

My Peace Corps Assignment in Slovakia

I joined the Peace Corps after retiring from a 40 year career as an educator. I was a classroom teacher in elementary schools, later became a reading specialist and then spent the last third of my career as a school principal. I had requested an assignment in Eastern Europe but was informed by the Peace Corps recruiter that I would probably be assigned to the Pacific Islands. So I readjusted my expectations to sandy beaches, palm trees, etc. and when I received the call and was informed that my assignment was to be in Slovakia, I naively asked the recruiter what chain of islands Slovakia was in!

After training in Bratislava, I reported to my post in Rimavska Sobota in Southern Slovakia not far from Hungary. Since I had always worked in Elementary Education, I was greatly unnerved to discover that I was to teach English in an Academic Gymnazium (high school). On the first day of school, I approached my first class with great trepidation but when all the students stood up, I realized that this was going to be all right after all! My students hoped to go on to University and were eager to learn English so it turned out to be a wonderful assignment! Also on school vacations I was able to travel to many neighboring countries and collected a lifetime of memories.

I still correspond with some of my former students and colleagues. We have a group of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers in Ashland, Oregon where I now live who march every year in the Fourth of July Parade and receive a great reception from the crowd!