

# CAJUN CORPS CHRONICLE

Bringin' da world to da bayou! May 2011

50 years  
How are you  
celebrating?

**SPECIAL:  
HOW PEACE CORPS  
CHANGED MY LIFE**

A Publication of the Louisiana Peace Corps Association

# Letter from the Editor

It was the fall of 2006. I was writing for the University of Missouri's laboratory newspaper, the *Missourian*, and trying to figure out what to do with a journalism degree that didn't involve, well, journalism -- when I met Dwayne.

Oh, Dwayne. He came to Mizzou for their Peace Corps Fellowship program (he'd just gotten back from the Republic of Georgia) and was ... quirky ... to put it mildly. He talked about diarrhea (in polite company!), he was always on the phone with someone speaking a language I couldn't understand, and NOTHING, not even the high stress of the newsroom, seemed to phase him. His apartment was bare, with only a single couch and a small coffee table. He had no TV or big stereo. Just a few books and maps hanging on the wall.

Dwayne talked about the Peace Corps all the time -- which would have been annoying, had he not had this *look* when he talked about it. This kind of large, dopey grin, like a kid talking about his first baseball game. It didn't take him long to convince me to apply. And exactly one year after submitting my first application, I was on a plane to Peru, nervous, numb and more than a little terrified.

I spent two years in the Northern Coast of Peru, 45 minutes from Ecuador. I worked with teens and youth in the prevention of HIV, with moms to prevent parasites and anemia in their children, and with engineers to bring latrines to the poorest sector of my village. Waist-deep into my service, I couldn't believe I would ever be able to answer the question "what was Peace Corps like?"

But as a graduate student in Tulane's School of Public Health, I get asked the question often. Sometimes I give a long, flowery answer about the trials and tribulations that are overshadowed by the beauty and awe that comes with living in a culture so different from my own. Other times, I just smile and say that it was interesting and challenging ... leaving the details up to the listener. And when I'm really feeling snarky, I say, "What was Peace Corps like? Hot."

The true answer is probably closer to this one: Peace Corps changed my life.

Not in any profound way -- I should add. I'm still me. A little harder, a little more adaptable, maybe, but otherwise more or less the same. And, sure, it changed my career some. I mean, I graduated with a degree in journalism and planned on going to law school, and now I'm one semester into a master's in public health program, but still just as uncertain about what I might want to do with it.

For some RPCVs, Peace Corps gave them more patience, pragmatism and perspective (See Cathy's article, pg. ##). Or falling in love with a culture forever (See Dave's article, pg. ##).

For me, my apartment is bare -- just a couch and some books on a bookshelf with maps on the wall. I could talk about Peace Corps for hours. And whenever I do ... I am certain I have this dopey look on my face.

I feel like I'm a part of something. Like Jack, Bart and Susan said in their note about the 50th Anniversary of Peace Corps in the Philippines (pg.##), somehow, we PCVs are a brother/sisterhood.

And I'm proud to be a new member of the Louisiana Peace Corps Association.

Cuídate,  
Robyn Correll | Peru, '08-'10



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## What are **YOU** doing to promote **Goal Three**?

We want your stories. That day you went to four grocery stores before you found purple corn to make *chicha morada*? That one time you spontaneously taught an impromptu dance class on traditional Kenyan dance? The brightly colored dress you bought in a market in Nepal that you take out for special occasions? The presentation you have on your flash drive to present at schools and, you know, bat mitzvahs? We want to know! Send your photos, stories or plans to the Cajun Corps Chronicle at [robyn.correll@gmail.com](mailto:robyn.correll@gmail.com).



### What's on the cover?

This photograph was taken in the town of Lagunas, a small village deep in the Peruvian Amazon and home to only a few hundred people.

Have a photo from your service you'd like to share? Send it to: [robyn.correll@gmail.com](mailto:robyn.correll@gmail.com).



Dear Returned Volunteers of Louisiana and Mississippi,

Throughout 2011, there will be a plethora of events around the world celebrating the 50th Anniversary, including a number of activities hosted by the LPCA. Such fanfare is certainly deserved, given the success that the Peace Corps has had over the past five decades. This milestone also gives occasion to reflect back on one of the initial goals of the program while it was still being developed. Both The Towering Task paper written by Warren Wiggins and William Josephson and the subsequent report submitted by Shriver to Kennedy in the early months of 1961 pushed for a bold program that would see two thousand volunteers in the field in mere months and tens or even hundreds of thousands once they were fully operational. Although logistics and funding have restricted the Peace Corps from reaching such marks, the organization has averaged eight thousand volunteers per year over its history, an existence that far exceeded the expectations of the founders. Perhaps more significant is that the Peace Corps has always maintained its independence from other entities, allowing it to stay true the founding mission. This consistency speaks to the strength of the ideals that formed the foundation of the program such as service, sustainability, and objectivity; as carriers and projectors of these ideals, PCVs (and RPCVs) represent the heart of the Peace Corps and are the undeniable drivers of the organization's continued success. As thousands of volunteers come forth to pick up the torch every year, even bigger milestones appear inevitable. So on this very special occasion, please let me congratulate not just the Peace Corps, but each and every one of you who has answered the call to make this possible.

Very truly yours,

*Ryan Mast*

Ryan Mast  
LPCA President

# On March 25th, the **Louisiana Peace Corps Association**, in conjunction with the **Tulane Master's International Program**, hosted a celebration in honor of the **50th anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps.**

Peace Corps Deputy Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet offered the keynote speech, in which she offered a vision of a dynamic organization with a strong history of service.

"For fifty years," she said, "the Peace Corps has promoted peace and friendship around the world, a legacy of service that is an important part of America's history,"

Hessler-Radelet also spoke of the importance of Louisiana's contribution to the history of the Peace Corps: "Today, 45 Louisianians are serving as Peace Corps volunteers, helping people build better lives for themselves and their communities. We are very grateful for the important role Louisiana Peace Corps volunteers have played in building bridges with communities overseas."

Members of the Louisiana Peace Corps Association spoke about their service and the importance of the Peace Corps in the world. When the speeches and stories were done being told, the Six Wheels of Justice provided the musical backdrop for the party.

The Howlin' Wolf, a music venue in the Warehouse District of New Orleans, made room for the roughly 250 in attendance — a mix of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and interested supporters of the mission of the Peace Corps all mingling on the dimly-lit dance floor.

LPCA presented a map on which RPCVs marked their country of service. The map was a startling demonstration of the spirit of service embodied by the nearly 100 RPCVs present. Pins marked every corner of Africa, South America, much of Eastern Europe, and into the Pacific Islands, and services spanned the entire life of Peace Corps.

In honor of Sargent Shriver's recent passing, Kelly Nowicki (RPCV Jamaica, '07-'09) provided a shrine in remembrance of his work as the very first Director of the Peace Corps. As they entered to celebrate 50 years of his legacy, many guests stopped to pay their respects to the great man whose passion was central to shaping the past, present and future of the Peace Corps.

Summary By Dave Westervelt, *MI Coordinator*

Far left: David Wessel

Left: Deputy Director Carrie Hessler-Radelet

Bottom: RPCVs marked on a world map  
where they served.



Where Did You Serve?





# 30 photos in 30 days

In honor of the 50th anniversary of Peace Corps (and a good idea of a good friend still serving in Peru), I posted 30 photos in 30 days on Facebook that helped tell the story of my Peace Corps service.

By Robyn Correll | Peru '08-'10



**Day One | Training Memory »** During Field Based Training, we went to go visit a volunteer couple way up in the Andes. As part of the training, we went to a village to do a quick activity with the kids, play basketball and do some exercises. When we arrived to the village, we were met by a parade of children and members of the community, who led us to their tiny school where they all studied. They performed traditional dances for us in costumes made from old rice sacks and gave us all clementines and bananas. It is one of my all-time favorite memories of Peru. **Day Two | First Impression of Site »** Holy crap! What am I doing here? Actually ... most of my photos from my first year were lost when my hard drive crashed mid-service. This photo is of Sheik, my 6-year-old host cousin, and a Spiderman fanatic.

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**Day Three | Action Photo** » Probably 80% of my working time was spent on my HIV-prevention project. This photo was taken during a session I gave with a colleague of mine from the health post to a group of parents. **Day Four | Favorite Food Eaten in Peru** » Ceviche, of course. **Day Five | Best Friend at Site** » Karen Peralta, my counterpart. I could tell her anything, and she always made me smile, work harder and love what I did. **Day Six | Favorite Holiday in Peru** » Velaciones ... or Day of the Dead. Everyone goes to the cemetery and lights a candle for those who've passed away. I went with my host family, and my host mom, Normita, took me to different graves and told me about the people who lay beneath them. You'd think it would be a morbid holiday, but everyone was laughing and smiling. Remembering was a way of celebrating, not lamenting. I loved it. **Day Seven | Most Valued Community Partner** » Lots of people could contend for this position. I had a number of awesome counterparts who were amazing and incredible in their own ways. But Karen will have to make another appearance because she is just that awesome. She was always up for anything I suggested and offered invaluable insights to make our projects better. She never made me do all the work, nor did she hijack projects or completely take over. She was truly a partner in crime, and in every project we worked on together, I never felt alone. **Day Eight | Most "Peace Corps" Moment** » Another incredible woman, Dilsia, was in (and mostly led) the latrine project we did in one of the poorer sectors of the district. When I first visited her, the children in her house had parasites and were anemic. No one purified the water or washed their hands. But she was excited and anxious to learn more about how to improve the health of her family. This photo was taken during a house visit we made a couple of weeks after a session on hygiene we gave to the community. She made this tip-i-tap so they could have running water during the day, and here she is teaching her grandson to wash his hands with soap and water. You can't see it, but behind me when I took this photo was a huge vegetable garden she had made as part of the project, and she had just harvested cucumbers, with radishes and carrots soon to be collected. Dilsia, a single mom with four kids and two grandkids, was one of the few success stories. Her family turned around their habits. They wash their hands. Drink boiled water. And now eat vegetables and beans instead of just rice and noodles. Following the initiation of the latrine project, she also spearheaded a project to bring chickens to her neighborhood so the community could have a source of meat and income when the river flooded the banana plantations and no income was coming in. Dilsia was and is an incredible inspiration to me. Few people in the world are as dedicated and as selfless as this woman. And I am honored to have had the opportunity to get to know her ... and it was as I was taking this picture that I realized that.

**Day Nine | Obligatory Picture of a Small Child** » Ladies and gentlemen, meet Arleth. A charismatic 5-year-old that will put you in your place and woo you at the same time. Arleth is the daughter of a really active health promoter, so she was a regular during meetings and house visits. I adore this child and miss her spirit and generous hugs.





**Day Ten | Amusing Cultural Exchange Moment »** The first time my host family ate Mac and Cheese. Host mom Andrea: "This is good!" Host dad César: "It lacks rice." **Day Eleven | A Daily Activity for Me in My Site »** Condom demonstrations on bananas. \*sigh\* Sooo many condoms on bananas. **Day Twelve | Photo That Will Always Make Me Laugh »** During our trip to the jungle, we had some downtime in the reserve, so we decided to lie out on the dock and play the Ha-Ha Game. It was ridiculous. But an awesome memory.

**Day Thirteen | Most Exotic Creature Encountered »** But of course, Sid, the Amazonian sloth that our guides chopped out of a tree so we could hold him.

**Day Fourteen | Greatest Success »** Our teen promoter project. These kids were/are amazing. Regardless of whether rates of new HIV infections go down in Pampas de Hospital, Peru, these kids are more confident, more curious, more responsible and more active in their community because they were given an opportunity to lead. They blew me away. **Day Fifteen | Biggest Failure »** This is a toss-up between my aerobics class for women and this youth group. My first youth group was a disaster. But because it was such a disaster, I learned a lot of what NOT to do with my teen promoters ... so I guess, not such a failure after all. **Day Sixteen | Most Fulfilling Secondary Project »** The latrine project was supposed to be a side project ... something small that I only helped with once in a while. It ended up being a huge part of my last 6 months in site and the most fulfilling thing I did in my service. And it was mostly because of people like Dilsia, who I've mentioned before and will mention again, who were so enthusiastic and ready to get her hands dirty. This photo is of the beginnings of her chicken coop she built for her neighborhood after helping to secure the latrine project. **Day Seventeen | Favorite Vacation Moment »** We'd been hiking for a little over an hour through the mountains when we turned a bend, and there it was: Gocta Falls. Towering over 700 meters, it is one of the tallest waterfalls in the world. Seeing it for the first time, I felt young and alive and LUCKY. Because how many people get a chance to see something so awesome? **Day Eighteen | Photo of my House »** There it is! Kids would stare at me through my window. They'd turn to each other with wide eyes and say "She's cooking ... oh! Now she's sitting ... She's eating now ..." and others would nod with enthusiasm. They weren't kidding when they said PC was liking living in a fishbowl. Now I know what a puffer fish feels like. **Day Nineteen | Favorite Day in Site » Every day I spent with them.** **Day Twenty | Something I Never Thought I'd Do, Ever »** Eat guinea pig. **Day Twenty-One | Obligatory Photo of Machu Picchu »** Ta-dah! **Day Twenty-Two | Music That Will Always Remind Me of Peru »** Cumbia. This photo was taken during a dance for my district's anniversary. Sarah Kwak and Molly Fergus came to Peru to visit and spent the night dancing with my god daughter, Jasmyn, and her quirky mother.





**Day Twenty-Three | Photo That Will Always Make Me Reflect »** This photo is of the kids in the community where we started the latrine project. 98% of families in that neighborhood didn't have adequate hygienic services (toilets or latrines) ... Few families cleaned their drinking water. And many of these kids were anemic and undernourished because of parasites. I wonder if the work I did in their community will affect their lives for the better. I wonder if their families will ever get their completed latrines. I wonder if they drink safe water and wash their hands. I wonder if 5, 10 years from now, they'll even remember me. **Day Twenty-Four | Best Moment With Visitors »** My last three days in site were the first three days of my replacement, Racheal. When she came for her site visit, there were a lot of passing-of-the-torch kind of events. But none of them meant so much to me as a party my latrine project community threw. They decorated and Dilsia made Racheal and I guinea pig (which she knew to be one of my favorite Peruvian dishes and something that was expensive and difficult to find in my region). It was simple. Not many words were spoken. And right before I said goodbye to them for the last time, one of the women, Flaca, grabbed my hands and sang to me a song about a mother missing her daughter in a foreign land. I stood there in a trance. The room was silent except for the sweet, cracking voice of this amazing reason who for no reason at all chose to love me. I made it 20 meters outside of Dilsia's house on the walk back to Pampas before I lost it. I had never felt so loved, so accepted, so sad to leave. And when I'm lying in bed at night, missing Peru, I think of Flaca and her beautiful song.



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**Day Twenty-Five | *Most Un-Peace Corps***

**Moment »** Walking around Tumbes City, you wouldn't think there'd be a paradise less than an hour away. Warm beaches, delicious food, beautiful sunsets. I felt spoiled living so close to bliss.



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**Day Twenty-Six | *My Peruvian Pet***

**Chilimasa! My precious Chilimasita ... I miss her.**

**Day Twenty-Seven | *Regional Capital Shot***

**»** I never brought my camera into Tumbes or Piura because I was afraid of getting robbed.

The only place I felt safe was in Serpost, the post office, where 5 women showered us with packages from home, and in turn, we gave them candies. This shot is of our mailbox. #5. It had a broken lock and was missing it's number -- and I'm fairly certain I used a paperclip instead of a key and still was able to open it. But by God, it was ours.

**Day Twenty-Eight | *Beautiful View or Landscape From My Site***

**»** I loved the view of the sun setting over the banana plantations. This shot was taken from my first host family's backyard.

**Day Twenty-Nine | *Nostalgic farewell picture***

**»** This was taken at the "passing of the torch" event at the high school where I spent a large chunk of my time. The three girls in front of me are teen promoters ... I really miss them.



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**Day Thirty | *One Picture That Sums Up Two Years* »** Making compost. You throw a lot of messy ingredients together, mix it around a while, and hopefully, a little while later, it will turn into something enriching that helps things grow.

# How Peace Corps Changed My Life: Friendships

By David Wessel | *Colombia '62-'64, El Salvador '01-'02*

I would love to say that my life changed dramatically by my Peace Corps experience... but that would be an understatement.

I was in my last year of college at Loyola U. in New Orleans and pretty much unsure as to what I was going to do once I graduated. I had applied to join the Navy NAV-CADS (Naval Air Cadets) but it turned out I was red/green coloredblind so that wasn't an option.

The day I finished my last exam I received a telegram from Peace Corps that I was accepted for training for a Peace Corps Group to go to Colombian SA in rural community development. I had almost forgot that I had filled out an application.

Training was at Arizona State U. and then Outward Bound training was in Arecebo Puerto Ricco with 35 other guys. That in itself was an experience.

We landed in Bogota in May, had a brief orientation there before being shipped out to our sites in rural Colombia. My big accomplishment in my village was a town library which was begun by a group of young women in my village El Carmen de Viboral. We worked tirelessly in setting up a dual-decimal system for keeping track of the books we collected from all over the country...including former residents of our village as well as the Pan American Union and CARE/Peace Corp. offices. I visited El Carmen in 1994 and was happy to discover that a public library had continued to function in the village every since our "grand opening" in 1964.

I also had projects in the farming communities outside of my village that included building 2 rural school houses, a tomatoe co-op and a nutrition program along side of the Dept. of Public Health.

I lived in three room rental house in the village with another PCV for a while but I never could keep a site partner...they got sick, they didn't like the cold...cloud covered mountain village, etc. I bet I ran through five different "partners" before they finally left me alone. I didn't think I was that difficult to get along with!

I fell in love with Colombia, its people, its traditions etc. The food wasn't so hot, but I lived with it, and I cooked my own as well as gave

some cooking/culinary demonstration using some of the food products donated by "Food for Peace", CARE, et. It was all great fun and the Colombians loved the Cornbread I taught them to make as well as simple meals like spaghetti and meat sauce and especially "Red Beans and Rice." They had a similar dish but it didn't have the "Kick" Louisiana Red Beans has.

I knew many people who remain my friends to this day. I have even had visitors from my village here in New Orleans in my home.

The lasting friendships I made with the other Peace Corps Volunteers in my group and other groups in Colombia have endured to this day. We will have a great time at the big celebration in Sept. in D.C.

I was the first Peace Corps Volunteer from the State of Louisiana and I have cherished the decision and the opportunity of Peace Corps throughout the years. I additionally went to El Salvador as a Crisis Corps Volunteer with Peace Corps in 2001 to 2002 after two earthquakes hit that country. So Peace Corps has remained with and as part of me throughout my adult life. I helped get the Louisiana Peace Corps Association started and was the President and well as holding various other positions with it since its beginning in the 1990's. Peace Corps Volunteers have something of a "bond" between and among them that is unique and cherished by all of us who have served. I believe the world is different, that I am different because I was a Peace Corps Volunteer and that I have something to share with my neighbors, my community and my country, as a result of that service, an acceptance and understanding of the world and its people as it was made available to me by the people of Colombia and El Salvador.

I have spent a good portion of my life in and around non-profit community based organizations. I was Executive Director of Junior Achievement in Terre Haute Indiana and Ft. Lauderdale Florida for about 13 years. I was a founder of Grace House of New Orleans, a free women's treatment facility for "indigenous" adult females with drug and alcohol addictions. I was also President of the Board and I was Executive Director for 3 years. I directed a program of day time refuge for the homeless at Immaculate Conception Parish in downtown N.O. in 2000-2001 prior to going to El Salvador with P.C. In addition to my involvement in founding the LPCA and service to that organization.



## March 1st Peace Corps Celebration in Puerto Princesa

A quick note and photo of the gang who celebrated (along with our rpcv families - included in other clips) the March 1st 50th anniversary here on the island of Palawan in the Philippines. RPCVs Bart Duff (West Pakistan '62), Susan Potter Evangelista (Philippines '63), and Jack Finlay (Nigeria '61), along with spouses Paz, Oscar, and Teresita respectively, were the organizers. But it would not have been a real celebration without the active PCVs serving on the island. Of the ten, eight (Lia, Forrest, Jerica, Debra, Chrystal, Matt, Petra, and Will) joined us for the event. Son-in-law (of Susan), Marcus obliged with his photographic skills - and was accompanied by wife Ami and 2 month old son, Lucas (maybe "Cool Hand Luke" a future PCV? :-).

The event was held at Bart and "Baby" Duff's house here in Puerto Princesa City. Plenty of San Miguel and soda flowed - and appropriately Shakey's pizza was ordered in, and hamburgers were "hot off the grill." We all enjoyed visiting and relating our stories via Bart's mike and karaoke. And despite the difference in years between active and old vols, this gap quickly disappeared as we donned our "house party" T-Shirts designed and contributed by Bart. Somehow we PCVs are a sister/brotherhood! And we have the photo (attached) to prove it! :-)

The gate sign (Susan and Chrystal holding it in the photo) said "Peace is our Mission, Prosperity our Goal." And each T-shirt indicated the

country and date where the volunteer served/is serving - and a big red "Accepting the Challenge" across the back. Name buttons with the PC logo did as well. Obviously, the "old guard" had a few tales to tell - but the active vols were not intimidated as they reported on their backgrounds and interesting current work in the country. The old vols also managed to come up with a photo or two from their Peace Corps years (to the amazement of even themselves! :-).

Also a crowd pleaser were the early Peace Corps newsletters - which somehow had been preserved by Bart over the many years and his considerable travels. To read about the enthusiasm of that era and what the vols were all doing around the world was indeed a delight (and especially for the current vols). Of course, all in black and white, the '62 newsletters were called simply "Peace Corps News" but later ones sported the title modification to "The Peace Corps Volunteer."

We are sure that you all had equally festive "house parties" to celebrate this important date for all of us. On to September! But thought we would jot down these few lines about ours - which all of us thoroughly enjoyed!

All the best from the Philippines (which after Ghana, was reputedly the second country to field active PCVs in 1961!

Jack, Bart, and Susan

*"Somehow we PCVs are a sister/brotherhood!"*



## How Peace Corps Changed My Life: The Borehole

By Cathy Enright | Malawi '08-'10

### Patience. Pragmatism. Perspective.

This is what Peace Corps taught me day-in, day-out. It wasn't that I didn't know them prior to my time in Malawi, but nothing in my life before challenged me to utilize these three traits on such a consistent basis. My day would start with patience. (Well, sweat and chai and patience). Each morning, I'd have to patiently wait at the borehole to pump my bucket of water. I'd wait in a small sea of women and girls—sometimes fifteen deep just to fill a twenty liter blue plastic bucket. Boredom would lead to chatting and I'd find out that some of the women passed fully functional boreholes, but choose this one instead. Why? I'd ask, as these other boreholes were often new and closer to their homes. "Ah, but I am used to this one" was a common response. Some would just show me their arms and laugh so I could see how strong they were. Then, high fiving the other women, they'd returned to the slow-paced task of filling the buckets, jugs, and pots—chatting all the while.

The borehole was the gossip and news hub of the community. It's where you found out who was sleeping with who, when the president's motorcade would be coming through, find out if there was a funeral or wedding to attend, badmouth the nurses at the clinic, and generally give each other (and me) good-hearted bullshit. In a culture where women were taught to be quiet and respectful, these scenes were particularly delightful. There was no shame, and no other concerns for the moment. Just the slow-pumping of the water and the cacophony of conversation.

I came to understand that "I am used to this one" really meant, "I am used to these ones". These women. I'd think about all the massive aid interventions and the commercials chiding the developed world with messages of "Mphatso must walk some huge number kilometers just for water!!!" I'd laugh thinking, 'Maybe Mphatso just wanted to chat with her friend'. No one (with the exception of JICA) in development projects understands subjective, relative reality like PCVs do because no one else lives in an area long enough to see the methods to the madness—to see the reasoning behind the why, and in doing so, see where information may have the biggest impact.

I became a regular at the boreholes—standing, like I used to, getting my morning coffee. As my language skills got better, I became more confident in joining the conversation—always inserting a public health message here and there. "I heard the motorcade would be in around noon. I'll go after my porridge. Also, did you know you could fortify your porridge with ground nut flour?" Normally, one woman would say yes, while another would say no and the former would explain. Knowledge would grow. Most of the women got hip to my little ploy, but they were always impressed that I'd be willing to go that extra kilometer. I'd always find this ironic: me going the extra metaphorical kilometer, them going the physical one—all just to connect to one another.

Peace Corps gave me the patience to truly listen, the pragmatism to see things in their subjective realities, and the perspective to understand that people go the extra distance for what they really value.

# Moroccan Reflections from a Peace Corps Veteran

By Lillian Thompson | *Ukraine '03-'05, Romania '06-'08, Morocco '10*

I just got back from six months in Morocco as the country's first Peace Corps Response Volunteer. I was a Volunteer in Ukraine (2003-2005) and a staffer (Program and Training Officer) in Romania (2006-2008). This time my return was like popping out of the time capsule in a science fiction movie. In one world, then another, that fast.

In Morocco, I lived on the edge of a shantytown that lay between me and the state university where I worked at the Center for Community Consensus-Building and Sustainable Development. I walked through the shantytown every day, taking the shortcut through a dirt field of trash and impromptu soccer games, enclosed by shanties, a blacksmith and various farm animals that somehow survived the traffic alongside. It was a community of rural poor, wedged between two four-lane highways in a city rich in tourism, oil and suburban sprawl from Casablanca. Although I am by nature reserved, I made a point of greeting my neighbors on my daily walks. They got used to me and we liked each other, although I did little to help them directly, except buy my food and propane gas from their all-purpose alimentaires. They spoke Moroccan Arabic, which is an unwritten Arabic language laced with French. We communicated in fractured French.

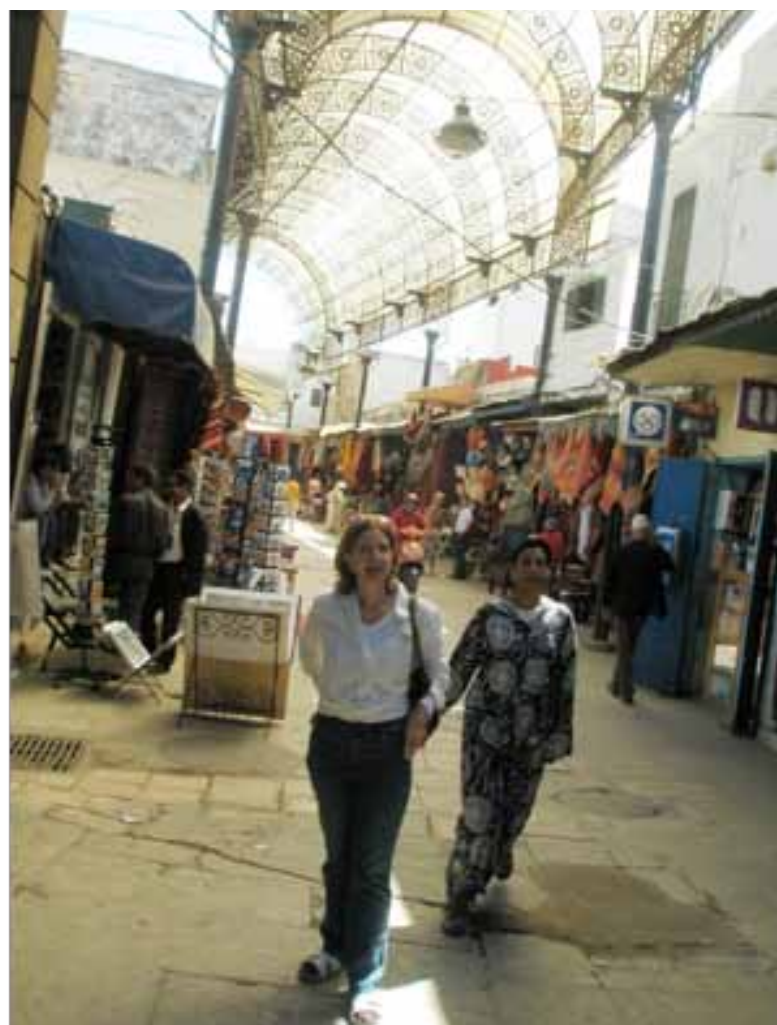
I worked for the High Atlas Foundation, an NGO committed to rural development in villages scattered throughout the High Atlas Mountains with few resources to eke out a living while trying to survive the effects of erosion and desertification. I helped the foundation develop a program to train Moroccans on the techniques international agencies use to facilitate development. It's staggering to think that rural villagers, who are often illiterate, could acquire these skills, but the foundation has that goal and the Center is educating Moroccan university students and community leaders as part of the process. I was glad to be part of that. Shantytowns like the one I lived in spring up when the rural poor move to cities like Casablanca looking for work. HAF's participatory development initiative intends to help rural families avoid that choice.

My colleague, Nabila, is twenty five. Her father died a few years ago and her mother continues to work as a social services administrator for the armed forces in the capital city, Rabat. The family incorporated me into their lives, guiding me through Ramadan, Eid, and the crises of daily life, which included learning how to hook up my propane gas tank so I could cook. Nabila took the veil two years ago. Nabila says choice is important, but she feels strongly about her decision—not out of political activism, but because, I believe, it gives her a sense of balance, or just, as she says, because she studied the Qur'an and decided it was right. One thing I know, she passed her sense of balance to me while I was there.

The High Atlas Foundation has its roots in Peace Corps. Its founder, Yossef Ben-Meir, served in a mountain village which inspired his life's calling to improve the lives of Morocco's rural poor. Yossef says he likes living on the edge, trying to do something that is messy and hard to do, and requires personal sacrifice.

One day, when Yossef and I were reviewing a proposal for a training program, I recognized the Peace Corps stamp on us both. We teach the same way, taking students into the community, throwing up flip charts on any available wall, and engaging students and communities in the process of learning by doing. Others do this too, of course, but not quite the way Peace Corps veterans do. I don't know where the work I produced will lead, or how I will live in future years. But I am sure that I will always carry my experience with Peace Corps and the High Atlas Foundation with me.





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# Grant Recipient: Eva Gougian

1 | *Bienvenidos a Los Derramaderos*: in the northwestern Province of Montecristi in the Dominican Republic. 2 | We live in a VERY dry part of the country, where there is no river, no aqueduct, and are frequently long periods of drought. 3 | But when it does rain, we collect the water in these large cisterns, with piping that collects the rain water from the roof. 4 | In 1997, a European organization helped the community build cisterns to collect rain water. The cisterns are large and expensive. Over the years, the tubing that brings the rainwater to the cistern has broken, and many families are not collecting as much rainwater as they could be. 5 | This project will not only provide the family with a little financial assistance to repair the broken tubing, it will educate on safe water collection and use: putting clorox in the water, keeping it covered, washing hands, filtration and sanitation. 6 | The Centro de Madres helped to identify the houses with cisterns that need repairs. Here they are in a nutrition class! 7 | There is no piping around their house! This project aims to reduce the amount of disease (diarrhea, vomit, gastrointestinal) that can be caused by lack of water (no sanitation) and un-safe water storage.

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8 | A common way to repair the parts that drip is to bind them with rubber tubing...which does not work well. 9 | We will give her technical and financial assistance in repairing the tubing that dumps out all her water. 10 | Another goal of project: education to teach about the danger of leaving water storage open. We live in a region where there is dengue (I've had it twice..). 11 | Their piping is broken, forcing them to open the cistern, allowing for mosquitoes, rats, rat urine, and other contaminants to get in. 12 | The piping we will use will look like this – enclosed, to prevent leaves and dirt from clogging it up. The old style was open on the top, and did not work so well. 13 | The goal is to take advantage of the roof-space already available, so that when it rains a little, we collect a lot of water. This house collects from both sides and hopefully in the future we will get there! 14 | ¡Gracias!  
15 | Feel free to email me with questions! [eva.gougian@gmail.com](mailto:eva.gougian@gmail.com)



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