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Association

Fall 2016

Vol. 29, No. 3 • \$4.99
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WorldView (ISSN 1047-5338) is published four times per year (Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter) by the National Peace Corps Association (located at 1900 L Street, NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036-5002) to provide news and comment about communities and issues of the world of serving and returned Peace Corps Volunteers. WorldView © 1978 National Peace Corps Association.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. & additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER

Please send address changes to

WorldView magazine
National Peace Corps Association
1900 L Street NW, Suite 610
Washington, DC 20036-5002

ADVERTISING

Questions regarding advertising should be sent to advertising@peacecorpsconnect.org.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Magazine subscriptions may be purchased from the National Peace Corps Association by check or credit card. Prices for individuals are \$25 and institutions \$35 (add \$10 for overseas delivery). Order forms are also available on the NPCA website at www.peacecorpsconnect.org or www.worldviewmagazine.org.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Articles published in the magazine are not intended to reflect the views of the Peace Corps, or those of the National Peace Corps Association, a nonprofit educational membership organization for those whose lives are influenced by Peace Corps. The NPCA is independent of the federal agency, the Peace Corps. Further details at <http://www.worldviewmagazine.org>.

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Letters to the editor are welcomed. Unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, or other illustrations will be considered. The editors prefer written proposals before receiving original material. Send queries or manuscripts to the editor at news@peacecorpsconnect.org or by mail to the NPCA address.

All inquiries can be addressed to the appropriate person at NPCA by fax at 202-293-7554 or by mail to NPCA, or through the NPCA website at www.peacecorpsconnect.org or www.worldviewmagazine.com.

WorldView

A magazine for the greater Peace Corps community



Field workers in Southeast Asia.

CREDIT: PEACE CORPS

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Terraced rice fields in Mu Cang Chai 200 miles north of Hanoi.

CREDIT: REUTERS/NGUYEN HUY KHAM

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I chose the Kroc School's Master of Peace and Justice program because of the theory + practice model. At the risk of sounding cliché, the Kroc School was one of the highlights of my academic and personal life. With exposure to international students in the program, the world became a much smaller, more exciting place. The beauty of the degree is also its versatility and ability to be applied to almost any setting."

- Cindi Cassady

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A PARADE OF NATIONS

Watching Mariama Mamoumou run in Rio

By Glenn Blumhorst

A moment of nostalgia came over me as the small but proud contingent of Guatemalan athletes entered Maracanã Stadium at the opening ceremony of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. A sighting of my own country of service flag and a cohort of Guatemalan "paisanos" took me instantly back to my Peace Corps service in the indigenous village of San Miguel Chicáj.

My fellow RPCVs Brett McNaught and Virginia Emmons-McNaught (Niger 2000-2002) had reason to feel an enormous sense of pride as they watched the procession. Representing Niger in the Olympic Games was none other than Mariama Mamoumou, the 19-year old track runner who had once been the little five-year-old girl living in the straw hut next to Virginia in her Peace Corps village. Many of us hope for the proverbial child next door from our Peace Corps village to grow up to be such an accomplished adult, thanks to our intervention in his or her life.

I'm sure that there are, in fact, thousands of stories similar to Mariama's. Each year, one of NPCA's most prestigious awards, the Harris Wofford Global Citizen Award, is bestowed on a host country national whose life and career have been influenced by the Peace Corps. This year we honor Mali national Ibrahim Sankare, who, with the support of

Peace Corps Volunteers Michele Magera (1991-93) and Brigid Andrew (1993-95), pursued an education and dedicated his life to service. Sankare is now founder and director of Delta Survie, a non-governmental organization committed to fighting for the integration of marginalized populations.

Back to the Olympics...One could not help but be struck by the Refugee Olympic Team, competing under the banner of the specially-formed refugee team of 10 athletes forced to flee their homelands, including Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The 2016 Rio Games are the first to have a team of refugees compete, in recognition of the 60 million refugees around the world. It was just last August that 18-year-old Syrian swimmer Yusra Mardini, with her sister Sarah, pushed and towed their sinking dingy with 20 passengers to the Greek island of Lesbos as they fled Damascus.

The hands of the Peace Corps community were among those that reached out and helped Yusra ashore at Lesbos. Former Peace Corps staffers Michael Honegger and Tim Smith were on Lesbos Island at the time. Stunned by the flood of arriving immigrants, they helped raise funds and distribute provisions. Their colleague, former Peace Corps staffer Barbara Busch (PCHQ 1964-2001), later headed to Lesbos to help, and upon her return to the U.S., reached out to

me. Over the last several months she has championed an NPCA working group to respond to the refugee crisis at home and abroad. Jointly with our partners such as Water Charity and NPCA affiliate groups, the Peace Corps community is taking action.

Some 206 countries, plus the Refugee Olympic Team, were represented at the 2016 Rio Games. The U.S. Olympic Team evoked pride in seeing the U.S. flag raised multiple times after their spectacular medal-winning athletic performances. As a community representing the United States, they undoubtedly forged friendships with, and impacted, their fellow athletes from around the world.

In commemoration of the Peace Corps' 55th anniversary, in 2016 we raise high the Peace Corps banner and the flag of each of the 141 countries where Peace Corps has served since its founding in 1961. At our community's annual conference—Peace Corps Connect—leaders from around the country gather to ideate, innovate, and motivate all of us to respond to global challenges and renew our commitment to Peace Corps ideals. Together, we are a force for good.

The author is president of the NPCA and served in Guatemala from 1988 to 1991. Contact Glenn at president@peacecorpsconnect.org

WHERE CAN PEACE CORPS FIND MORE MONEY?

New spending packages may be a start

J.M. Ascienzo

When President George W. Bush proposed the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief during his 2003 State of the Union address he asked Congress to commit \$15 billion over five years to combat the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. The President called it “a work of mercy beyond all current international efforts to help the people of Africa,” and he enlisted the Peace Corps as a key partner in the historic initiative. Culturally assimilated, able to speak national languages and local dialects, and with access to hard-to-reach places, Volunteers were the ideal boots on the ground for the massive effort.

Now 13 years later, the Peace Corps is not only a key partner, it's an indispensable one in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Partnering with PEPFAR in 25 countries around the world, the Peace Corps sends traditional two-year Volunteers and Response Volunteers to work in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, to work with USAID on supply-chain management, and since 2013 has sent Global Health Service Partnership nurse and doctor Volunteers to train host-country doctors and nurses at teaching universities and facilities in what is now five countries.

“Basically, we are the only U.S. government agency working in PEPFAR that's on the ground—that lives with communities,” said Marie McLeod, Director of Peace Corps’ Global Health and HIV Office at the 21st International AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa in July. “We live with these people. We are the ones that do this grassroots-level work.”

President Bush’s commitment to combating HIV/AIDS around the

globe is now a commitment to the Peace Corps as well. PEPFAR funding currently provides for staff and programming and fields approximately 700 Volunteers—or about 10 percent of those currently-serving—through nearly \$50 million in funding.

In addition to PEPFAR, the Peace Corps partners with USAID to provide crucial project implementation through the President's Malaria Initiative and Feed the Future, and provided vital assistance to the Centers for Disease Control during America's response to the West African Ebola outbreak, work made possible by transfer of funds from the partner agencies.

Peace Corps' interagency partnerships have resulted in the agency becoming an essential—and

cost-efficient—actor in several whole-of-government initiatives.

While the agency looks forward to continuing these partnerships, there is no guarantee that the partner agencies can maintain robust funding for the partnerships, nor is there a guarantee that the Peace Corps' budget itself is off limits to cuts, especially as America's International Affairs budget continues to shrink.

At \$39 billion and making up less than one percent of America's budget, International Affairs includes all overseas nondefense agencies and programs like PEPFAR and the Peace Corps. International Affairs also includes an additional \$15 billion in funding for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)—emergency spending for



Dr. Jessie Reynolds, a Seed Global Health Partnership physician educator, works with a student in Malawi.

TIM COMLEY/GHSP

temporary programs like combating ISIS or for responding to humanitarian crises—but these funds do not extend to the Peace Corps. President Obama's fiscal year 2017 International Affairs budget request of \$54 billion is slightly less than this year's current level, and down 12 percent since fiscal year 2010.

Additionally, the two-year budget deal brokered by President Obama and House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) at the end of 2015 that prevented massive cuts—and paved the way for the Peace Corps' historic budget of \$410 million for fiscal year 2016—is set to expire at the end of fiscal year 2017, with no guarantee for what will come after.

Adding to that uncertainty is the fact that the public's appetite for increasing foreign aid—which polls show it

Peace Corps Volunteers don't work in active conflict zones, but they counter the potential for violent extremism by providing opportunities for boys and young men, access to education for girls, and helping host-country volunteer programs at the national level ...

consistently believes to be at around 25 percent—isn't likely to spike anytime soon.

In this environment, flat funding—in reality a decrease after adjusting for inflation—is considered by many to be a victory.

The environment is also considered a cause for concern; it may be time for the Peace Corps to look elsewhere for additional funds.

The office of Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine might not be a bad place to start. Over the summer the senator from Virginia,

who is a member of the Armed Services Committee, introduced an amendment to the *2016 National Defense Authorization Act* that would have allowed field commanders to transfer Defense Department funds to USAID to counter violent extremism. Efforts like Sen. Kaine's and a similar one by Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) are responses to a growing number of active and retired military personnel and State Department officials seeking a whole-of-government strategy to counter violent extremism.

Peace Corps Volunteers don't work in active conflict zones, but they counter the potential for violent extremism by providing opportunities for boys and young men, access to education for girls, and helping host-country volunteer programs at the national level similar to Malaysia's MYCorps that actively counters violent extremism. Malaysia's Sports and Youth Minister Khairy Jamaluddin says MYCorps fosters leadership and volunteerism and channels "the energy from young Malaysians away from extremist threats, from the lure of organizations like ISIS."

If Congress is serious about implementing whole-of-government strategies to tackle 21st-century challenges, it needs to prioritize cost-efficient, effective programs. As President Bush said in his 2003 State of the Union address, "seldom has history offered a greater opportunity to do so much for so many." There's much to do, and the Peace Corps can help do it.

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J.M. Ascienzo is the NPCA government relations officer and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 2012 to 2015.

WHEN OUR PEACE CORPS VALUES MATTER MOST

There was growing unease regarding discriminatory rhetoric targeting refugees, immigrants, and other minorities in the United States almost a year ago when NPCA President Glenn Blumhorst condemned those hateful messages in a blog. We believe his message remains relevant so many months later that we have chosen to reprint his call for tolerance in the magazine.

—The Editors

Like many of you, I am deeply disturbed by the recent chorus of negative and aggressive speech targeting immigrants and refugees in our country. At times it has seemed impossible to pass even a single day without encountering prejudicial, uninformed, and inflammatory messages in the press and on social media.

Over the course of 55 years, more than 220,000 of us have lived and worked side by side, often in isolated, marginalized communities, with the citizens of 141 countries. Among those that have invited us and welcomed us are predominantly Muslim countries—places like Morocco, Turkey, Jordan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Indonesia, and Senegal—and our Latin American neighbors like Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Bolivia.

Together with our hosts we celebrated, worshipped, and grieved. We broke bread and learned each other's languages. We immersed ourselves in our shared humanity. Because as Peace Corps Volunteers we are tasked not merely with transferring skills and knowledge, but also with sharing, in a spirit of humility and respect, what it means to be an American.

The hateful messages we have been hearing do not reflect who we are as a country. They make our fellow citizens feel unsafe, and those here fleeing violence unwelcome. And they threaten to damage the reservoirs of good will abroad that Peace Corps Volunteers have painstakingly built over decades. They are wrong and we condemn them.

As Volunteers, we promised to take on a third task: to foster among Americans a greater understanding of the places where we served.

Now is the time for us to rededicate ourselves to this third goal of the Peace Corps, to commit ourselves to education and constructive dialogue—to the open hand of America, rather than the closed fist.

Together, I urge us all to reach out, in large ways and small, to immigrants, refugees and other minorities in our communities. Welcome them as we were welcomed when we were Volunteers far from home.

Call out hate speech. Counter stereotypes and prejudice—at work, in our homes, in public, with friends.

Share your Peace Corps story in person. Seek opportunities to speak at libraries, schools, places of worship, civic and social organizations. Share what it was like to serve in a Muslim country, in

a minority community, or simply to be a newcomer in a strange land.

Share your Peace Corps experience even more widely. Write letters to the editor and op-ed articles. Use social media to showcase messages and images of tolerance and respect using the hashtag #PCIsPeace.

Write to politicians and your Congressional delegation. Let people know that prejudicial speech undermines the mission of the Peace Corps and the values of our nation.

Connect with your fellow Peace Corps Volunteers. Reach for encouragement and support when you feel frustrated or discouraged. Many of our affiliate groups have established community outreach efforts, or are mobilizing to respond to this newly hostile climate. The National Peace Corps Association will in turn share information and support awareness-raising efforts by our community.

Friendship. Freedom. Openness. Respect. These are American values to which we dedicated 27 months of our lives, and these are the values that continue to animate everything we do, both professionally and personally, as Returned—not former, not "ex"—Peace Corps Volunteers.

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GOOSE BUMPS

One of my most vivid memories over my many years on staff here at National Peace Corps Association is what happened when a former Peace Corps staffer now working in Libya wrote to me, "Can you help me find...?" In just a few minutes, I was on the phone with a stunned Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, who then Skyped with his former student a few days later. The message to that RPCV was simple, "Thank you!"

"Thank you! Your service made a difference to me and later to my daughters."

I get goose bumps just writing that. And to know that I had a part in making that happen? Wow!

So, then, why am I excited about our new community-building web platform? People don't need to call me anymore. They can connect directly to each other. But that's exactly it: there will be even more connections made, stories shared and "thank yous" sent, all valuable demonstrations of the impact of Peace Corps.

Our association has hosted a range of technologies to keep the greater Peace Corps community better informed over the years, always searching for ways to better connect and engage our members.

Based on feedback, input and testing within our community, we launched our new community-building platform this July.

The site is designed around our three goals—helping our community thrive, making Peace Corps its best, and increasing development impact. To make that happen, this platform combines both a website and a database. No more multiple places to go and passwords to remember. It's all here:

- An online directory of our 158 (and growing) affiliate groups
- One-stop membership in NPCA (by the way, it's now free, in case you missed that) and those 158 affiliate groups
- Direct support of that impact in the field through targeted contributions to our Community Fund
- A searchable directory of community members
- A calendar of events hosted by our community members around the globe, and
- The latest news and action items for the Peace Corps community.

Now we need you. Go to www.peacecorpsconnect.org and log in using your email address. Update your profile. If we don't yet have your email or you are not yet in our database, just click on "Join

Now" in the upper right corner, or contact us at nPCA@peacecorpsconnect.org and we'll get you set up in no time.

There's more you can do. Add a photo and a story or two. Opt into our email newsletter and let us know what information we can share in our online directory. Discover a friend from your Peace Corps days and drop them an email. You don't have to reveal your email address, if you don't want to. And finally, tell your other friends to come to www.peacecorpsconnect.org.

Membership is free, but please join us as a Mission Partner to continue to get this magazine and, better yet, help all of us "champion lifelong commitment to Peace Corps ideals." The more, the merrier—and the mightier. Thank you!

When you reconnect with your former site mate, share the success of your long-lost student and tell the story of the impact Peace Corps has had. Then give me a call or email me via the platform. I'll be watching online and your story will surely give me those goose bumps again. Bring 'em on!

Anne Baker

SO MANY BOOKS

The Library of Congress is the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and the largest library in the world. Among more than 155 million items in various languages, disciplines, and formats



in its possession are books written by Americans who have served in the Peace Corps.

The library has a new bibliography of more than 550 books written by Peace Corps Volunteers and staff about the Peace Corps titled *Annotated Bibliography of Peace Corps Writers' Books in the Library of Congress*. You can check out the list at The Library of Congress web site by searching "Peace Corps books."

And thanks to Patricia and John Garamendi and Marian Haley Beil—all RPCVs from Ethiopia—the Library of Congress is home for a special collection of books written by Peace Corps Volunteers. Beil served there from 1962 to 1964 and the Garamendis served from 1966 to 1968.

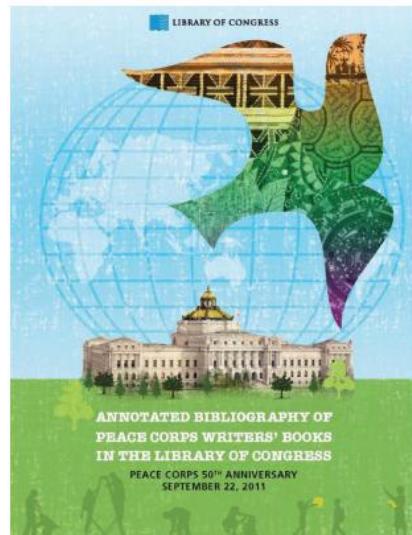
Rep. John Garamendi wrote in 2011 to the then-Librarian of Congress, James Billington, and asked Dr. Billington to mark the 50th anniversary of the Peace

Corps by creating a collection and hosting a luncheon for all Peace Corps writers.

Patricia Garamendi arranged for the luncheon and certificates of creativity were presented by Congressman Garamendi to those Peace Corps writers who attended.

The collection of titles used for the Library of Congress bibliography was provided by Beil, a co-founder of the newsletter RPCV Writers and Readers, who wanted to recognize and promote the literary works of former Volunteers and staff. More titles were added to the list for the 55th anniversary bibliography by Elizabeth Jenkins-Joffe, a retired recommending officer at the library who served in Colombia from 1963 to 1965.

For more than 50 years, Peace Corps writers who have written memoirs, novels, poetry or collections of stories about their experiences. Many more books have been written since 2011. The library's



bibliography does not include books written about the Peace Corps experience that are not in their catalog. If you want to add titles to the Library of Congress

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Affiliate Group Network Annual Meeting
1:00pm-5:30pm

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John Coyne

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For 50 years, Peace Corps Volunteers have asked for and received boxes, pallets of boxes, and shipping containers of classroom and library books from the International Book Project in Lexington, Kentucky.

Some of the book packers at International Book Project's warehouse are Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. And more than 20 percent of the six million books IBP has sent to schools and libraries around the globe were requested by Peace Corps Volunteers serving in dozens of countries.



Harry Siler's host parents welcomed a shipment of IBP books for five primary schools in South Africa's Limpopo Province.

Peace Corps recognized the International Book Project as one of its 20 Partners for Peace in 1992.

The book problem in many countries was clearly expressed by a Peace Corps Volunteer couple in the Philippines who wrote to IBP in 1978 that "... the users far outnumber the books available."

A Peace Corps Volunteer at Wainimala Junior Secondary School in the center of Fiji's Viti Levu Island wrote in 1980 that his students were "book crazy. They need story books that are interesting and challenging, yet not really difficult."

For its first 20 years, IBP operated out of the home and basement of Lexington resident Harriet Van Meter who was inspired to start the project when she saw the need during a 1965 trip to India. Van

Meter was the unpaid director until she retired in 1980.

IBP has always drawn local RPCVs in central Kentucky to its mission. Besides packing books, they sometimes bring international students and visitors to choose and pack their own small shipments of books. Recently a number of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have served on IBP's board. Current president Dan Sprague (Colombia 1963-65) said, "After visiting the IBP warehouse filled with books to be shipped to remote villages around the globe, I knew instantly that this was where I belonged."

Receiving Volunteers in the field are appreciative. A Kenya Peace Corps Volunteer wrote "It is almost as if you came here personally to see what we need." A Solomon Islands Volunteer reported that her books arrived at her island post by canoe. Another Volunteer wrote, "The books have been an incredible success. The world is opening up in western Nepal."

IBP responds to bigger requests, too. In 1982, \$300,000 worth of school and college books went to Liberia which Peace Corps Volunteers then sorted and distributed. In 2009 another sea container went to Liberia with logistical help from RPCVs and Liberians. The shipping costs in 1982 were paid by Kiwanis International, Bethlehem Steel, and Uniroyal.

IBP's historic success is, in part, due to collaborations with such organizations and companies, as well as grants from foundations. In honor of Peace Corps' 40th anniversary in 2001, IBP's challenge grant focused on responding to requests for books from Peace Corps Volunteers in 34 countries, from Armenia to Zimbabwe.

And long after Volunteers leave their sites, they send requests to Lexington. Harry Siler (South Africa 2001-03) organized a sea container delivery to support five village primary schools in South Africa's Limpopo Province. And the family that hosted him 15 years ago were there to welcome the IBP shipment from the Lexington warehouse.

Angene Wilson



PEACE CORPS

THE LONG VIEW

A regional director reviews the Peace Corps' role in Southeast Asia

Megan Patrick

Keri Lowry's office window at 1111 20th St NW offers a view of Washington's understated downtown skyline. But as Peace Corps' regional director for Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Lowry has achieved a longer perspective of the agency's progress in Southeast Asia.

She can recite much of that story from Cold War geopolitics to the possibility of a Trans-Pacific Partnership. It's a narrative of a relationship between the nations of Southeast Asia and the United States that has vacillated between aspiration and tragedy, with too many political and diplomatic miscues.

Every country in the subcontinent has been transformed since Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines 55 years ago. General Ne Win seized power in Burma and ruled from 1962 to 1988. A still-disputed incident in the Gulf of Tonkin started what many call "the

American War" against North Vietnam. By 1975, seven million tons of bombs had been dropped on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines. The Khmer Rouge devastated Cambodia. Indonesia invaded East Timor. After Benigno Aquino's assassination, his wife won the presidency. Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest. President Suharto finally resigned, and Southeast Asia suffered a financial crisis, SARS, a tsunami, and multiple coups.

Through it all, the Peace Corps stuck it out in the region. In fact, it expanded to Indonesia, Cambodia, and Timor-Leste, with programs expected to open in Myanmar and Vietnam.

"Some distinctive qualities come with serving in Southeast Asia," Lowry says. English speakers find the languages more difficult to learn than in other places in the world. And she lists the challenges of managing the cultural nuances of strict gender roles, patriarchal social systems,

the importance of 'saving face,' and the lingering suspicions of foreigners in host communities. Government instability makes the work even more complex.

Despite these obstacles, communities in that faraway region demand that more NGOs and grassroots organizations like Peace Corps take root and assist with development goals. "Both the United States and foreign governments have generated expanded opportunities for dialogue and collaboration with Southeast Asia," Lowry says.

She was in Kuala Lumpur when the Malaysian government launched MyCorps to recruit new leaders for the nation and foster volunteerism. Malaysia's minister of sports and youth, Khairy Jamaluddin, says their domestic programs will "channel the energy from young Malaysians away from extremist threats and the lure of organizations like ISIS."

MyCorps and other regional volunteer initiatives can create substantial domestic benefits, Lowry says. She believes the

strong traditions of charity and giving in Southeast Asia already connect communities, and as regional economies strengthen, an increased interest in national service at home and abroad will result.

Peace Corps' programming is determined by the needs of the host communities. While the agency is currently assisting the ministry of youth and sports with MyCorps, there is no longer an active program in Malaysia. From 1962, over four thousand Volunteers served in the nation, but in 1983, both the Malaysian government and the Peace Corps chose to close the program due to the host country's economic achievements through the 1970s.

Volunteers, however, are still in Thailand and the Philippines—economies many would refer to as 'middle income countries.' Service and programs have the potential to be complex in more developed nations; while in low-income countries, Volunteers' work might target

access to clean water, sustainable farming practices, and maternal health care, those in middle income countries could support projects that address corruption and the need for free speech.

For countries that don't offer the same civil liberties as those found in the United States, Volunteers have to navigate between local realities and the goal of project assistance. "The agency recognizes the unique perspectives and specific socio-political realities of the countries with Peace Corps programs," Lowry says. "Volunteers are trained on these realities and how they might impact their service."

"In some countries, Volunteers may receive a bit more scrutiny of the work they are doing, especially when it comes to secondary projects. However, they are adept at empowering counterparts and community members."

Those challenges don't restrict the agency's appeal in Southeast Asia. "In some countries such as Indonesia, we're

piloting geographic expansion within the borders. In other places, we're expanding through the introduction of new program areas." A group of third-year Volunteers will leave for Myanmar soon, and Peace Corps continues discussions with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to someday send English teachers.

Given the region's turbulent relationship with the United States in the last half of the twentieth century, it's promising to see the Peace Corps opening new programs in the twenty-first. As Southeast Asia's geopolitics and financial markets ebb and flow, the goals of host countries will shift. When that happens, Lowry and the agency will respond appropriately—by putting the specific needs of communities first.

Megan Patrick is NPCA's strategic communications director and served as a girls' education and empowerment Volunteer in Togo from 2001 to 2003.



ROAD TO MYANMAR

Aung San Suu Kyi is in the driver's seat. Wish her good luck.

Lex Rieffel

Anew and hopeful chapter in Myanmar/Burma's sorrowful history opened in April when the country's first non-military government in 54 years took office. The leader of this government is the world's best-known living "icon of democracy," Aung San Suu Kyi.

The daughter of General Aung San—the Burmese officer who led the country's fight for independence from British colonial rule—she is popularly called Daw Suu or "The Lady." She became the leader of an uprising in 1988 against more than two decades of stultifying military rule. Her party, the National League for Democracy, won in a landslide the military-organized election held in 1990, but the military refused to cede power to Daw Suu. She spent most of the next 20 years under house arrest.

Her remarkable emergence now as the nation's leader is not the result of another popular uprising but of a transfer of power carefully orchestrated by the military leadership over the past 13 years. Key steps in this process were the adoption of a new constitution in a rigged referendum in 2008, a similarly rigged election in 2010 that brought to power the quasi-civilian government led by former general Thein Sein as president, and the remarkably free and fair election in November 2015 that her party won in another landslide.

Despite being the leader of the ruling party, however, Daw Suu is not the president in the new government because of a provision in the 2008 Constitution—clearly written to exclude her from this position—that bars from the presidency any person with children holding the passports of a foreign country; Her two sons were born in the United Kingdom from her marriage to a British academic

The fundamental tragedy of Myanmar is the civil war that has waged without interruption since independence in 1948 between the Buddhist ethnic majority residing in the central lowlands and a dozen major ethnic minorities residing in the country's mountainous borders.

who died in 1999.

The new president who was sworn in on March 30 is U Htin Kyaw, a long-time National League for Democracy leader selected by Daw Suu for this position. Daw Suu herself holds two ministerial portfolios: foreign minister and minister of the President's Office. She also holds the position of "State Counsellor" under a controversial law passed by the NLD-dominated parliament. At the same time, the ministers of three key security ministries are appointed by the commander in chief of the armed forces pursuant to the 2008 constitution.

The fundamental tragedy of Myanmar is the civil war that has raged without

interruption since independence in 1948 between the Buddhist ethnic majority residing in the central lowlands and a dozen major ethnic minorities residing in the country's mountainous borders. This tragedy was compounded by a period of socialist-isolationist rule that brought the country from the upper ranks of Asian countries by per-capita income to the lowest ranks in the 1980s.

The victory of the new government has raised expectations sky high both among the citizens of Myanmar and among friends in the rest of the world eager to see the country emerge as a beacon of democracy in Asia. It is hard to believe that the National League for



National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi charms military officers as she enters historic March 30 inaugural ceremonies for a civilian government in Naypyitaw, the capital.

YE AUNG THU/REUTERS.

Democracy government will be able to meet these expectations in its five-year term.

Here are five things to look for between now and the end of 2016 to gauge the government's progress:

Relations with the armed forces

and the peace process: Since the National League for Democracy's election victory last November, Daw Suu has worked hard to obtain support from the military establishment for the National League for Democracy's policy agenda. There were troubling signs of tension in the run-up to the seating of the new government on March 30 and in its first couple of months, but subsequent signs were encouraging, including a visit to Daw Suu's house by the armed forces commander-in-chief on July 19. Ending the civil war won't come easily. Many rounds of negotiations led by the government-supported Myanmar Peace Center yielded a partial agreement last October, but attacks by both sides have continued without interruption. The first key test was the outcome of a peace conference at the end of August. Peace ultimately depends on creating a meaningful federal structure that is enshrined in amendments to the 2008 Constitution.

Relations between the government and the parliament: The two-chamber Parliament was expected to be a rubber stamp for the last government because it was dominated by the military-supported government party. Surprisingly, it emerged as a strong countervailing power in which anti-reform vested interests had significant influence. It is easy to imagine the National League for Democracy-dominated Parliament becoming less controlled by Daw Suu than she would like, or than is consistent with good governance. Support for unsustainable populist measures may be hard to resist by the newly elected members of Parliament as they focus on how to ensure their re-election.

The bureaucracy: Historically most government officials and employees have been more interested in their entitlements (rent-seeking) than providing services to the public. Culturally they are accustomed to operating in a patronage system with orders coming down from the top and little accountability for results. Today's bureaucracy is a far cry from the meritocracy that Myanmar inherited from its decades as a British colony. It will be especially interesting to see how the

Daw Suu is not the president in the new government because of a provision in the 2008 Constitution—clearly written to exclude her from this position ...

large state economic enterprise sector is managed. It has functioned as a tool of the rich and powerful for the past 25 years and is a major obstacle to economic progress.

The resource curse: Abundant natural resources—natural gas, timber, jade, copper, hydropower, etc.—have been more of a curse than a blessing in the past 25 years. Control of these resources is at the core of the conflict between the Bamar ethnic majority and the ethnic minorities. Natural gas and hydroelectric power are exported to Thailand and China for their consumption while the population of Myanmar is starved for electricity. In one his most spectacular reform moves, former President Thein Sein suspended construction of a large dam high up the country's major river, the Ayeyarwaddy, for the length of his five-year term. It was a Chinese-funded project to export power to China and the suspension shook Myanmar's key bilateral relationship to the core. Daw Suu's decision on whether to extend the suspension, resume construction, or

terminate the project could be the single most crucial policy decision she will have to make this year.

The agriculture sector: Seventy percent of Myanmar's population derives its livelihood from the agriculture sector. Arguably the biggest failure of the outgoing government was its neglect of this sector. All of the countries in East Asia that have moved from low-income status to middle-income status in the past 50 years have started by raising household incomes in their rural populations. Agriculture sector reforms featured prominently in the economic strategy unveiled by the new government at the end of July. If measurable improvements are not visible within a year, however, the new government could suffer a worrisome decline in its popular support.

Signs of progress

This short list of pitfalls on the road to a more prosperous and democratic country should not be seen as supporting a pessimistic view of Myanmar's future. Many factors are working in favor of a successful transition to more democratic rule and better governance. For example, 3G and 4G mobile telephone services are being rolled out across the country at a pace unmatched in the rest of the world. This phenomenon alone could contribute more to a successful transition than any other single policy reform.

This article is based on a blog piece posted on the Brookings Institution web site in March that has been updated to reflect subsequent developments. The author, Lex Rieffel, a Brookings research scholar since 2002, has for the past eight years closely monitored economic trends in Myanmar during its transition to more democratic rule. He was an economist in the Treasury Department for 18 years and a senior advisor in the Institute of International Finance for seven years. Earlier, he was a USAID economist in Indonesia, a planning analyst for the International Paper Company, a Peace Corps Volunteer in India from 1965 to 1967, and an officer in the U.S. navy stationed in Vietnam.

FACEBOOK REPUBLIC

Vietnam's bureaucrats embrace social media

Vu Tu Thanh

Half of Vietnam's 90 million people use the Internet. That's a slightly higher percentage than China or the Philippines and much higher than Indonesia. The Vietnamese also spend more time on the Internet: almost five hours a day on a computer and more than two hours on mobile devices.

Social media reach is higher here than in Germany and several percentage points above the global average. Vietnamese users spend an average of 2.3 hours per day on social media, indicating a greater addiction than their peers in many developed countries such as the United States, Singapore, Hong Kong, France and Japan.

Social media and the broader cyberspace have become an integral part of life for Vietnamese. The people are "porting" their business from the traditional world to the virtual world and starting new businesses in the modern society of Vietnam.

Facebook is the most popular social network with 29 percent of the market share, followed by Google+ with 20 percent. Almost half of the nation's Facebook users are in their 20s. What's even more appealing to these young social media users is they can now do cross-border business much more easily than ever before.

On Facebook, a 19-year-old college student in Ho Chi Minh City took in more than \$100,000 a month with his fashion business, developing his designs, manufacturing them in Bangladesh and selling them to buyers in the United States and Europe. That's a rare example, but the number of high-income entrepreneurs more than quadrupled in the past year.

The success of social media is a recent development, but we have found that it offers a new way of doing business.

In the poverty-ridden northern mountains of Ha Giang province on the China border, Dr. Nguyen Huu Chung

delivered a pair of twins who were attached at birth. They were a seven-hour drive north of Hanoi and the central hospital in Hanoi that could perform the necessary surgery.

Still in his white hospital blouse, Dr. Chung hurried to the district market with an ultrasound photograph of the twins to raise the funds for the trip. A bystander then took a picture of the photo on his smartphone, the cause went viral on Facebook, the minister of health saw the Facebook plea and guaranteed that the nation's best surgeons in Viet Doc hospital performed a successful separation. It took only 36 hours, but would have taken weeks without Facebook.

The minister of health, Nugyen Thi Kim Tien, conferred a merit upon Dr. Chung for his honorable deed and opened the door to Facebook for all of Vietnam.

The health minister goes viral

Madame Tien was the first cabinet member to open a fanpage on Facebook. She now has 370,000 followers.

The government press used to constantly bombard Mde. Tien with accusations of incompetence in the press and social media for various scandals in the healthcare sector.

Government health care had been in bad shape for so many decades that no matter how hard she tried to improve it, progress was slow. Balanced coverage in the state-controlled media never came. Members of the National Assembly regularly called for her resignation and things went from bad to worse for Mde. Tien.

When she turned to Facebook in February of last year, she opened a fanpage and public opinion turned around. In a matter of weeks she had 80,000 likes. Now she could reach out directly to millions of people without relying on the government media. Even government reporters picked up on her good news.

The page also became an unfiltered source of real-life inputs into her decision-making process. She told another

leading newspaper, "Compared to the traditional way of getting information and recommendations, this way is faster, more humane and substantive because in the virtual world. Many feel comfortable to share the truth."

Mde. Tien embraced social media, but others in government were more reserved. The Ministry of Information and Communications that controls the Internet, played her Facebook successes down. The information ministry's vice minister, Truong Minh Tuan, said Facebook was not the right place for her official ministry business.

Tuan prohibited other party and state leaders from using personal blogs or Facebook pages and argued for Internet restrictions. In 2012, he wrote the controversial decree 72 that would severely restrict the Internet rights of bloggers and social media users.

A thousand blogs bloom

For many in the establishment, the blooming of the blogs and social media presented a serious threat to the government's ability to control the message. The virtual world seemed to out-communicate the massive state-controlled mainstream media. Corruption and the secretive inner workings of the establishment were revealed on the Internet from unknown sources which infuriated the public, including many incumbent and former government officials.

Concerned by the destabilizing effect of social media, the establishment enforced an unofficial ban of Facebook around 2011 to 2013 where users in the country could not access it without some work-around tricks. The ban itself was de-stabilizing. It gave government critics perfect proof of how the establishment was trying to stifle public will and prompted even more people to get on Facebook, using the widely shared work-around tips.

Industry and foreign embassies joined

forces to persuade the government to lift the ban, arguing that social media offers an innovative business platform for millions of people to start and run their own businesses.

The government denied knowledge of such a ban, and said the problem was purely an issue of technology.

User growth on leading platforms such as Facebook continued at a double-digit pace and it soon became obvious to the establishment that they could actually get a lot out of this.

In fact, weeks before minister Tien opened her Facebook account, Prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung acknowledged the importance of social media and urged government officials to make use of it.

The prime minister told the Office of the Government more than a year ago, "We all know that the moment we turn on our phones, we can get right into social media, Facebook. Several 10 million (Vietnamese)

people are already using the Internet and social media, so we need to push our official message to social media better." It took nine months but finally the government opened a web site of its own on October 21 of last year. Within hours, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam got 23,000 likes.

After nearly a year, the government Facebook page still remains a pilot project with just less than 120,000 likes. The traffic on the health minister's fanpage has tripled that number. Mde. Tien logs in at the end of her long day, around 11 p.m., to review comments on her staff's daily posts and answers many of those comments. She is live and online as a person, which resonates very well with Vietnamese netizens.

No other cabinet minister or other high-level government official has opened a Facebook account, but many officials and communist party organizations and government agencies have set up teams to

gather public requests and criticisms on social media, which they acknowledge to be an increasingly important channel of public policy input.

Social media creates pressure on public officials to respond to the wishes of the people. Members of the establishment now know that they can no longer keep the policy-making process to themselves. Sooner or later the secret dealings would be exposed on social media and they will be held accountable. A number of senior government officials now retired have learned that lesson the hard way.

Vu Tu Thanh is the Vietnamese country representative to the United States-Association of Southeast Asian Nations business council in Hanoi. He advises multinational companies on business strategies in Vietnam.

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REVOLUTIONARY THINKING

A university in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam challenges educational traditions

Dam Bich Thuy

There is a funny anecdote that many Vietnamese know. A first grader writes an essay describing an ox on his family's farm. "My family has an ox," he writes. "The ox is brown. It has two horns. The ox eats a lot but doesn't do much. It moos and sleeps throughout the day. I like the ox."

The essay receives a low score. In her comments, the teacher calls the description "uninspiring." She makes the child rewrite his piece along the lines of her instructions. The revision is slightly longer and—so the teacher hopes—more edifying: "My family has an ox. The ox is brown. It has two horns. Everyday, the ox works on the field under the scorching sun from dawn to dusk. Looking at the ox, I am reminded of the sacrifice that our country's farmers have made to give us a better life. When I grow up, I want to be like the ox. I vow to follow the ox's example and become a hard-working citizen of our country."

Silly as it may sound, this story reflects the sad reality of Vietnamese education. From first grade to university, students are taught to parrot back the words of their teachers, who in turn are instructed to uphold the thinking endorsed by institutional authorities. Personal opinions are shushed if they clash with "correct" lines of thought. Compilations of "sample" essays glut the Vietnamese textbook market, meeting high demand.

This phenomenon is not unique to the humanities. In math and science classes, students practice drills until they can spit out the correct answer after only glancing at the prompt. I still remember seeing my daughter's bloodshot eyes after she,

then a seventh-grader, had pulled an all-nighter to finish her daily math assignment, which comprised more than 100 equations.

Rote memorization has some positive benefits. Vietnamese students' stunning performance on the 2015 Program for International Student Assessment shows that on average, they are better test-takers than their U.S. and European peers. Yet test scores alone are not adequate measurements of success of any education system—Vietnam's included. In fact, beneath these impressive statistics lies a sadder reality. As Vietnamese students study abroad, they typically struggle with the coursework, which demands creativity and openness to new modes of thinking.

How to compete in global business

The fixation on rote learning spills into the university classroom. Rather than learn to think critically and solve problems, Vietnamese university students memorize texts and formulas merely to pass exams. This ill is made worse by failure in governance. Vietnamese higher institutions lack academic freedom and incentives to innovate. These ills in combination cause a gap between the classroom and the market. Vietnamese university graduates often find themselves ill-prepared for the cutthroat competition in the global marketplace.

Vietnam boasts one of the world's highest economic growth rates, but its education lags behind even those of its neighbors. Without efforts at reform in higher education, Vietnam may never fully unleash its great potential to develop an advanced economy.

To help Vietnam inch closer to that

goal is the aspiration of the Fulbright University Vietnam. The university seeks to build an accredited, American-style liberal arts undergraduate program, the beacon of intellectual freedom in the United States.

The program focuses on critical issues that face Vietnam. The university has already trained about 1,200 students over 20 years in a range of economic

With notable exceptions, Vietnamese students tend to be shy in class discussions, never having been taught to challenge teachers—something that their foreign peers have been encouraged to do since very small.

studies including infrastructure development, macroeconomics, trade, banking, governance and the analysis of poverty. It was founded by Harvard University and the University of Economics to serve as a bridge between the United States and Vietnam. It was named after Senator J. William Fulbright.

On his May trip to Vietnam, President Barack Obama spoke at the university's launching ceremony and thanked Ho Chi Minh City government leaders for donating 60 acres in the Saigon High Tech Park for a permanent campus of the

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HONEST CAFÉ SOCIETY

Thai students fight corruption over coffee

Erin Gallegos

When I started my third-year teaching position at the College of Local Administration at Khon Kaen University, I was asked to support a youth anti-corruption education project tied to the U.N. Development Program's good governance efforts.

As words are the lens through which I try to understand the world, I wanted to turn to language to gain perspective on my new project, and I redoubled my efforts to rack up more Thai vocabulary. Corruption is a concept through which I imagined I would gain insight into the culture, simply by learning the word and tracing its constituent parts.

Ultimately it was one of the simplest words I would add to my growing vocabulary: "Cor-rap-shan." But being able to say it was far easier than discussing the concept and its remedies—good governance, accountability, and rule of law. Though the word was recently borrowed from the English language, the concept runs deep in Thai society and is tied to sets of cultural norms, historical realities, and social assumptions that are difficult to wrap your head around.

As quickly as I learned the word, I also learned how naïve I was to think that my project would be as easy as teaching people about corruptions' root causes, its harms, and the role ordinary people can play in fighting it.

Thai-style corruption

During that third year, whenever I mentioned to anyone—a tour guide, a bus driver, the woman who sold me noodles—that I was working on an anti-corruption education project, the inevitable reply was a fit of laughter.

Almost always, the laughter became a serious discussion.

I learned that vote-buying is not only ubiquitous, but that even the local politicians buying the votes feel trapped in the system and complain about it. I learned that everyone has a story of being shaken down by police—or narrowly escaping some legal punishment because they had connections.

I learned that people tolerate corrupt acts because they do not want to break face—embarrass another person—or sever ties in their own communities. I learned that kickbacks, collusion and price fixing are rampant and tied to infrastructure projects big and small—

from dredging a stream to building a highway or bypassing regulatory requirements for environmental impact studies on major development projects. I learned that even when these things aren't happening, people believe they are. And I learned that people are sick of it.

Thailand is currently undergoing a process of historical change. With a military government in place, the country now faces other enormous pressures that go beyond unchecked corruption. In part, the corruption is abetted by the fact that Thai society is built around a highly stratified hierarchy.

Despite decades of healthy economic growth, efforts to achieve democratic



Anti-corruption network mentors "Atom" and "Bank" stand alongside café creator Kwanpadh Sudhi-Dhamakit at Ubon Ratchatani University. The popular café concept may expand to another Thai university.

reform since the absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932, and the successful creation of modern infrastructure and industry, Thailand is still largely a patronage society.

People expect those above them in status to provide for them and to demonstrate their status through conspicuous acts of generosity and (social) protection. In return, those with greater status expect loyalty. Those who possess that high status—whether they achieve it by birth or through the acquisition of great wealth or political power—are able to act with impunity in pursuing what many consider to be rewards that accrue to them naturally because of their station.

Much of this I already knew after two years as a Volunteer, but I learned much more because the university students and community members I worked with turned out to be some of the best



observers of their own society and its struggles.

Café Heroes

The U.N. Development Program held a series of anti-corruption camps that led to a network called the Thai Youth Anti-corruption Network. Their motto was "Corruption, Chan Mai Co-rap", which translates roughly to "Refuse to be Corrupt."

But two years ago, UNDP was struggling to sustain the youth anti-corruption network with dwindling funds. Students who had participated in the original anti-corruption camps were inspired and wanted to continue the conversation within and beyond their campuses. However, they lacked independent funding, space, and a champion. Without the spotlight of the UNDP, it was hard for students to convince some administrators that the conversation around anti-corruption was worthwhile to sustain.

So these students pleaded for a space in which they could continue this dialog. And they created it.

The first Anti-Corruption Café opened its doors at Ubon Rachatani University in June 2015. Efforts are still underway to open a second Anti-Corruption Café at my school. These cafes were envisioned and are run by student activists and backed by UNDP, the school administration, and True Coffee Corporation in a partnership that truly puts the students' goals first.

The effort began several years ago.

Safe haven

Today, students operate the shop with a dual mission: first, to create a safe space for students and community members to learn about and discuss corruption in Thai society and their communities, and second, to raise money for outreach.

While the cafes were still just an idea, I helped UNDP, True Coffee Corporation, and volunteers from Ashoka and the Ma D social enterprise organize camps at both universities. Around 60 students

participated in each, spending two days learning about corruption, social enterprise, and running a coffee shop. In groups, they designed and presented their ideas for their campus's Anti-Corruption Café.

On the second night at the UBU camp, another organizer joked to the campers that I came to Thailand on a vacation and decided to stay to clean up the nation's corruption, and pressed a microphone into my hand, inviting me to speak. Obliging, I talked about my role as a Peace Corps Volunteer and how I had left my family and friends to come and serve in their community. I touched a bit on my work at KKU and some of the educational materials I had created, and shared my enthusiasm for their café project. The students were already tired, and I could see their minds drifting to the all-nighter they were going to have to pull in order to finish plans for the next day's presentations on their ideal Anti-Corruption Café, so I tried to wrap up my speech with some encouraging words.

"Mai mii arai kuum kaa tii ja ngai, dtee khun dtong tam na," I said, with a few tears coming to my eyes. Nothing worthwhile is easy, but you have to do it.

As I returned the microphone, my phone buzzed in my back pocket. The text message was from Noo, True Coffee's marketing division rep, an ardent supporter of the Anti-Corruption Café. She had been standing on the other side of the room when I spoke.

The text read, "You're my hero."

I walked over and gave her a hug, thinking how easy it was for me to come in and say what I'd said, and how I would soon leave. The fight against corruption and complacency continues in the hearts and minds of all these young, dedicated students. They're the real heroes.

Erin Gallegos served in Sukhothai and Khon Kaen, Thailand, from 2012 to 2015. She is an internal communications specialist with AVG Technologies in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



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university's new School of Public Policy and Management.

The initial teaching program will offer a diversity of majors, ranging from the traditionally privileged subjects in Vietnam—mathematics and the natural sciences—to economics, history, and the fine arts. The rigor and richness of Fulbright University Vietnam's curriculum will not only respond to the demand for skilled labor in Vietnam, but will also educate students with a broad knowledge base and critical thinking skills to prepare them for the unforeseen jobs of the future.

Yet beyond its practical aims, the university was founded on the idea that learning should be an end in itself. At the heart of the liberal arts philosophy are the genuine love for knowledge, a commitment to treating all disciplines with the same respect, and the intellectual courage to challenge conventions and norms.

Vietnam needs visionary entrepreneurs, but the country cannot afford to thrive if its citizens forget the nation's past. Vietnam will prosper with more doctors and coders, but just as crucial to the vitality of the nation are poets, musicians, and painters. It is these voices of diversity, of self-reflection, that Fulbright University Vietnam seeks to promote.

It is my sincere hope that the university can help nurture a generation leading more mindful, more curious, and intellectually richer, lives.

Dam Bich Thuy is president of Fulbright University Vietnam and received her graduate degree in business administration from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business on a Fulbright scholarship. She founded the first privately owned company in Vietnam and consulted for IBM, Citibank, Coca Cola and other foreign firms before becoming general manager of the Australia and New Zealand banking group in Vietnam.

THE CHINA GANG

Peace Corps and a new culture shaped four top-notch writers

John Coyne

If you look at the books published in English about China from 1995 until now, four Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served together over several early years in China have published eight books. That's more than all of the correspondents from *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* magazine have published over the past 21 years. And it doesn't even count two more China books published by writers who served later in the Peace Corps China program.

These four writers served together and formed a close working collaboration, beginning in 1993, when the People's Republic of China program opened.

I have recently interviewed each of these journalists and close friends, writers who have no formal journalism training to speak of and little non-fiction writing experience for that matter. The four writers are Peter Hessler, Michael Meyer, Craig Simons and Rob Schmitz. They talked about how China and the Peace Corps taught them what they needed to know to become successful writers and journalists.

Hessler is a *New Yorker* correspondent in Cairo who started his career with that magazine as their Beijing correspondent. Hessler gives credit to Bill Speidel, who was Peace Corps country director when all of them served in the program.

Hessler says Speidel was "not a Peace Corps person" but a China expert who as country director persuaded them to approach China in an analytical way. "Bill was highly critical of the way the western press covered the country. I think this also influenced us to some degree. ... it was so Beijing—and Shanghai—focused."

When he began teaching English as a second language in a college in Fuling, Hessler found major gaps in the books in English about China. "That feeling was

part of what made me write *River Town*—I had very specific ideas about what was missing. I had published before going to the Peace Corps, and I continued to write some travel stories while I was overseas, and now I wanted to write a book about China."

River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze was published by HarperCollins in 2001. It is the story of his Peace Corps years. The following spring, *The National Geographic* asked him to write about China for their monthly magazine. Hessler then sold his first story to *The New Yorker*. All of this happened six

for Craig and Rob. And none of us had studied any Chinese before arriving with the Peace Corps."

The Peace Corp risk

Hessler thinks he and his writing friends benefited from a "reflection of a certain Peace Corps mentality—the toughness and the willingness to take risks."

"The people that I went to college with at Princeton and Oxford generally would not be willing to go to a place like Beijing and try to freelance, with no guaranteed income or career path. But after the Peace Corps, all of us became more resourceful,



ANDREW RENNESEN

A correspondent in the *New Yorker*'s Cairo bureau, Peter Hessler returned to his Peace Corps site in 2003 to interview those displaced by flooding as the Yangtze River rose behind the Three Gorges Dam.

months before the publication of *River Town*, the first book by a Peace Corps Volunteer from China.

"Michael, Craig, Rob or myself; we had not studied either China or journalism in college," said Hessler. "I took one course in nonfiction writing, but most of my writing was in fiction, and I majored in English and creative writing. I never published anything in a campus paper or magazine, which may also be true

and of course the Chinese taught us something about seeing an opportunity and playing your hand. In my experience, that honestly was a factor."

Hessler says the Chinese that he knew were very tough. They moved fearlessly and without regret at the first sign of opportunity. "I think that this influenced my path as a writer," he says. "I made a lot of counter-intuitive and risky decisions during the early part of my career, which put me in



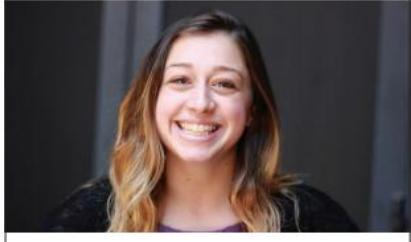
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a position to get unusual material and write about it in a creative way.

"I know that Meyer sees his path in similar terms, and I think the same dynamic played a role with Craig and Rob. Everybody in China was having their lives shaken up, and it made us more likely to do the same."

They can't stay away

Meyer was the first to arrive and he stayed on in China to write and volunteered as an English teacher in the community's schools. Meyer lived in Dazhalan, one of the oldest neighborhoods of Beijing, the focus of his first book. He later won the Lowell Thomas Award for travel writing and has published articles in *Time*, *The Smithsonian*, *The New York Times Book Review* and other national publications. He has two China books to his credit: *The Last Days of Old Beijing*, and *In Manchuria*. Meyer is an assistant professor of creative writing at the University of Pittsburgh. He has written two books on China—*The Last Days of Old Beijing* is about a traditional neighborhood and *In Manchuria* is about a northeastern rice farm. Meyer is working on a third book.

After Peace Corps, Hessler went home hoping to find a job as a journalist, but without luck. He worked on the first draft of *River Town* while looking for a newspaper job. He was a graduate of Princeton and a former Rhodes Scholar with Mandarin fluency, two years of Peace Corps and work published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *Atlantic Monthly*.

"Newspapers and magazines weren't interested," Hessler says. "So I decided to try to freelance in China. I had just sold *River Town* for an advance that was not huge, but it was enough to pay off the rest of my college loans and give me a bit of a cushion. That helped me make the decision to go back to China." It was a wise decision.

In March, 1999, he flew from St. Louis to Beijing and got a job clipping news articles for the *Wall Street Journal's* local news bureau staff for \$500 a month.

"Beijing was still very cheap and I found an apartment for a couple hundred dollars a month."

Schmitz returned home to teach Spanish at a Minneapolis middle school but faced a classroom of students who couldn't compare to the diligence and commitment of his students back in China. "At the Christmas break in 1998 I quit," he says. He took a job with the American Field Service. It was an office job, and after a while, "I realized I wanted to return to China."

In 1999, e-mail began sweeping the United States and spreading to the world. "Many of us in China 3 were constantly sending messages to each other about how much we missed living China, scheming ways to get back. I remember stealing away to a conference room twice a week to talk to my China 3 friends, Adam Weiss and Craig Simons, about this, and by the end of 1999, all three of us were primed to return. What each of us was doing—dropping everything to suddenly leave for China like that—was pretty risky, but we had strength in numbers."

"Pete was in Beijing, Craig and I were in Chengdu," said Schmitz. "Another fellow China 3 volunteer, Mike Goettig, was also in China, living in Kunming, trying to start a bar with a Chinese friend. We were all very good friends, and we supported each other through it all. For me, that support was crucial. Had those guys not been there, I'm not certain I would've just up and left like that."

Working for a rock star

"Peter Hessler put us in touch with Kaiser Kuo, a famous rock musician in China," Schmitz told me. "Kaiser needed writers for a new start-up, Chinanow.com. It was a great gig. Kaiser paid us one yuan per word, and we often wrote 1000-word articles. Since each of us only paid around 600 yuan in rent per month, we could easily afford life in Chengdu."

"Kaiser also allowed us to piggy-back those Chinanow stories and pitch them to newspapers in the United States. Both Craig and I began getting articles

published in papers like the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The Hong Kong Standard*, the *Newark Star-Ledger*,” Schmitz says. “Later that year, Craig had been admitted to Harvard to begin a Masters in East Asian Studies, and I was admitted to Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism.

Simons was working in a program for Chinese scholars at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. He earned his degree, applied to more graduate schools, then back to Chengdu to freelance.

In early 2000, Simons and Schmitz left for Chengdu to practice journalism. They reported from Sichuan and Yunnan provinces in China’s southwest.

Simons would live in China for the next eight years. As a freelance writer, he wrote for *Outside*, *Backpacker*, *The New York*

Times, and the *Wall Street Journal*. In 2003, he began reporting for *Newsweek* and in 2005 he was hired as the Asia correspondent for Cox Newspapers, a chain of American dailies. In 2009, he was one of 12 journalists to win a prestigious Knight Science Journalism Fellowship from MIT, and he later held a public policy scholar position at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC. In 2013, St. Martin’s Press published his first book, *The Devouring Dragon: How China’s Rise Threatens Our Natural World*. He joined the Foreign Service in 2012 and is currently serving at the U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba.

Schmitz is the China correspondent in Shanghai for American Public Media’s *Marketplace*, the largest business news program in the U.S. He is also author of the recently published, *Street of Eternal Happiness: Big City Dreams Along A Shanghai Road*.

Times and opportunities have changed. Hessler was the last clipper at the Journal’s bureau. “I had a good run—I was still working as a clipper when I sold my first piece to the *New Yorker*. I am also the first clipper to marry one of their correspondents.”

Hessler met his wife, Leslie, when she was a *Wall Street Journal* reporter in the Beijing bureau. She left the newspaper to work on her first book, *Factory Girls*, as they prepared to move to the United States. All of the China gang married Chinese or Chinese-American women.

John Coyne is a contributing editor to the magazine, a novelist and the editor of peacecorpsworldwide.org, where a version of this article previously appeared. He served in Ethiopia from 1964 to 1967 and on Peace Corps recruitment staff.



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SERVING IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

Among those joining President Barack Obama on his historic trip to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in May were Peace Corps Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet and Secretary of State John Kerry. The Peace Corps director signed an agreement raising the prospect of Americans serving as Volunteers in a country where the United States had waged a war for two decades. Kerry spoke at a hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, celebrating the dedication of a large piece of land to a new university.

At the dedication of the Fulbright University Vietnam, Kerry recalled his first visit 48 years ago to that hotel as a young naval lieutenant on shore leave.

"I could see flares popping around the city, lighting up the night and the



Secretary of State John Kerry announces new Fulbright University Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City.

perimeter," Kerry recalled. "And in the distance, you could even hear the bursts of gunfire or occasionally a C-130 with something called Puff the Magic Dragon shooting in the distance. It was literally surreal—an oasis of sorts, but still a war zone."

The U.S. Secretary of State was forthright about the mistake our

government made in the 1960s. The Vietnam war "should never have happened," he said. "It reflected a failure of diplomacy and a failure of understanding and a failure of vision. And it destroyed many lives, deprived us of much that we can never recover, and opened wounds that have taken decades to heal."

Thousands of Americans served in both the Peace Corps and in the war.

ASHES

When he was drafted, John Pohlman was teaching English on Ono-i-Lau, the most remote island in the Fiji archipelago. Friends say he thought the war was unnecessary but he thought he would learn to fly a helicopter, a skill that was needed in these more than 3,000 islands.

He got his wish and became co-pilot of a helicopter that illuminated night-time battles in South Vietnam's Tay Ninh province.

In the early morning hours of his 43rd day in the war, Pohlman's Nighthawk took heavy fire from North Vietnamese forces near the Cambodian border. The chopper crashed and Pohlman died. After his California burial, his parents flew to Ono-i-Lau to place some of their only child's ashes at his Peace Corps site.

MEKELLE

Gary Daves dropped out of law school after one year and joined International Volunteer Services, a development organization partially funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. He was surprised to hear that two other IVS volunteers who had served with him in Mekelle, Ethiopia, as Peace Corps Volunteers had also come to Vietnam with IVS.

William Seraile was one of two others who taught in Mekelle. It turns

out, writes Seraile—now retired from teaching African American history at the City University of New York's Lehman College—that at least seven other Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from Ethiopia also went to Vietnam—one of them for the U.S. Agency for International Development and another as a *Time* magazine correspondent.

Seraile taught English to teenagers until the Tet offensive forced his school to close to create housing for refugees. Then he scrubbed in Air Force operating rooms for six weeks. "I witnessed amputations, brain and intestinal surgeries and saw the destruction of war as my neighborhood experienced air strikes."

He decided to leave Vietnam when the IVS office failed to act on his request to work with the refugees. A war economy had taken over. His students "were likely to quit school, earning more money than school teachers or police officers by working with USAID or the American military."

Seraile and Daves did not meet in Vietnam. "It was a dangerous time, especially after the Tet offensive," Seraile says.

THE POW

That's when Daves was captured by North Vietnamese soldiers and spent five years in a North Vietnamese prison.

Daves worked in a mobile science teaching program in the city of Hue when the mortar fire of the Tet offensive began. In the sudden quiet of the fourth day, North Vietnamese soldiers knocked on his door and captured Daves and a Canadian. For several weeks about 30 prisoners—some civilian and some not—were marched under armed guards by night, fighting leeches, blisters and cold rain as they traveled south and west of Hue. They made part of the journey in supply trucks, possibly crossing the Laotian border. One prisoner died in an aerial bombing attack before the column turned north toward the permanent camps near Hanoi where Daves and others spent a little more than five years in captivity.

Daves says he and the other civilians

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/REUTERS

MY VIETNAMESE FAMILY

An Asia scholar began his study at a wedding

Lex Rieffel

My year in Vietnam was atypical because almost my entire social life was spent with Vietnamese people, not Americans. My college soccer coach had introduced me to the U.S. Naval Academy soccer coach who was coaching the Vietnamese national soccer team during his summer break. Members of this team became my best friends, especially the starting left wing whose family pretty much adopted me. I attended Huynh van Phat's wedding and his uncle arranged for

to study engineering in college. He left before the end of his freshman year to take a job in California with relatives, and over the next 10 years arranged to bring to the United States (with our guarantee) his mother, her parents, two aunts, and half a dozen cousins. Now we are part of their family.

Reel movies

This all started when the U.S. Navy made me a commissioned officer following my graduation from Princeton University in 1963. Having a fondness for the oceans, I had opted for the two-year "contract" naval reserved officers training program as an alternative to being drafted into the army.

My performance as a midshipman was embarrassing enough to convince the navy to keep me away from its ships and put me on shore duty. Thus, I found myself in July 1963 as the Theater Officer in the Special Services Division of "Headquarters Support Activity Saigon."

My main duty was to ensure that all 18,000 U.S. military advisors scattered among about 105 units across South Vietnam had a different 16-millimeter reel movie to watch every day of the week and every week of the year. My other duty was escorting performers of USO shows to their audiences in the field. Bob Hope didn't come during my year but Raymond Burr—who played the role of Perry Mason on television—came twice and he was a great trouper.

The closest I got to a combat situation was on the day of the coup that toppled Ngo Dinh Diem. I was upcountry with a small USO group of musicians. We were



The author photographed Hon, in the red and white hat, standing with his mother, in a white dress, and other members of the Phat family on a 1967 return visit to Saigon.

me to play goalie for one of the Saigon Traffic Police teams. A year later his wife gave birth to a son and the next year Phat was killed in a traffic accident. The connection still resonates.

After the United States pulled out of Vietnam in 1973, Phat's wife decided their son, Hon, should go to the United States and be raised by my wife and me. On his third attempt to escape by boat, in 1981, he made it to a refugee camp in Indonesia and from there to our home in Washington, D.C. Hon did his last two years of high school as the older brother of our two sons and got a scholarship

were interrogated in the beginning but not harshly treated. Labor usually consisted of shouldering loads of sugar on bamboo poles for several nights at a time. He taught others in the camp algebra and chemistry, studied Vietnamese and French from a dictionary bound in rough brown paper, and together they learned and played bridge with ragged decks of cards. The two daily meals were a small bowl of soup and bread. "It was mostly good, but much thick with bugs cooked in. The chores included throwing our Ho Chi Minh sandals at the rats and emptying the honey buckets.

"What bothered me the most was the failure to allow any letters to family from my group, particularly in regards to a captain who had been held since 1964." Daves wrote a letter of protest to camp authorities.

"Protest of this led them to put me in solitary for three months."

The Hanoi government released Daves and hundreds of other prisoners after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement in 1973. Daves returned home, finished law school, worked for the federal government and the City of Albuquerque on water rights and water resource policy. "I enjoy life in New Mexico with five grandchildren nearby and I no longer try to save the world."

HEARTS & MINDS

The Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Service was a U.S. Agency for International Development project to win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese. As a Volunteer, Leo Cecchini had coached an Eritrean high school soccer team in Asmara. Later, as a foreign service officer, he worked in Vietnamese pacification programs, organizing local self-defense units in Saigon, then as advisor to the Phoenix program on the coast of the South China Sea, a Central Intelligence Agency-led project to infiltrate, capture or kill pro-communist Viet Cong

guerrillas operating in the south.

A district police chief once challenged Cecchini, who was dressed in his normal civilian attire. "Where is your weapon," the chief asked. "In my brief case," Cecchini replied.

Roger Cranse wrote in the literary journal, Raritan, "We were the counterinsurgency workers, the hearts and minds guys. We did good work in the villages so that the people would side with us, not the enemy. We thought we could win the war by being nice. We were a mixture of young do-gooders fresh out of college; mid-career foreign service officers; and a great many random misfits: men escaping nagging wives and boring jobs, adventurers, boozers, soldiers of fortune, profiteers, ex-military personnel hooked on war."

The Vietnamese had been surrounded by war since 1946, Cranse writes. "They lived in a world of war, a world that brutalized people, a world where killing was a common affair. And we'd prolonged that war after the French defeat in 1954; we'd expanded it, intensified it.

"Americans during the war often denigrated the Vietnamese, calling them 'dinks' and 'slopes,' saying things like, 'They don't value human life like we do.' But here, they did. And we've gone on to live out those lives because of the generosity and graciousness of those Vietnamese peasants in wartime ...

"I spent nearly two years in Vietnam, 1966 to 1968. The years before those two, and all those afterward, have been years of comfort and ease, of predictable days and safe nights. It was only in An Loc, down in the bunker at night when the rockets whistled in, or out in no-man's-land during the hot and rainy days, that I got a hint of the pit-of-the-stomach helplessness the Vietnamese lived with for years.

COMING HOME

In 1965, Phil Damon came home from Ethiopia and joined a thousand other

ordered to interrupt our schedule and proceed immediately to a Vietnamese army base. That night I stood a watch at the perimeter of the base armed with a rifle and a couple of grenades expecting any minute to see a battalion of Vietcong attacking my sector. Luckily only grasshoppers and mosquitoes attacked me. But four months later two Vietcong jumped out of a taxi in front of my office (in a full-size cinema hall rented to the Navy). They shot the M.P. on duty, dropped a plastique charge in the entry, and disappeared into the city. Another American soldier was killed and about 50 others were awarded Purple Hearts for injuries. I was extremely lucky not to be killed, but that's not part of this story.

My career goal in college was to be a development economist, initially focusing on India. Among the many adventures during the year I spent with the Navy in Saigon, I managed a quick trip to New Delhi to interview for jobs with the local offices of the Ford Foundation and U.S. Agency for International Development. I came away convinced that I wouldn't be hired because I didn't have genuine developing country experience; my year in Saigon didn't qualify. So there was a specific reason to join the Peace Corps: to get this experience.

Luckily my request to be posted to India was granted and my two years with India XVI had the desired result. They helped me get into graduate school for a master's degree in development and that led to a program economist position in the USAID Mission in Jakarta, Indonesia, two years later.

Changing my mind

From 1964 when I left Saigon through my Peace Corps years and at the beginning of my graduate studies in 1967, I was a strong supporter of the U.S. strategy in Vietnam for the simple reason that if we didn't fight the Communists there they would overrun the rest of Southeast Asia. In particular, it was worth American blood and treasure, I argued, to keep the beautiful and peaceful Kingdom of Thailand out of the Communist camp.

In my first month in graduate school, I gave a slide show to my fellow students in support of this position. Six months later, shortly after the Tet offensive, my position flipped and I joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

In the 53 years since I graduated from college, I've seen a lot of developing countries and have taken a special interest in the rise of Asia, from China to India. My views on what the United States can and should do to promote economic advancement in low-income countries have evolved a great deal over these years. My worst mistake was leaving India in 1965, believing it would disintegrate under the weight of its rapid population growth and regional differences. Perhaps most importantly, I have become appalled by the misguided American efforts to export our kind of democratic political system to developing countries.

China's incredible economic progress under an authoritarian political system is a phenomenon with many lessons for countries seeking to escape poverty. I returned to Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi) in 2011 and saw another country with an authoritarian system building a modern market economy that was rapidly lifting the population out of poverty—with some strategically smart American assistance.

From my perch at Brookings over the past nine years and over the course of more than a dozen visits, I have studied Myanmar/Burma's transition to a more democratic system. Sadly, I am not optimistic about its economic progress in the medium term, am doubtful that the democratically-elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi will be considered a success, and believe that much of America's assistance has been misguided and even counter-productive

Lex Rieffel is a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. In the Peace Corps, he promoted modern poultry raising in Ghaziabad, Upper Pradash, India from 1965 to 1967.

A VOICE ON CAPITOL HILL

Tom Dine's anti-war career began in the Philippines

Kitty Thuermer

Almost 50 years ago, I knew Tom Dine as the hotshot young aide to Ambassador Chester Bowles at the New Delhi Embassy where my father served. Admitting his youthful arrogance, Tom remembers how he enjoyed "pissing off" the other Foreign Service officers with the sign on his door: "Never trust anyone over 30."

My parents were friends of Tom and Joan Dine and like all expats they lived a full life in India, while keeping a close eye on the tumultuous events back home. I remember, for example, during the Bangladesh War for Independence in 1971 when the highly treasured Sunday *Washington Post* arrived in the diplomatic pouch, and there, on the front page, was a photo taken during the home leave of young Joan Dine, chained to the White House fence in protest over the United States sending arms to Pakistan.

I was happy to catch up with him recently at a Washington, D.C. restaurant and with his international career, much of it focused in those early years on Southeast Asia and Vietnam when he finished his Peace Corps service in the Philippines in 1964.



At 70-something, he looked fit and energetic. And his passion for Peace Corps and politics has not waned. Hearing that Peace Corps has recently signed a diplomatic memo of understanding with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Dine said it "will be a jewel in the Peace Corps crown" if they get to send Volunteers there.

"My two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer were transformative," he said. "It accomplished three things: it shaped my 54-year career in foreign affairs, it linked my practical experiences to my values, and it enabled me to meet my wife, Joan Corbett, at Peace Corps/Washington." Tom's post-Peace Corps career included working in the U.S. Senate, heading the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, serving with U.S. Agency for International Development in the Bill Clinton administration and running Radio Free Europe from Prague in the Czech Republic.

KT: As a boy growing up in Cincinnati in the forties and fifties, how did you get interested in U.S. foreign policy?

TD: As a child I became fascinated with British colonial rule over America, and later the psychological legacies of colonial rule in general. When I was at Colgate University in New York, I studied French military involvement in Vietnam including its defeat at the battle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. I then followed the evolution of the U.S. military engagement in the Vietnamese civil war starting with the first combat death in 1959. In an article I wrote for the Colgate newspaper, I described the instability in Southeast Asia and urged my classmates to study the map and the issues surrounding North and South Vietnam as they might be serving there shortly.

KT: While serving in Peace Corps/Philippines—did the Vietnam war affect you at all?

returnees in forming the Committee of Returned Volunteers to oppose the war in Vietnam. "Certainly, we felt, our voices would be heard and heeded. We of all people had our fingers on the pulse of the developing world."

In May, 1970, some members of The Committee of Returned Volunteers conducted a 36-hour occupation of the fourth-floor offices of the Peace Corps' Southeast Asia regional office and hung the flag of the Viet Cong guerrillas out of a window with a view of the White House. *The New York Times* reported that the agency received a petition signed by hundreds of Volunteers serving in South Korea, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala.

Damon writes "... while we may not have affected the escalation of the war, it occurred to me that we may have made a greater impression in the world than I'd given us credit for. It was a bittersweet feeling at best.

"All of this came poignantly back to me ... as I attended the National Peace Corps Association's biannual conference in Chicago. I'd been ambivalent at first about going.

"I was always skeptical when friends from Peace Corps called it the defining experience of their lives. Wasn't it time to move on? ... But without mincing words or minimizing the importance of later achievements, maybe the Peace Corps was that kind of seminal event for all of us. And maybe—despite our country's tattered image in the current global environment—it continues to be so for our most recently returned Volunteers."

LANDMINES

It was no surprise that the draft board in the rural Indiana community of Amish and Mennonite families honored the heart-felt objections Douglas Yunker declared to fighting in war. On weekends during two-year alternative service in Indianapolis, Yunker protested against the war and

against racism. Then he spent four years working with inner-city kids and their families in Kingston, Jamaica.

Years later, he is proud of the work being conducted by Peace Trees Vietnam, a Seattle organization whose activities in Vietnam include landmine removal. "Its work is focused in Quang Tri province, an area heavily impacted by the legacy of war," he writes. His daughter, Claire Yunker is executive director of the organization. "Over the last 35 years, more than 10,800 people have been killed or maimed by landmines and unexploded ordnance. In one out of every five cases, the victim is a child."

ROLLING THUNDER

The acting country director in the Philippines, William Miller, had taken his family on holiday to the mountains in Baguio in the north in 1972 when one evening he heard a far-off roaring sound in the sky. "The noise deepened, growing greater and greater in volume. I looked up. It was what looked like B-52s, bombers, U.S. warplanes. It was now a very loud, deep distant roar, like thunder.

"It was our planes headed to Vietnam. My understanding was that they were going to pattern-bomb ... wipe out everything. It was chilling to me to know that our planes, our bombs, were going to be dropped on villages in North Vietnam, just like the villages in the Philippines and like villages in Indonesia.

I can never forget the feeling I had inside: what we were doing in Vietnam was so wrong, and what we were doing in the Philippines and around the world was so right?

FINGERLINGS

His journey to a war zone began in 1968, during his final teaching year in Asella, Ethiopia, writes Randolph Marcus. "I had been accepted into the Foreign Service—but with the proviso that I would start out as a

TD: I was a Volunteer from 1962 to 1964, teaching English on the island of Mindanao, and was so isolated from the news that I heard about the Cuban Missile Crisis three weeks after it happened. However, it was in 1963—while visiting a sick Peace Corps friend at Clark Air Base Hospital in Luzon—that I first saw many young soldiers my age with serious wounds from explosions in the jungles of Vietnam. My conversations with them were about recovery, not politics, but my eyes convinced me that day that the U.S. was involved in a violent land war.

KT: Why weren't you drafted?

TD: My Cincinnati draft board accepted the fact that I was first an undergraduate student, then in Peace Corps service, then in graduate school, then an employee of the U.S. government in Washington and New Delhi. At that time, young men who were not drafted tried to find jobs in the private sector or attend graduate school or join the Peace Corps. These activities, however, were not alternatives to military service. You regularly reported to your draft office and went in when called. I still have my draft card.

KT: After Peace Corps, were you active in the anti-war movement?

TD: While a grad student at UCLA in 1964, I was in a debate at an anti-war rally on campus. I argued against American military involvement in Vietnam and a well-known political science professor, David Wilson, argued in favor. It was a heated affair, and I remember the campus crowd booing the professor.

After getting an M.A. in South Asian history at UCLA, I got a job at Peace Corps headquarters as the Congressional Liaison. During that time, President Johnson's policies in Vietnam were mired in controversy both in headquarters and in the field. In the spring of 1966, I participated in a panel of former Volunteers debating whether the Peace Corps should send Volunteers to South Vietnam. I argued the negative side. No Volunteers were ever sent to that battle-

torn territory.

KT: While serving in the U.S. embassy in India during the height of the war, did Vietnam affect your work?

TD: I served as personal assistant to Ambassador Chester Bowles at the American Embassy in New Delhi, India, from 1967 to 1969. A gifted progressive public figure in mid-century America, Bowles opposed the war effort in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. I assisted him in drafting tightly-held secret cables to President Johnson every four months, arguing to exit the military morass. In one of LBJ's responses, he instructed Bowles to go on a very secret mission to Phnom Penh to try to persuade Khmer Prince Sihanouk to block Viet Cong fighters and North Vietnamese regulars from using Cambodian territory to enter into South Vietnam. Bowles told Sihanouk that if he did not close his borders, America might expand its air and land war into the neutral state. The mission was not successful, and President Nixon sent U.S. troops into Cambodia on April 30, 1970.

KT: When you worked on the Hill, describe your role on the staff of Senator Frank Church.

TD: From 1970 to 1974, I worked for U.S. Senator Frank Church (D-ID) as his legislative assistant for foreign affairs. My main task was to support his anti-Vietnam legislative stance within the Senate and as a prominent anti-war voice throughout the country. Two pieces of legislation were passed and signed into law, both co-sponsored by U.S. Senator John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) and Church. A final amendment passed in late 1974 prohibiting the use of American forces in, over, and around Indochina. We were out!

Kitty Thuermer grew up in India, Ghana and Germany and served in the Peace Corps in Mali from 1977-79. She later worked for the National Peace Corps Association, Catholic Relief Services, Population Services International, and other non-governmental organizations.

civilian adviser in South Vietnam with a State Department program with the snappy name of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support. The bloody 1969 Tet Offensive had occurred two months before.

"My second assignment was in Khanh Hoa, an area CORDS called a pacified place. I visited five out of the six districts by vehicle, unescorted and unarmed. The one exception required a helicopter ride to a Montagnard district in the highlands where there was the threat of ambush in the mountains. We loaded in our Huey large plastic bags of tilapia fingerlings for fishponds in Nha Trang and rushed to stock the ponds.

"I often thought about my Ethiopia PCV experience. My job with CORDS had a certain people-to-people Peace Corps quality. We worked hard to help improve the lives of ordinary Vietnamese—but at the cost of maintaining an artificially divided country. It didn't work. Our government could not sustain a tottering corrupt regime against a highly motivated, indigenous, communist, nationalist movement. The war was a tragic waste of American and Vietnamese lives."

EVACUATION

Tobey Grand met her husband when they were Volunteers in India from 1966 to 1968. Six years later and as the mother of their two small children, Grand joined her husband who had been posted to Vietnam.

"Life had a normal rhythm to it, with new friends, parties, dinners, dances and work. Everything changed on March 25, 1975 when Da Nang was bombed by the North Vietnamese. We built a bunker in the middle of the living room in case of incoming rockets. But, mostly we huddled on the bed or packed belongings, believing we could get most of our possessions out, or that we would be returning in the near future. The mind is a strange thing when in stress.

"We never returned. We were evacuated at 5 a.m. on the morning of March 26,

driving in the darkness past millions of refugees sitting and sleeping on the sidewalks as we moved toward the airport."

Others on the plane included babies being rescued from the hospital. A young American girl held one infant. "She brought it to me sensing something was wrong. We wrapped it in a blanket and brought it to the pilot who placed the dead infant on the floor of the plane. Shock set in for all. ... We left Saigon on April 12. My husband remained behind ...

"I met my husband through the Peace Corps and Vietnam ended the marriage. From Peace Corps to Vietnam, we became different people."

STROUDSBURG

At the end of her tour in Leyte, the Philippines, Letitia Morse married Jesse Lladoc, the deputy governor of the province of Leyte, who later was elected mayor of Ormoc City. "The Vietnam War was always close and the information I was receiving about the war often conflicted with what my father was reading in the U.S. newspapers.

"I returned with my husband and children to Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, due to the political unrest in the Philippines in 1979. Vietnam was still part of my world, because I began teaching English as a Second Languages to Vietnamese immigrants under a program at King's College for the next four years.

"Since 2007, I have been teaching ESL at Northampton Community College and I have had more than a dozen young Vietnamese immigrants and exchange students in my classes. I have learned so much from my Vietnamese students about their country, culture, and language."

BOAT PEOPLE

The child of refugees, Tommy Bui writes, "My father had endured five years in a jungle re-education camp: a grueling topic that he is not quick to discuss or relive. But upon his release and through sheer will alone he somehow managed to haul his family to America and start anew. It

was a hellish and hardscrabble first few years.

"I was born in the United States and have always inhabited a border-region of cultural self-identification. I took residence on the blurred line of neither feeling fully American nor completely Vietnamese."

Tommy Bui graduated from college and became a Volunteer in Alamaty, Kazakhstan, a program that was terminated nine months after Bui's arrival. He has visited Vietnam more than once.

"My time in Vietnam provided a sorely-needed counterbalance to a keeling ship of cultural confusion." He witnessed a country with "a young and hungry population straining to take advantage of educational opportunities. I saw a nation blooming and propelling itself into a new technological forefront all whilst maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity."

SEMPER FI

Before serving as a forestry Volunteer in the Rif Mountains of Morocco, LeRoy DuVall served as a Marine in Vietnam for two years. He returned briefly in 1997 to work in Hanoi for three months. He returned again when his wife began a four-year contract on a project in Hanoi.

"I became a volunteer with a Hanoi-based American NGO, and eventually I became a staff member. I worked in Hai Phong, Hanoi, Dong Hoi and Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park near the former DMZ, Da Nang, and Ninh Thuan Province in the south, east of Ho Chi Minh City. These were all areas that were heavily impacted by the war and in many areas unexploded ordnance still remains today, long after the end of the war.

"I saw people in fields searching for unexploded ordnance with makeshift mine detectors, or disarming an explosive device left over from the war that they had found, or driving a cart or truck down the road, loaded with unexploded bombs and other war debris to be sold as scrap.

"Even though the war and its aftermath are a daily reality in many



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parts of Vietnam, I never heard any animosity expressed towards the US or to me as an American. The Vietnamese that I have met have been extremely friendly, warm and generous.

"The lingering effects of the 'Vietnam war' are much more obvious in the United States with the uncertainty or bitterness often expressed by Americans, as compared to how the Vietnamese have put the 'American war' behind them. Not all U.S. veterans are bitter: There are many American veterans and veterans' organizations active in Vietnam today."

GANGLAND

When President John Kennedy was assassinated, David Dawley was in training to go to El Triunfo, a town in southern Honduras. "International news was delivered through Voice of America on a shortwave radio and weekly issues of *Time* magazine. While attending the University of Michigan School of Social Work he joined Ann Arbor's anti-war protests, the first national protest in New York and the march on the Pentagon where federal troops used tear gas on peaceful demonstrators.

"Chicago was my Vietnam," he writes. He was hired by the TransCentury Foundation to survey the roots of poverty and social disaffection in Chicago's west side for Vice President Hubert Humphrey and the President's Council on Youth Opportunity. Dawley worked for two years with the Conservative Vice Lords and a sprawling network of black gangs in the Chicago area to help them create a positive legacy in the Black Power movement.

These reflections are among more than 60 submitted recently to the NPCA for publication in the magazine. We will try to publish others on our website at peacecorpsconnect.org. The Editors.

RETURNING WARRIORS

How the West invented victimhood for soldiers of all ages

Sebastian Junger

Because modern society has almost completely eliminated trauma and violence from everyday life, anyone who does suffer those things is deemed to be extraordinarily unfortunate. This gives people access to sympathy and resources but also creates an identity of victimhood that can delay recovery. Anthropologist Danny Hoffman, who studied Mende tribal combatants both during and after civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, found that international relief organizations introduced the idea of victimhood to combatants who until then had rarely, if ever, thought of themselves in those terms. "The language of 'I am a victim too' did not originate from the combatants themselves," Hoffman told me. "(Aid organizations) would come in and say, 'This is how you're supposed to be feeling . . . and if you do, then you'll have access to food supplies and training.'"

In such a poor society, food donations and job training gave an enormous

advantage to ex-combatants. The consequence, Hoffman told me, was that ex-combatants were incentivized to see themselves as victims rather than as perpetrators. These people committed terrible acts of violence during their wars, and many of them felt enormously guilty about it, but they were never able to work through those feelings because their victim status eclipsed more accurate and meaningful understandings of violence. Mende combatants often described combat as something that makes the heart "heat up," transforming a fighter to the point where he is thought to have literally become someone else. In that state he is capable of both great courage and great cruelty. Such a state of hyperarousal is familiar to many soldiers or athletes and has a firm basis in the neurobiology of the brain. For the Mende, it means that the moral excesses of the battlefield don't necessarily have to be brought home.

I was in both Liberia and Sierra Leone during those wars, and the combatants

who had a "hot heart" were unmistakable. They wore amulets and magical charms and acted as if they were possessed, deliberately running into gunfire and

Mende combatants often described combat as something that makes the heart "heat up," transforming a fighter to the point where he is thought to have literally become someone else.

dancing while firing their weapons to prove how brave they were. Other people's lives didn't seem to matter to them because their own lives didn't seem to matter to them. They were true nihilists, and that made them the most terrifying human beings I've ever encountered. According to Hoffman, even highly traumatized ex-combatants such as these could have been reincorporated into Mende society if indigenous concepts like the "hot heart" had been applied. Their classification as victims, however—with the attendant perks and benefits common to Western society—made their reintegration much harder.

The civil war in nearby Ivory Coast unfolded in much the same way, although relief organizations had less access to combatants afterward. "In tribal cultures, combat can be part of the maturation process," I was told by Sharon Abramowitz, who was in Ivory Coast with the Peace Corps in 2002. "When youth return from combat, their return is seen as integral to their own society—they don't feel like outsiders. In the United States we valorize our vets with words and posters and signs, but we don't give them what's really important to Americans, what really sets you apart as someone who is valuable to society—we don't give them jobs. All the praise in the

THE AUTHOR AND SARAH CHAYES will discuss the nature of war and community at Peace Corps Beyond: Peace Corps Connect 2016, on September 21-25 in Washington, D.C. Chayes is a senior associate in the Democracy and Rule of Law Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former war correspondent for National Public Radio. Her recent book is *Thieves of the State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*.



Sebastian Junger



Sarah Chayes

She served in Morocco. Junger is a Vanity Fair contributing editor who has reported about sabotage in the Niger Delta, the war in Afghanistan and wrote the best-selling *The Perfect Storm*. The two were childhood friends who traveled to Morocco together when they were 18 years old.

world doesn't mean anything if you're not recognized by society as someone who can contribute valuable labor."

Anthropologists like Kohrt, Hoffman, and Abramowitz have identified three factors that seem to crucially affect a combatant's transition back into civilian life. The United States seems to rank low on all three. First, cohesive and egalitarian tribal societies do a very good job at mitigating the effects of trauma, but by their very nature, many modern societies are exactly the opposite: hierarchical and alienating. America's great wealth, although a blessing in many ways, has allowed for the growth of an individualistic society that suffers high rates of depression and anxiety. Both are correlated with chronic PTSD.

Secondly, ex-combatants shouldn't be seen—or be encouraged to see

themselves—as victims. One can be deeply traumatized, as firemen are by the deaths of both colleagues and civilians, without being viewed through the lens of victimhood. Lifelong disability payments for a disorder like PTSD, which is both treatable and usually not chronic, risks turning veterans into a victim class that is entirely dependent on the government for their livelihood.

The United States is a wealthy country that may be able to afford this, but in human terms, the veterans can't. The one way that soldiers are never allowed to see themselves during deployment is as victims, because the passivity of victimhood can get them killed. It's yelled, beaten, and drilled out of them long before they get close to the battlefield. But when they come home they find themselves being viewed so sympathetically that they're often excused

from having to fully function in society. Some of them truly can't function, and those people should be taken care of immediately; but imagine how confusing it must be to the rest of them.

Perhaps most important, veterans need to feel that they're just as necessary and productive back in society as they were on the battlefield. Iroquois warriors who dominated just about every tribe within 500 miles of their home territory would return to a community that still needed them to hunt and fish and participate in the fabric of everyday life. There was no transition when they came home because—much like in Israel—the battlefield was an extension of society, and vice versa. Recent studies of something called "social resilience" have identified resource sharing and egalitarian wealth distribution as major components of a society's ability to recover from hardship. And societies that rank high on social resilience—such as kibbutz settlements in Israel—provide soldiers with a significantly stronger buffer against PTSD than low-resilience societies. In fact, social resilience is an even better predictor of trauma recovery than the level of resilience of the person himself.

Unfortunately, for the past decade American soldiers have returned to a country that displays many indicators of low social resilience. Resources are not shared equally, a quarter of children live in poverty, jobs are hard to get, and minimum wage is almost impossible to live on. Instead of being able to work and contribute to society—a highly therapeutic thing to do—a large percentage of veterans are just offered lifelong disability payments. And they accept, of course—why shouldn't they? A society that doesn't distinguish between degrees of trauma can't expect its warriors to, either.



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THE ALTRUISM OF CHIC DAMBACH

A peacebuilder turns citizen-diplomacy into a movement

Peter Deekle

Beginning in the 1960s, thousands of Americans protested the U.S. military presence in Vietnam's war between the north and the south, and Chic Dambach was a student activist in those ranks of protest. When he returned from two years of Peace Corps in Colombia in 1969, he began a professional career that has included leadership in the non-profit world to support the arts, the Olympics, Congressional effectiveness and self-respect in the American classroom.

To our greater Peace Corps community, he is most familiar as president of the National Peace Corps Association from 1992 to 1999. But in the years that followed, he has earned far greater recognition beyond our greater Peace Corps community as a pioneer in negotiating an end to armed conflict and building a community of citizen diplomats here and abroad. As head of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, he helped to foster a community of activists who would pursue roles as peacebuilders in war and in pending conflicts. He has taken the word peace literally and pursued it.

In June of this year, the head of the Institute for Economics and Peace, Steve

Killelea, presented Dambach with the Institute's first lifetime achievement award. Killelea, the Australian creator of the Global Peace Index, told his Washington, D.C. audience Dambach has been an innovator in peacebuilding who has clearly and boldly articulated ways for others to empower rival parties to resolve disputes. "But the quality of Chic's that has left the strongest lasting impression is his personal altruism."

That altruism became evident during his time as president of NPCA, when Dambach found U.S. government funding to coordinate a trio of returned volunteers from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to aid in the complex reconciliation process after the Rwanda genocide.

In genocide's wake

Steven Smith was back from his Peace Corps service in Congo less than a decade when he met Dambach at the 1993 NPCA conference in Berkeley. A year later, the Rwanda genocide erupted. "This occurred in a part of Africa I knew well," Smith says. "I was appalled at the lack of national and international response.

"Chic was instrumental in the launch of the Rwanda project that led to the creation of an RPCV database for use

in emergencies. This work inspired the creation of Peace Corps' Crisis Corps—now Peace Corps Response. Chic has remained committed to peace in Central Africa for over 20 years."

Shortly after he left our association, Dambach and four NPCA members who had served in Ethiopia and Eritrea flew to the capitals of the two countries and met with both presidents to offer their services as friends of both countries, encouraging the leaders to end a two-year border war that had cost these countries more than 100,000 lives. The citizen-negotiators were later invited to the Algiers peace treaty ceremony, where Ethiopia's prime minister took them aside to personally thank them for "creating the momentum and the spirit which made this historic achievement possible." Unfortunately, the governments failed to abide by the signed agreement; their border remained heavily armed and conflict continues to flare.

Later, Dambach and another RPCV team played an active role in peace initiatives in conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Praise for his work follows him. "With some of his friends, he has been a hero in bringing back peace to DRC and the Horn of Africa," says Mali's minister of employment and vocational training, Mahamane Baby. "He knows the culture, the actors and he has that human sensitivity to make a huge difference in the life of people who are far from his reality.

"If there were a God of peace, Chic would definitely be his deputy."

Perhaps of greater importance is his desire to see others follow his lead. Dambach is now adjunct faculty at American and Johns Hopkins universities and a Woodrow Wilson visiting fellow, nurturing a larger community of peacebuilders.

Former deputy secretary of state for legislative affairs Joel Rubin values what Dambach has done for a new generation



Dambach with his friends Maikel Nabil of Egypt and Victor Ochen of Uganda. Nabil and Ochen are the two youngest Africans ever nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

of citizen-diplomats. "The young people he has mentored could circle the earth twice. Chic is a North Star for generations of peacebuilders around the world. And above all else, he's a fighter for a better world, not letting anything stop him."

Support for an Arab Spring hero

When he came to the United States from an Egyptian prison, Maikel Nabil Sanad spoke publicly about the need to promote liberal democratic values in Egypt and for peaceful relations between Egypt and Israel. Dambach joined him on his speaking tour in the United States.

Nabil was a conscientious objector who had been sentenced by a Nasr City military court to three years in prison for "insulting the military" when he posted a blog during the 2011 Arab Spring movement in Cairo. He suffered two comas during a prison hunger strike and

came near to death. His efforts have been recognized by Reporters Without Borders, The International Federation of Liberal Youth, and a Middle East youth website. The Daily Beast called him one of the 10 best bloggers of the year.

"I owe Chic a lot," says Maikel. "We gave a couple of speeches together to high school students in Baltimore, and it was amazing to see him listen to the students carefully, and respond through his experience and enthusiasm.

"He doesn't make anyone feel unimportant or unworthy. Helping others isn't a career step for him; it's a personal commitment and a way of life. I wish we had more people like him around."

Even in Washington, the impact of his work is apparent as Melanie Greenberg, his successor at the Alliance for Peacebuilding, recalls the day a Eritrean rushed out from within her food kiosk

and buried Chic in an enormous hug. "She thanked him personally for the work that he had done directly with the presidents of Ethiopia and Eritrea to bring peace to that conflict," Greenberg says.

"...above all else, he's a fighter for a better world, not letting anything stop him."

'...hearts need to be touched'

If altruism has guided Dambach's career among peacebuilders, he applies everyday realities to clarify emotional issues. His target has been armed conflicts in other parts of the globe, but at home he took on a leadership of another manifestation of violence: a campaign to stop bullying in American classrooms. Musician, composer and close friend Peter Yarrow had asked him to run his Operation Respect program.

When Dambach organized a Washington, D.C. symposium for educators and activists trying to address the issue, he took a pass on panels of experts on the issues and the challenges and, instead, he asked children to speak about the experience.

Yarrow remembers one 12-year-old girl who talked about the ridicule she had faced and the worthlessness she felt. But when she switched to another school, she said the students saw something special in her. They taught her to believe in herself, and it turned her life around.

"Through a torrent of tears," Yarrow recalls, "this young girl reminded us all why our work was so important.

"As a great activist and advocate, Chic knows that to move society forward in the face of apathy, insularity, or just a simple lack of awareness, our hearts need to be touched."

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Peter Deekle edits the community news for WorldView, writes book reviews for peacecorpsworldwide.com and is a former dean of university libraries and interim provost at Roger Williams University. He served in Iran from 1968 to 1970.

'BLESSED ARE THE FLEXIBLE'

In Seattle, they celebrated Ramadan

Jonathan Pearson



Muslim Sufi minister Imam Jamal Rahman shared an Iftar meal with Seattle RPCVs.

BREAKING FAST

Imam Jamal Rahman joined **Seattle Area Peace Corps Association** to celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan and learn more about Islam.

"The world is not made up of atoms, but stories," the Muslim Sufi minister from Seattle's Interfaith Community Sanctuary told an estimated 50 who sat down to an Iftar meal during the month of fasting. The Iftar menu included pilafs and curries, stuffed dates, quiches, pies,



cakes, and cookies.

It was the beginning of an evening of enlightenment and story-telling. After the sun set, food was served and this local RPCV community learned more about Islam.

It is only through knowledge and personal interaction that fear and ignorance will be dispelled, said Imam Jamal, one of three so-called "Interfaith Amigos," a collaboration between religious leaders in Seattle who explore spiritual inclusivity.

Imam Jamal led the group of RPCVs and friends in meditative prayer and described some of the history and tenets of Islam. He also touched on the theological differences between Sunnis and Shiites, the rise of Wahhabism, and how the hijab showcased choice and devotion.

"Considering world events and the increasing animosity against Muslims

in our country," said Barbara Stahler, a former Dominican Republic associate country director and Cape Verde country director, "it was significant for SEAPX and friends to show that we are world citizens who respect the values of all people."

Imam Jamal reminded his Seattle area audience, "Blessed are the flexible, for they will never be bent out of shape."

Dozens of our other NPCA affiliates sponsored worthwhile projects around the globe. Here are a few.

NO SMALL POTATOES

The annual partnership between the **RPCVs of New Jersey** and the Howell Living Farm continues for the 30th year thanks to the farm's manager, Pete Watson, who served in Benin. In August, group members harvested potatoes that were donated to Trenton area soup kitchens and food pantries. The project yields an average of one ton of potatoes each year in May. This year the New Jersey affiliate also partnered with other projects in northern and southern parts of the state during Jersey Cares Day. Their partnerships with area colleges and universities such as Rutgers University are expanding to the College of New Jersey and Monmouth University.

20 K MILESTONE

The **Friends of Dominican Republic's** Community Challenge Fund crossed its \$20,000 threshold when they recently gave a \$1,800 grant for a new aqueduct project in Punta Larga, a town in the center of the Dominican Republic. The NPCA affiliate's community fund has also funded projects in other impoverished communities on the island: clean cooking stoves in Tres Ceibos and Higueroito, a water project in La Hondonada and La Javilla, and the construction of sanitary cement floors in Los Bueyes.

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Members of the Peace Corps community affiliated with the group **Full Basket**

Belize helped to fund five projects in Belize on the environment, education and agriculture. Funded projects include protective bird habitats to offer avian protection and science education for young students in three villages in the Cayo district; a solar fruit dryer so the Toledo Women's Food Security group can double dried fruit production; and after-school day care for low-income families on the south side of Belize City. Since establishing its community grants program 10 years ago, Full Basket Belize has provided approximately \$30,000 in project support.

TIME MARCHES ON

In more than a century the annual Rose Parade has become a beloved tradition of the Portland, Oregon Rose Festival. In June, 55 members of the **Columbia River Returned Peace Corps Association** were part of that tradition as they marked Peace Corps' 55th anniversary. It has been five years since the NPCA affiliate first grabbed the flags of the many countries in which they have served and many joined the Rose Parade in 2011. Some continue to wear the dress of their host countries and others wear a t-shirt designed for the 2012 event by Eugene, Oregon artist James Cloutier (Kenya 64-66).

CARIBBEAN RE-BOOT

The **Friends of Jamaica** has re-established its small grants program, which is available to community-based organizations serving the needs of Jamaicans. They recently awarded grants to the Redwood Progressive Youth Club for a Basic School Sports Day event and the Y's Menette's Resource Centre for an annual summer camp to unite communities and teaching life skills to youth. See servejamaica.org for more about these projects.

POUR IT ON

The **Tennessee Returned Peace Corps Volunteers** gathered with friends



and supporters to "Pour One for the Peace Corps" at Black Abbey Brewing in Nashville in July. The event brought in more than \$800 for Peace Corps Partnership projects supervised by currently serving Volunteers from Tennessee. Members of this group have donated over \$8,000 to 27 projects in 19 countries.

NEW GROUPS

We're experiencing wonderful growth among affiliated groups. During the second quarter of 2016, our board of directors welcomed four more groups to the NPCA family. The latest additions are the Mississippi-based **Magnolia State RPCVs**, the New York-based **RPCVs of the Southern Tier**, a revived **RPCVs for Environmental Action**, and a newly formed group within the federal government's General Services Administration, the **GSA RPCV Employee Association**.

COMPOSTING 301

Madame Clarissa and the women of northwest Ghana

William Zimmerman

The town of Jirapa in northwest Ghana had a nice frontier-town atmosphere in the dry season of late 2014 with its dusty streets and modest dwellings. Housing for visitors was limited. I had hoped to stay in one of the Catholic guesthouses but no rooms were available. So I crashed in a motel in nearby Wa, the district capital, a larger town of about 100,000.

There was a restaurant at the motel, but after the first night I only took breakfast. I skipped dinner because working in the sun each day left me with no appetite. When I got back to my motel, I bought local bread and bottled water from a vendor across the road from the motel.

ACDI/VOCA, an NGO (non-governmental organization), manages an extensive USAID Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) operation in Ghana. They assigned me to teach subsistence farmers how to compost for staple crops in northwest Ghana. The government had stopped subsidizing chemical fertilizers and the Jirapa farmers weren't eligible for micro-credit loans, so they needed to learn other ways to enhance soil fertility.

My first contact with the Jirapa Farmers Network was an afternoon meeting with six executives of this cooperative. Most of them knew at least some English, but they all chose to speak Dagaare, one language spoken by natives of this corner of Ghana.

Madame Clarissa, the secretary and only woman among the executives, was chosen to be my translator and daily guide. We agreed on the daily itinerary for my visits in the region. The executives also taught me how to say good morning, good evening, and thank you, but Madame Clarissa would translate all of my meetings from that night on. In the upcoming days I would become adept with a number of Dagaare terms pertaining to soil, water, and compost components.

The arid savanna soil conditions and crop residue were identical everywhere, but each community had a distinct personality.

The surroundings and the field in which we worked varied by the size and species of the trees—often the sheltering neem under which I set up my flip chart.

Each visit was productive, even if the lesson was the same. By the time we finished making the rounds, Madame Clarissa and Ken, my driver who came with me from Tamale, had memorized my spiel.

More than two-thirds of the farmers who came to the workshops were women. Women *are in the forefront of subsistence farming* in many communities here; they are either the dominant worker of the family or are delegated that role since many men leave to find jobs in southern Ghana. The women in my workshops participated with enthusiasm and asked most of the questions about handling the green and brown materials for composting.

All of the farmers who work this hard-scrabble soil have to be respected. They are intelligent although most are illiterate. The F2F program is rigorous about documenting attendance in their programs, so we always brought a supply of attendance sheets and a pad of ink to each session. Attendees recorded

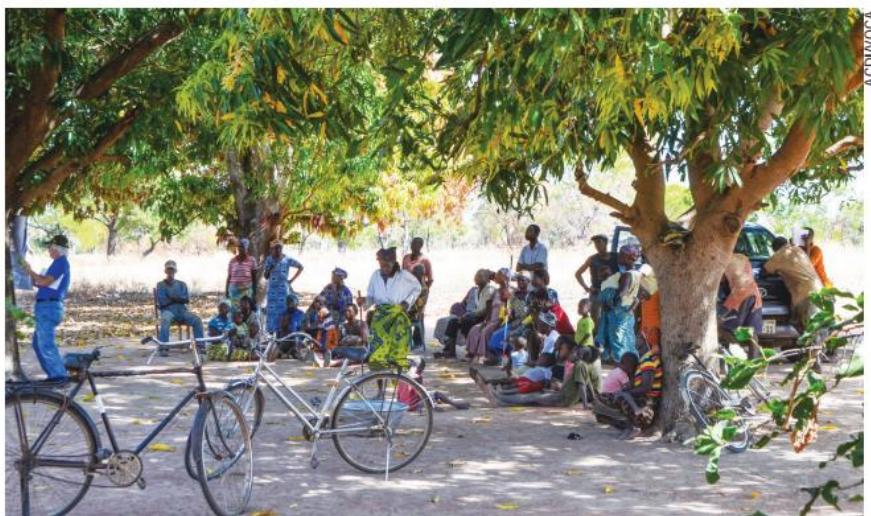
Two-thirds of the farmers who came to the workshops were women. Women *are in the forefront of subsistence farming* in many communities here ...

thumbprints instead of signatures.

On the daily commute from Wa via Jirapa to Sigli, Zingpen, Moyiri, Tizaa, Duri, Sabuli and Gbare I watched farmers burning their fields for the next cultivation or engaging in goat husbandry while I counted the occasional shea and neem trees were visible from the road. These trees of the savannah offer more than shade: the neem tree provides a natural pesticide and shea seed may be processed into oil-rich shea butter.

Early in my assignment, my hosts took me to the town of Tizaa for a National Farmer's Day celebration. One of the farmers in the Jirapa Farmers network was awarded a certificate for his pistachio yield. I thoroughly enjoyed the certificate ceremonies and the dance performances. The speeches—not so much.

At one workshop, I was sent off



Zimmerman outlines compost procedures for farmers from Sigli who cycled or walked to his workshop under the cooling cover of several shea trees.

with a farewell song. At another site the community greeted me with songs, yams and a chicken, but those disappeared with the group president, who came for a visit.

Back in my motel each night I transcribed the day's notes, prepared a simple tropical composting manual—absent the chemistry—and recommended next steps to F2F Ghana: a complete extension program in soil conservation that includes minimum tillage, erosion control and uses of crop residue to build the fertility of these soils; and recruitment of others in the region such as Peace Corps Volunteers with agricultural background to teach soil conservation and community gardening.

One PCV who visited me in Ghana, John Meisenbacher, is a perfect example of this outreach. John was teaching math and information technology at a junior high school in Nandom to the north. His secondary projects included vermiculture,

rabbits, zia pits (shallow depressions for individual plants) and composting.

Coming into the Farmer-to-Farmer program with the perspective of a Peace Corps Volunteer made me aware of the obvious discrepancies between the lifestyles of a Peace Corps Volunteer vs. agricultural consultant. Instead of PCV housing, F2F arranges a hotel or a guesthouse. Travel is much easier. I always have a car and driver so no more bush taxis and local buses. In comparison with Peace Corps, this consultant's life seems excessively comfortable.

While I now have significant professional qualifications for my work in each country, I don't learn the language and culture of my hosts; this lack of assimilation sometimes gives me feelings of guilt. Ultimately, I leave each assignment feeling that I could have learned and achieved more. But I have also felt this way after my Peace Corps tours.

My Peace Corps experience in the 1970s shaped my life and career interests. I spent two years as a PC agricultural extension agent in Nicaragua where we rode horseback to visit our farmers and lived without efficient means of communication. Technology has changed all of that, but the lifestyle of the Peace Corps Volunteer remains much the same.

I came home to eventually earn my doctorate in biological sciences at the University of Missouri-Columbia and then taught and/or conducted research in institutions of Washington and Michigan and in Israel. I left academe and returned to Nicaragua as a Peace Corps-Crisis Corps Volunteer working in soil erosion. Before retirement, I spent another decade in private industry, and after leaving I began looking for overseas assignments as a volunteer.

Initially, I spent 11 months in Liberia in a Peace Corps Response program but when I finished that tour, I switched to the Farmer-to-Farmer program. The shorter length of these sojourns—most are two to four weeks in length—was ideal because I could still work in developing countries but maintain family responsibilities back home in Missouri.

I've consulted for F2F once in Nepal and four times in West Africa—Ghana, Liberia, and twice in Nigeria. This USAID program is the perfect alternative to Peace Corps; it offers professional volunteer service and personal fulfillment. I've conducted curriculum development, pedagogical seminars to university faculty and rural workshops like this one on soil erosion control and composting. As long as my skills fit, I'd like to complete several assignments each year.



Unique Skills-based Volunteer Opportunities!
FARMER-TO-FARMER.ORG

William Zimmerman is a retired microbiologist/botanist who has conducted several Farmer-to-Farmer projects in Nepal and four African countries. He served in Nicaragua from 1974 to 1976, returned as a PC Crisis Corps Volunteer in agriculture to Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch and again volunteered in Liberia as a PC Response Volunteer in education from 2012–2013 in Liberia.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR COMMUNITY

ARMENIA

Erica Brouillette (2007-09) is the new president of the Falls Church (VA) Rotary Club. Erica joined the local Rotary in 2012, and was installed as president during a June 30 induction ceremony. She will serve as president through June, 2017.

BOTSWANA

Nicole Appelian appears in the second season of the "Alone" wilderness survival series that premiered in April on the History Channel. Nicole volunteered as a game warden with the Peace Corps, and continued work in Botswana as a field biologist. Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2000, Appelian now lives in the Pacific Northwest where she relies on local plants for a healthy lifestyle. She is a research biologist, expedition leader, traditional skills instructor and southern Africa specialist with Ecotours International.

BRAZIL

Dennis Brueggemann volunteers in the "waterkeeper program" run by Kootenai



Environmental Alliance in Kootenai, Idaho after a career with the Special Olympics. In the Peace Corps, he and his wife worked with the Special Olympic headquarters and trained other Peace Corps Volunteers and their local villages in Brazil to run training programs for athletes.

CAMEROON

Stephen Schwartz (1981-83) was confirmed as the new ambassador to Somalia. He will be taking over as first US envoy to the East African country in more than 24 years. The U.S. no longer has an embassy building in Somalia. Schwartz will be working at the U.S. embassy in Kenya. Earlier, Schwartz supervised Citizen's Democracy Corps volunteer

programs in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, spent three years as Peace Corps desk officer for Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso and opened the program in Chad in 1987. As a Volunteer he was a business advisor to a cocoa cooperative in Cameroon.

CHINA

Author **Rob Schmitz** (1996-98) has published his new book, *Street of Eternal Happiness: Big City Dreams Along a Shanghai Road*. Published by Crown,



the book chronicles conversations with everyday Chinese citizens he encounters daily in his corner of the former French Concession where he and his family live. Schmitz first came to China in 1996 as a Peace Corps Volunteer assigned to Sichuan Province. In 2010, he settled in Shanghai as a correspondent for American Public Media's Marketplace program.

COSTA RICA



Derek Conley (2012-14) is a Peace Corps Fellow in applied economics at the Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development at Illinois State University.

ECUADOR/GUATEMALA

As part of an annual traveling art show that also highlights the contributions of local seniors, the San Diego Legends program honored **Vickie Velasco** at a reception at the El Cajon Library. Velasco, who joined the Peace Corps for multiple tours in Ecuador and Guatemala, promotes healthy exercise in the "Feeling Fit," a program she helped create while managing San Diego County's Aging and Independence Services.

ETHIOPIA

As the mayor of Eugene, Oregon, **Kitty Piercy** (1964-66) is among 20 other U.S. mayors and 40 Chinese mayors who were recently invited by the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Bloomberg Philanthropies to attend the U.S.-China Climate-Smart/Low-Carbon Cities Summit. Piercy is concluding her final mayoral year in Eugene, Oregon. In 2012, she originated a resolution from the U.S. Conference of Mayors, recognizing the contributions of current and returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

THE GAMBIA

A new company seeking to preserve the traditions of global artisans and improving livelihoods through providing high quality, handmade textiles has opened a new store. The founder of Living Threads Co., **Amanda Zehner** (2007-09), opened a storefront in her native Virginia, in the Reston Town Center. Living Threads Co. currently partners with

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artisans in Guatemala, India, Nicaragua and Nepal.

IRAN

Stephen Gottlieb (1965-67) contributes frequently to local Albany public radio's *Midday Magazine*. His commentaries incorporate his legal insights and global perspective on events as diverse as current US/Iran diplomacy and the Orlando, Florida tragedy. Following his Peace Corps service in Iran, he has practiced law with a New York City firm and currently serves as Albany Law School's Jay and Ruth Caplan Distinguished Professor of Law.

JAMAICA

Appearing at the University of California, Riverside, **Jacqueline Patterson**



(1991-94) discussed the impacts of polluting industries and climate change on communities of color and low-income communities. Patterson serves as director of the NAACP's environmental and climate justice program. During her career, Patterson has worked on women's rights, HIV and AIDS and racial, economic, and environmental justice.

LIBERIA

The Board of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Colorado announced in May 2016 the nomination of **Sue Fox** (1968-70) for the John F. Kennedy Service Award for her work to establish a partnership between Peace Corps and Rotary International. Sue died this year after a year-long battle with cancer.

Dorothy Wrase Hares (1971-73) was honored in 2016 with the Distinguished



Dietitian Award by the New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Hares is a registered dietitian at St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center. She served as the New York State Academy of Nutrition and

Dietetics president for the 2013-2014. During her Peace Corps service she served as a Volunteer at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Monrovia.

MADAGASCAR

Two recent RPCVs were featured in the *Epoch Times* as "Ethical Entrepreneurs Who Focus Their Businesses on Helping



Others". **Nathaniel Delafield** and **Sarah Osterhoudt** (2005-07) founded LAFAZA, in Oakland, California, to create a better way to market the vanilla beans of Madagascar. The couple is working with hundreds of growers to bring direct trade for their product. The country's vanilla bean market has been dominated by foreign-owned vanilla plantations, leaving small landowners with whatever someone would offer them for their product.

MAURITANIA

Selected by the Duke University Graduate



and Professional Student Council as a young trustee, **Christopher Paul** (2007-09) will serve a three-year term. He and his wife, Anna Bauer, served in the Peace Corps as environmental education volunteers. Paul's fieldwork is primarily in East Africa, where he researches climate change, social capital and development.

MOROCCO

Susan Traverso (1983-85) is the new president of Thiel College in Greenville,



Pennsylvania. Hired as the school's 20th president and first female to lead Thiel College, Traverso served as the provost and senior vice president of Elizabethtown College since 2007. Along with serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco, Traverso worked as a recruiter in Boston and trainer in Yemen and Bulgaria.

NEPAL



Thomas H. Prol (1994-96) was installed in May as the 118th president of the New Jersey State Bar Association. He will be the third lawyer from Sussex County (NJ) to

lead the State Bar Association in its 117-year history. Prol will be the association's first openly gay president.

NIGER

Michael Klinger (1979-1981) of Acton, Massachusetts, is founder of Bokai, Inc. non-government organization in Acton, Massachusetts, working with leaders of Guidon Roumji on local government, farming and education projects and addressing water supply



and capital improvement needs. Acton is the sister city to Guidon Roumji, Niger.

OMAN

In Washington state, **David Fenner** recently addressed the Monroe Public Library on the topic of *Islam 101: Perceptions, Misconceptions and Context for the 21st Century*. Fenner is a retired University of Washington chief academic officer and scholar of Islam. The program was supported in part by the nonprofit Humanities Washington.



SENEGAL

Anne Marie Linn (2012-2014) recently described her service in Senegal for "Success in Service: Life after Peace Corps" as "a student-organized, TED-style program, featuring diverse, passionate Returned Peace Corps Volunteers." "Success in Service" is a collaborative effort by the Peace Corps and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Linn is a Rutgers University senior program coordinator in the School of Nursing.

SWAZILAND

In comments on lessons for success

in business posted in July 2016 on

KNOWSTARTUP: Inspiring Startups in

India, **Reed Hastings**

(1983-1985) never saw himself as an entrepreneur when he was younger. He saw himself as many other things—a marine, a Peace Corps Volunteer, a teacher

in Swaziland, even a developer of artificial intelligence—all of which he did. Yet Reed managed to grow Netflix, the 1997 DVD delivery rental company, into the \$32.9 billion giant it is today.

American political commentator, talk show host, and author **Chris Matthews** (1968-1970) has been named the recipient

of the 2016 Tip O'Neill Irish Diaspora Award. He served in the Peace Corps as a trade development adviser and is best known for his talk show, "Hardball with Chris Matthews," on

MSNBC. The Diaspora Award was named to honor the late Thomas P. Tip O'Neill, who was speaker of the US House of Representatives from 1977 until 1987. Matthews spent six years as O'Neill's chief of staff.

WASHINGTON, DC

Mark Gearan has received an appointment as president in residence at Harvard University's graduate school of education. He will leave the presidency of Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New

York at the end of the next academic year. He served as the college's president for 18 years and led the small respected college in New York through unprecedented financial

and academic growth. At Harvard's graduate school of education he will pursue issues in higher education. Gearan was director of the Peace Corps for five years and served before that as communications director in the administration of President Bill Clinton.



FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE.

For MPH student Elizabeth Toure, the word "community" conjures an unlikely picture: a bowl of rice with sauce. When she shared the dish with a group of women in Guinea, as a Peace Corps volunteer, she felt welcomed into their community.

Establishing community trust is central to breaking down barriers to advance public health and health education globally. As a neighbor, teacher and friend in her Guinea community, Elizabeth led reproductive health and family planning classes, went door-to-door to hang mosquito nets and even founded a girls' soccer team in the village.

Elizabeth joined the Peace Corps to challenge herself and help a community. Now she's earning an MPH from the Bloomberg School to change the world.

Join us in protecting health, saving lives—millions at a time.

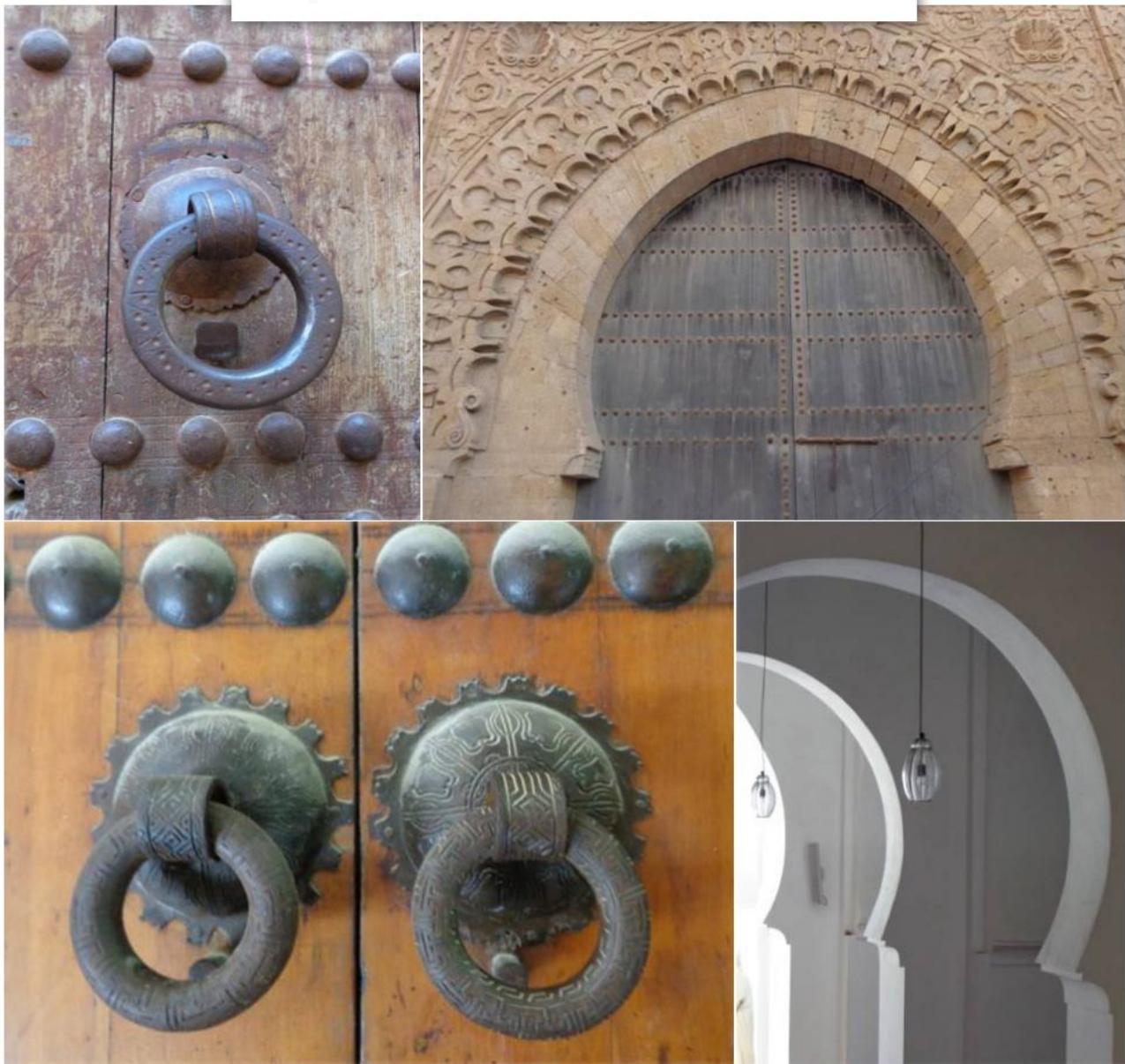
jhsp.h.edu/feel-good

Scholarships and financial aid options are available.

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MEDINA DOORS

The doors of these city gates, shops and homes are found in the streets of the UNESCO World Heritage sites of 12th century Rabat and 9th century Fez medinas. The photographer, Susan Flaherty, is attracted by the power of the metaphors and the fine craftsmanship of the doors, and the mystery of what lies behind them. At once, these centuries-old doors appear medieval and hermetic, yet they invite entry and radiate Moroccan elegance and the warmth of hospitality. She has photographed doors in Morocco and more than 30 other countries while traveling with Kevin Quigley, the Thailand country director from 2012 to 2015. Visit www.1000BeautifulChoices.com.



IN MEMORIAM

We remember those within the Peace Corps community who passed away in the last several months, and thank them for their service to our nation. For a more extensive list of those lost in recent years, visit <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/>.

We welcome you to send information on additional members of the Peace Corps community by sending a message to obituary@peacecorpsconnect.org.

STAFF	CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	HONDURAS	MOLDOVA	SIERRA LEONE	UKRAINE
Glen Fishbach, 3/8/16	Kristen Von Koschembahr, 7/16/16	Catharine "Cate" Stratton, 2/12/16	Chuck Norris, 2/17/16	Thomas Myers, 6/7/16	George Martin Huschle, 5/25/16
Howard Kramer Gray, 5/23/16				Andre David Stutz, 4/5/16	ZAIRE
Vera Radford Hughs, 6/20/16	CHAD	John Schmidt, 5/4/16	Pattie Lanich, 7/12/16	Rebecca Tucker, 5/12/16	Joan Inga Vreeburg, 5/30/16
Thomas Joseph McDonald, 5/25/16	Dorothy Kehmeier, 7/6/16	John E. Small, 5/12/16			COUNTRY OF SERVICE NOT SPECIFIED
Deborah Hirst Nager, 2/25/16	CHILE	Robert Wydra, 5/4/16	Daniel Francis Doheny, 5/22/16	Sandra Switzer, 2/22/16	Mark J. Clayburgh, 4/28/16
Br. Leo Ryan, 6/25/16	Lou Edwards, 4/27/16	Peter Van Zile, 6/25/16	John Erickson, 6/28/16		Casey Piper Coes, 4/6/16
MULTIPLE COUNTRIES OF SERVICE	COLOMBIA	IRAN	Jerry Lee Haynes, 5/23/16	THAILAND	Robert Akers Cox, 4/10/16
Christopher Anthony Butowicz (Nigeria, Liberia) 5/13/16	Curtis Glick, 3/27/16	John Lyle Erdman, 2/24/16		Carroll Lucht, 7/3/16	Edward J. "Ed" Ebel, 4/25/16
Daniel Llewellyn Morford (Brazil, Ecuador, Peru) 5/3/16	Michael Judd, 7/4/16		NIGERIA	TOGO	Mary Louise Martin, 2/22/16
Roger Smith (Panama, Peru) 5/16/16	Richard Lloyd, 7/15/16	JAMAICA	Peter Brigham, 6/22/16	Patten White, 4/15/16	Dave Skinner, 1/28/16
Phoebe Soule (Ethiopia, Fiji) 6/12/16	Anne Vogel, 4/23/16	Kathleen Gutzman Nenaber, 5/30/16	John James McCaffery, 7/5/16	TURKEY	
ALBANIA	Steven Zamora, 7/8/16	Joseph Benjamin Saxon, 6/23/16	Thomas O. Yeoman, 5/30/16	Philip Konkel, 5/31/16	
Muriel "Annie" Monrad, 5/15/16	COSTA RICA	KENYA		Eugene Zajac, 4/7/16	
BARBADOS	Erma Flora Haughawout Boothby, 5/3/16	Floy Alton Altenbernd, 5/13/16	PANAMA		
James Rindfleisch, 7/11/16	Grace Malone, 6/22/16	Philip Andrew Graham, 7/1/16	Franklin Dale Rousar, 7/3/16		
BENIN	COTE D'IVOIRE	David Welch, 7/4/16	PHILIPPINES		
William Floyd Jacobs, 5/17/16	Richard Dwight Newberg, 4/25/16	LESOTHO	Peggy Jean Barker, 5/2/16		
Bonnie Papke, 4/22/16	ECUADOR	John G. Begeman, 5/10/16	James William Fraley, 4/29/16		
BOLIVIA	Marilyn Belman, 6/28/16	Kelly J. Meyer, 11/4/15	Richard K. Irish, 6/17/16		
Dusty Turcott, 7/7/16	ETHIOPIA/ERITREA	LIBERIA	PERU		
BRAZIL	Michael Feldstein, 4/13/16	Susan R. Fox, 4/29/16	Joseph Benjamin Saxon, 6/24/16		
Don Davidson, 6/20/16	Dr. Philip Littman, 3/16/16	Diana Kelly Hernandez, 4/26/16	Robert Serventi, 6/24/16		
James F. Hicks, 6/6/16	John Timmons, 6/2/16	MALAWI	ROMANIA		
Teresa Stewart, 6/1/16	GUINEA	Milford Randall Cowley, 10/8/15	Beth J. Barfield, 5/24/16		
	Carl Leslie Chatfield, 5/6/16	MALAYSIA	Jackie Lee Smith, 4/27/16		
		Marlene Ellis Payne, 5/10/16	SENEGAL		
			Bill Beery, 7/5/16		
			Beth Schmidt, 6/16/16		
		MARSHALL ISLANDS			
		Jennifer Ann Williams McKissick, 5/6/16			

