquette

Advice on How To Be a Good Guest

It's a not-so closely held secret that the PCV travel network beats a chain of Best Westerns any day. Not only does it afford you way off the beaten path sights, it's also cheap. Frequent hosts and hostesses in Morocco caution PCVs to remember, however, that the legendary Peace Corps hospitality isn't an open invitation to show up with your toothbrush, kick up your feet, and morph into the "Thing That Wouldn't Leave." Below, they offer advice on how to be a responsible guest and not abuse the system.



Don't become the "Thing That Wouldn't Leave!"

- If at all possible, notify the prospective, temporary roomies of your intention to visit.
- Don't overstay your welcome and turn your host or hostess with the mostest into a raging lunatic!
- Pay for your share of food. If you stay for several days, consider buying items such as toilet paper, snacks, or replacements for staple items that are used up during your stay (e.g., butter, coffee, condiments, etc.).
- Don't expect to be dining out all of the time for the special occasion of your arrival. The city folk, especially, are often on a tight budget.
- Clean up after yourself and help with the dishes. Keep muddy or sandy shoes at the doorway, or sweep up after you leave. (Remember, your mother doesn't live there!)
- Keep the noise to a minimum, especially when it's late. Respect the neighbors and the reputation of the host PCV. It's all fun and games until the guy next door gets miffed.
- Respect the image that the host PCV wishes to portray. (For example, dress appropriately, and don't get obnoxious in public).
- Watch what you say out in those street cafes. Remember, people speak English all over the place.
- Don't expect your host PCV to give up his/her blankets because you get a little chilly at night. Bring a sleeping bag!
- Most importantly, let common courtesy and respect be your guide, so that the next time you show up at someone's doorstep, they'll say with sincerity, "What a pleasant surprise!"

Reprinted from "Peaceworks," the Morocco Volunteer Newsletter.

The World Map 'Au Naturele'

Variations on the Popular Project

After painting a couple of world maps, a few "mappers" decided to take the emphasis off of political boundaries, especially in the face of ever-changing political climates, and place it more on the globe's natural features. Instead of "Which country is this?" geography lessons focus on topics such as: "What natural features does this part of the world exhibit?" and "How is our geography in the tropics similar or different from other places in the world?"

Now, we're not National Geographic cartographers, and with this map-making method you won't be able to pin-point Mt. Kilimanjaro or find the exact starting and stopping points of the Atacama desert. But by replacing the "color-by-country" method with one that varies colors with deserts, rivers, and icy land masses, a truer picture of the natural terrain emerges. Plus painting the map is 10 times the fun!

You'll need at least three shades of green: dark, medium and light. Paint in dark green two grids above and two grids below the equator all along the length of the map. Paint in medium green three to four grids above and below the dark green, and the rest (until you hit the Arctic and Antarctic) in light green. Remember, the northern parts of Canada, Europe, and Asia are snow and ice-covered and should be white.

Once the basic colors are placed, bring out the sponges and blend the colors. Mix yellow with white and/or brown to make a sand-like color, and sponge in the major deserts—the Sahara, Kalahari, Arabian, Great Victoria—as well as other dry areas.

With varying shades of brown, sponge in the major mountain ranges: the Andes, Rockies, Sierra Madres, Urals, Alps, Pyrenees, Himalayas. (Though sponging is fun, please try not to get carried away!) Use white paint to delineate snow caps on

mountains and the Antarctic and Arctic regions of the Northern Hemisphere. Use unmixed blue to paint in lakes, bays, and the major rivers. Consult atlases and other relief maps to guide you.

Once the map is dry, use black paint pens to go over coastlines and country borders.

Labeling the countries is the subjective part of this map-making method. You can either write in country names—which makes the map look a little messy but allows for quick references to countries—or number the countries and make a separate list to mount on a nearby wall. The latter is more aesthetically pleasing and can serve as a teaching exercise or quiz. The only drawback is students or community members may not refer to the list to learn country names.

However you want to go about it, the all natural world map is a proven success, a good time for all involved, and it comes highly recommended by those who have ventured to paint our natural world a little more naturally.

By Megan Hanson. Reprinted from "La Cadena," the Costa Rica Volunteer Newsletter.



Future cartographers hone their craft in Paraguay.

The Desire to Acquire

Keep In Mind Gifts In Kind

You're a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching science and have been at your site for six months. Having familiarized yourself with the facilities at your school, you realize there is a need for a school laboratory. Visions of a lab teeming with scientific gadgetry dance through your mind. Your principal and staff are quick to support the idea, and you've got the perfect spare room to house the lab. The only problem is: where will you find materials like compound microscopes, with mirrors and Bunsen Burners?

All Volunteers have experienced the desire to acquire. Materials crucial to the success of Volunteer projects, however, are sometimes not available in the host country. Keep in mind that the Peace Corps Gifts In Kind Program is one way that Volunteers may obtain those hard-to-find textbooks and typewriters.

But hold on a minute: get those fantasies of 48" color TVs out of your head. Given the large number of Volunteers in the field who are in need of work-related materials for primary or secondary projects, Gifts In Kind asks Peace Corps staff in-country to carefully scrutinize each request. Volunteers interested in obtaining materials should be sure to explore all avenues of acquiring the necessary items within the host country. After these have been exhausted, contact your APCD for information on how to access the Gifts In Kind Program.

Jordan Pollinger is Peace Corps' Gifts In Kind Program Specialist. He served in Namibia from 1993-95.

Loret Miller Ruppe

A Volunteer's Director

BY DEEDEE RUNKEL



“DON'T GO HOME tonight unless you can answer the question, 'What did you do for the Volunteers today?'”

These were the motivating words Loret Miller Ruppe, Director of the Peace Corps from 1981-89, offered her staff on a regular basis. And if she wasn't standing at the doorway of your office asking the question herself, she'd implanted it so squarely on your conscience that it was the rare one among us who wasn't prepared to answer it on a daily basis. Volunteers were, to Loret, our stars, the reason we existed, the true leaders of the Peace Corps. Our sole purpose, she regularly reminded us, was to ensure that the Volunteers could continue to do their jobs, not just well, but superbly.

My introduction to working at the Peace Corps came as the Agency was preparing a massive commemoration of its 25th anniversary. Loret, as she was known by everyone from Volunteers to staff, heads of state and the diplomatic

corps, cast a wide net for people who could help with the intensive public relations barrage she would unleash to let the world know, once and for all, that the Peace Corps was not only still alive, but was vibrant, full of unending virtue, the greatest job anyone ever had, and the most worthwhile venture ever made with public monies.

What I learned from Loret was relentless-ness. She mobilized and galvanized so many people through loving relentless-ness. It would be impossible to assemble in one place all of the people whom she inspired. Loret, who died of cancer last August at the age of 60, never gave up, rarely relaxed long enough to take a breath, and was always looking for the

next strategy to celebrate the work of the Volunteers and to make sure they had the support they needed. If we didn't think of a way to do it, she did.

When Loret went to the field, she would spend most of her time there with Volunteers listening to their stories and hearing their gripes, which more than a few would want to share. She made sure to take with her a good supply of M&Ms and Oreos. Upon her return, she would call families to report that the Volunteer was doing a stupendous job, and that it was clearly an indication of their contribution as parents.

There really was no constituency Loret did not reach with the message that they were the most important people in the world and needed to join the Peace Corps' efforts to show the rest of the United States the path to the global village. Peace Corps Volunteers, she would tell every audience, "are the peacemakers who will lead us into the next century. They know the world. They will show us the way."

The first major constituency Loret reached was the members of the Reagan Administration, some of whom had advocated an end to the Peace Corps. She would remonstrate, "How could this be? The Peace Corps is surely the most conservative undertaking there could be. It is voluntary; it is working at the grass roots to promote self-determination; it is inexpensive compared to other similar efforts." It wasn't long before she had the support of most of her colleagues in the Administration and President Reagan was being told by the President of Fiji that his nation would not be the same without the help of Peace Corps Volunteers.



Director Ruppe addresses RPCVs at the Peace Corps' 35th anniversary celebration; (above) visiting a women's cooperative in Ghana.

The Democratic Congress was also one of her favorite targets and often the keystone of her Congressional strategy to increase the Peace Corps' budget. She spared them no end of documentation on how cuts would impact Volunteers in the

When Loret went to the field, she would spend most of her time there with Volunteers listening to their stories and hearing their gripes . . . She made sure to take with her a good supply of M&Ms and Oreos.

field. When another arm of the Government was threatening to move the headquarters to Virginia, she promptly went to Capitol Hill to talk about how impossible it would be for diarrheal medevacs to take the Metro, where there were no toilets, to their doctor's appointments. It worked. If she spoke to high schools, she told administrators they ought to think about making the schools Peace Corps training centers in the future. If she spoke to colleges, she told the graduates success in their careers would be defined by a Peace Corps experience. If she spoke to Rotary Clubs or senior citizen groups, she told them their expertise was essential to the developing world.

Businesses, universities, other voluntary organizations, governmental agencies, and foundations were on her priority list for enlistment into the Peace Corps' "Leadership for Peace" campaign, an initiative that followed the 25th Anniversary. This effort translated the vision of the Peace Corps' next 25 years in a report Loret commissioned from a group called the "Future Team." With its nine members assembled from all over headquarters and the field, the Future Team was charged with developing a collective vision for the future and reporting back to

Loret. Like most Peace Corps gatherings where the number of expressed opinions exceeds the number of people present, the Future Team had to struggle for six weeks to reach consensus before presenting Loret with the results.

Future Team members were lavishly complimented for their work but then instructed to start its implementation the next day. Loret wasted no time getting the message and the challenges of the Future Team out to the broader public when she launched Leadership for Peace. A memorable moment in this project came at the conclusion of her pitch to the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal*, a place allegedly made more friendly by the presence of an RPCV on the board.

"That sounds pretty good, but we just don't do peace, Mrs. Ruppe,"

the editor said.

Undaunted, Loret suggested that the *Journal* would be well served if it paid more attention to peace and particularly to the enriching impact on the globalization of our economy of thousands and thousands of Americans returning to the United States with a world view.

Inspired by the myriad spins Loret could put on the Peace Corps story, her staff around the world often looked for unique and unusual venues for her to meet Volunteers or charm a new constituency, sometimes mischievously.

On a recruiting trip to Los Angeles, the recruitment office manager convinced her that the L.A. Dodgers baseball team wanted her to sing the National Anthem to open the playoffs. He even brought along a

tape recorder so she could practice. As she earnestly sang the first few notes, those of us in the car burst into laughter, and Loret, realizing she'd been duped, ultimately joined in.

That day and every other day, she would ask whoever was listening if they could see how important the Peace Corps was to our collective futures. And so it was, day in and day out with Loret.

Loret Miller Ruppe reminded people all over the world of the virtue inherent in the Peace Corps and in every Peace Corps Volunteer. She left an extraordinary legacy everyone of us must strive—everyday—to carry on.

Deedee Runkel served as Director of Public Affairs, Director of Congressional Relations, and Country Director/Belize between 1986 and 1994.



**No constituency she did not reach:
Director Ruppe entertaining PCVs in Mali.**

The Loret Miller Ruppe Memorial Lecture Series

Soon after Loret Miller Ruppe died of cancer in June 1996, Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan established the Loret Miller Ruppe Memorial Lecture Series in her honor. Its purpose is to provide a forum for prominent individuals to address public policy questions that bear on the Peace Corps' mission, such as international development, volunteerism, and public service. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the principal negotiator for the Bosnia Peace Accords and the Peace Corps Country Director in Morocco from 1970-72, gave the inaugural lecture last September. The Peace Corps intends to host the lecture series several times a year as a means to contribute to the discussion of important issues facing America and the world as the next century approaches.

Crisis Control

Crisis Corps Volunteers provide short-term relief to those in need.

BY PAUL EAGLE

THE TELEPHONE RANG IN STEVE Johnston's home in Needham, Mass., on Dec. 24. It was Steve's former Peace Corps Country Director, the last person in the world

he expected to hear from on Christmas Eve. He called to ask if Steve would be willing to help out. There was a crisis in Antigua, an island in the Caribbean. Hurricane Luis had struck and left 2,000 houses destroyed and thousands of people homeless.

Steve was the right person to call. He had served as a Peace Corps Volunteer for four years in Gabon and was an expert in primary school construction. He also worked for a year with the International Rescue Committee in Tanzania. Steve was still looking for a job in the States when the Peace Corps called—perfect timing. With little hesitation, he said he'd be willing to leave Massachusetts for a few months to join up with the new program that Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan was calling the "Crisis Corps."

The Crisis Corps is now an important part of the Peace Corps. The program utilizes the cross-cultural, language, and technical skills of third-year or recently Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to provide rapid-response, short-term assistance during humanitarian crises and natural disasters in the developing world.

In the last 10 years, the number of overseas "complex emergencies," such as civil strife and displaced persons, has

more than doubled. This alarming global trend has resulted in a number of countries having years of hard development work obliterated within weeks or even days. The Crisis Corps hopes to intervene and alleviate the hardships that many of these countries suffer after a disaster.

This isn't the first time the Peace Corps has forayed into disaster relief work. During a drought in Southern Africa in the early 1990s, Volunteers built water catchment systems to collect water and protect the environment. In 1994, they helped Rwandan refugees grow their own food. And last year, Volunteers assisted Bosnian refugees in setting up a summer education camp for children and adults.

The Peace Corps is making plans to send more Crisis Corps workers overseas. Over the next year, at least 40 Crisis Corps Volunteers will head out to help countries in need. In February, the Crisis Corps sent Volunteers to West Africa to work with refugees from the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

It was during the Antigua project, however, that Steve and his group witnessed the official beginning of the Crisis Corps.

Steve arrived in Antigua after he got the call and met with other Crisis Corps workers. They were all returned or third-year Peace Corps Volunteers who, because of their strong cross-cultural and technical experience, were able to hit the ground running. They met with the vocational school staff and began construction work almost immediately. The Corps workers used steel bands to strengthen floor-to-foundation and roof-to-wall connections, and they installed hurricane clips which also strengthened roof connections to the tops of walls. As they built these "hurricane resistant" homes, they transferred these skills to local vocational workers.

Their efforts paid off. Steve recalls some of the impact his group had on the people of Antigua. "I distinctly remember someone named Mr. Belton. He was an older gentleman who had lost everything he owned in the hurricane, so he was living in a makeshift plywood shelter, not unlike a walk-in closet. He still worked full-time as a garbage man during the day but insisted on helping us with his new house after work. His drive and initiative really kept us going."

Steve also remembers Mrs. Green. "She was a single woman with six children. They were literally left out in the rain. It felt really good to watch her and her family get out of the elements and move into their new home."

Six months later, Steve was back in Massachusetts working at the Bank of Boston. Though building hurricane resistant homes in Antigua now seems far away, he says it left him feeling like he made a real contribution. "It's great to be able to say that you have built homes for people. It's even better to know that traditionally underserved communities, like the poor and elderly who were homeless after the hurricane, now have their own houses because of the Crisis Corps."

Paul Eagle was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Liberia from 1988-90

Volunteers Write:

WHEN SIMBU COMES

A piece of cloth tacked to a neem tree with a strange painting on it. A creature with a cat's mask and up-raised claws. When I asked the Serere villagers about it, all they said was, "Simbu, Simbu is coming tonight."

I heard the drums just before sunset and trudged through the village's sand paths to the Place de Palaver where I'd seen the painting. Under the trees, in front of a row of drummers, a woman danced, swaying her hips back and forth and twirling her skirt. Her face was layered with exaggerated make-up—lilac eye-shadow, fuschia rouge, and orange lipstick. The crowd laughed and applauded her suggestive dance. Youssou, my friend, smirked. "That's not a woman, you know; it's a man." Fooled me.

People of all ages drifted from the village towards the square. I turned around to survey the scene and saw four apparitions appear from the north, east, south, and west of the village. They came running at terrific speeds, scattering the screaming children before them. Over their heads they held dark hoods that billowed in the wind. Leather *gris-gris* coiled around their legs and slithered around their arms and waists. They roared and growled like ravenous lions. As they neared the square, the children who had gathered there ran away in terror, a flurry of pink soles kicking up sand. The braver older ones clung to each other giggling nervously. Simbu, the lions, charged into the ring, where they tore around in frenzy to the beat of tam tams. The female impersonator-turned-lion-tamer raised her arms, pointed a finger, and chanted orders to them. They pulled off their hoods, and the spectators gasped. Yellow paint streaked their foreheads, black carwhiskers bristled on their cheeks, and green circles glowed around their red, wild eyes. Clots of tawny fur stuck in their thick hair, clawed paws covered their hands. One wore a lion skin over his head

that draped down his back into a tail. They fell on all fours and circled their tamer, growling, snapping, scratching the ground with their claws. The crowd moaned with delight; the tam tams slowed. Suddenly, a simbu darted through the startled spectators to scatter curious children hanging back at the crowd's edge. One simbu spied me. He shot towards me, skidded to a halt inches in front of me and pawed the air, grunting. Youssou interpreted, "He wants money." I was not about to argue. I forked over a 250-franc piece, which the simbu snatched with his teeth and swallowed.

The simbu wove in lightning motion in and out of the square, pounding his muscled legs up and down, dropping to his hands and knees, somersaulting, leaping straight up into the air, and raking up clouds of

s a n d . Youssou whispered that they feared the lions' spirits might possess them. That's why they wore so many *gris-gris*—for protection. The crowd, excited and fearful, chanted "S i m b u , simbu." The Sereres abandoned

themselves to the ritual that emerged from their distant past and the simbu, the lions that roamed ancient Africa.

Leita Kaldi is a Volunteer in Simela, Senegal.

The Concert

"If music be the food of love, play on." —William Shakespeare

Solomon Islanders love music. Children here were enchanted when I showed them the sounds that could be made by cupping the hands to create a sound chamber and blowing over the opening at the thumbs. The previous day, I had played a song that the children learned in Sunday school. They all tried to imitate it, playing on their own new-

found musical instrument, but they found it somewhat difficult. I could hear them struggling with the notes as they walked toward their village.

Walking home the next day from primary school, however, we were ambushed by Amos, a nine-year-old Polynesian child from Rennell Island, and his friends who leapt out from the coconut grove and performed the song for us. They had practiced all day, and Amos had perfected it. In celebration, we all joined

in the praise song, truly making a joyful noise.

Douglas Dalrymple is a Volunteer in East Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands.



Doug Dalrymple makes a joyful noise with his friends in the Solomon Islands.

Staying in the Field

Apply your skills as a United Nations Volunteer.

BY TRISH HEADY

ELISA LEVY WASN'T SURE HER TWO years as a PCV English teacher in a Moldovan village would equip her with the high level skills she would need as a Gender



in Development Specialist for the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) program in Moldova. But she found that her ability to speak the local language and her deep familiarity with gender issues and the Moldovan people were crucial to the success of her one-year UNV tour.

"When I decided to stay in Moldova for an additional year after having spent two years as a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Volunteer, I had no idea how valuable my experience in the Peace Corps would be in dealing with people, in working with an organization that was new to me, and in feeling confident that I could handle the problems that came up on a daily basis," she says.

Elisa was one of about 4,000 UNVs working in 134 countries in the last year in a variety of programs, including community-based initiatives, elections and peace-building, environmental management, and humanitarian relief efforts.

With over 120 nationalities represented in its pool of volunteers, UNV is probably one of the most diverse volunteer organizations in the world. Fifty-two percent of UNVs work in Africa, 20 percent in Asia Pacific, 17 percent in Inter-America, and 11 percent in Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the Arab states. Most UNVs are themselves nationals of developing countries—only about 25 percent come from industrialized nations.

UNV is a great option for Peace Corps Volunteers who want to stay in the field and apply their skills in new ways. "I found myself in situations that would require me to speak to news reporters or participate in meetings with Moldovan government officials," says Elisa. Not exactly the same as teaching kids in a classroom.

The length of service for UNVs varies with each program from a few weeks in the case of election monitors, to several years as Program Officers. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers made up about three-quarters of the UNV Electoral Supervisors from the United States who helped monitor the elections in Bosnia last September. Over two dozen had just completed Peace Corps service.

"I thought I'd just be able to slide in, having served for two years in a former Soviet Union country, but Bosnia and Kazakstan are very different," says RPCV Kevin Streeter, who went from the wind-swept

brown steppes of Kazakstan to the rolling lush hills of the Republika Srpska. "But Peace Corps gave me the tools and motivation to adapt quickly and effectively."

Approximately 13,000 UNVs have served in the 25 years since the program was established. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have consistently made up at least 50 percent of the U.S. citizens serving as UNVs. "UNV often looks for Peace Corps experience since being a PCV tells them that the candidate already has what it takes to function in an inter-cultural environment," says Ken Murphy, a Senegal RPCV who also served as a Program Officer in UNV/Nepal.

How does UNV differ from the Peace Corps? Peace Corps fields approximately 3,500 U.S. citizens per year; UNV may field 100 U.S. citizens. UNVs must have a minimum of two years full-time work experience. UNVs are part of a multi-lateral team and often serve at the ministerial level. Length of service can be anywhere from three weeks to two years (12 months is most common). Families are accepted.

Probably the biggest difference between the two organizations, however, is the level of independence that UNVs have. "As a PCV, I was trained, attended conferences, bonded with other Volunteers. As a UNV, I was not even met at the airport and started work the day I arrived without language or cultural training," says Robert Hollingsworth, who was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Western Samoa and is now working in the Solomon Islands for UNV. "Compared with the Peace Corps, the UNV program provides me greater freedom to succeed or fail on my own."

Peace Corps Volunteers can apply to UNV within 12 months after their close of service (please do not apply any earlier than three months before your C.O.S. date). If you're interested in UNV, send your resume to: Peace Corps/United Nations Volunteers, 1990 K Street, NW Washington, DC 20526.

Trish Heady is the Peace Corps' United Nations Volunteer Coordinator.

REMEMBRANCES

Nancy Coutu

Like many Volunteers, Nancy Coutu was drawn to Peace Corps because she wanted to contribute something to the world, "to dive into a challenging job and make a difference in the lives of others." In her 18 months of service as a parks and wildlife Volunteer in Madagascar, she had many remarkable accomplishments. Nancy, a native of Nashua, N.H., helped to preserve an environmentally protected area near her local village of Bereketa. She led a project in her community that used money raised from entrance fees to the park to rehabilitate a primary school in the area. She taught English to the staff at the local hotel to



help them accommodate visitors. Most importantly, she gained the love and respect of her village. On April 9 of last year, Nancy was killed as she was riding her bike to a meeting near Bereketa. Three men were convicted of this horrible crime. At a memorial service for Nancy, members of her community sang all night for her as part of the Malagasy custom. "Nancy's village mourned her exactly as someone of the village," said Joe Shaeffer, a fellow Volunteer and close friend of Nancy's. "It's difficult to express what a tremendous compliment this is and the accomplishment it represents. Volunteers like Nancy strove to integrate themselves into the community and be part a part of its daily life. There were so many people she touched in a meaningful and special way."

Annika Rodriguez

When she applied to be a Peace Corps Volunteer, Annika Rodriguez wrote that the key to breaking through the barriers that separate nations was always to treat others with respect. "We each share many things in common, yet we are all unique individuals," she stated. "This is true no matter what country you're in or what language you speak." In her life she exemplified this truth as a kind of code to

live by. "Annika always looked you in the eye and paid 100 percent attention to you," said a friend. During her short time as a Trainee in Honduras, it earned her the respect and admiration of her fellow Trainees. "She was our anchor," one Trainee said. "She had the innate ability to make everyone feel important. She will be very, very missed." Annika drowned on October 17 of last year when the jeep she was riding in became stuck in the Quiscamote River near the town of La Union in Olancho. A Peace Corps Trainer and RPCV, Kathleen Temple de Martinez, also died in the accident. Annika, who grew up in Levittown, Puerto Rico, left in the minds of all those she touched a sense of loss for the great things she would have done. Said Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan said of Annika, "She was preparing to become an outstanding Volunteer. She was a gifted and talented woman who was loved and admired by those who served with her in Honduras. They all considered Annika to be the star of their class."

Kyrstin Sharninghausen

The first week and a half were filled with thoughts of coming home," Kyrstin Sharninghausen wrote not long after arriving at her site in Namibia, "but at this point, I've decorated, figured out how to wash my dishes, come to terms with the realities of my latrine, bonded with my homestead family, been welcomed by the entire community, and observed new and exciting species of insects at close range." This abiding optimism and adventurous spirit were Kyrstin's trademark and her friends and her family in Carolina, R.I., say it spilled over into all aspects of her life. She was a dynamic presence in her community. As a teacher trainer, she organized workshops, taught English, and set up a World Wise School pen-pal program between her students and school children in Richmond, R. I. On Nov. 17 of last year, Kyrstin died in a car accident in Namibia. "She energized an entire school with enthusiasm for learning," said U.S. Ambassador to Namibia George Ward, who had visited Kyrstin at her school. "She gave more of her spirit, more of her energy, and more of her love than we could ever have expected."





PEACE CORPS' MISSION

The Peace Corps was created to promote world peace and friendship.

Our goals are:

- To help the people of interested countries meet their needs for trained men and women;
- To help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the people served; and
- To promote a better understanding of other people on the part of the American people.