



MNRPCV News

*Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers
Serving RPCVs and the Community*

Fall 2001

2001-2002

MNRPCV Board

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At Large

*Kriste Ericsson
Paraguay
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Mission Statement

*To serve Returned Peace Corps
Volunteers and the community
by providing service to others
and fostering appreciation of
cultural diversity.*

The Corner Board

by John Shirk

MEMORIES OF RAMADAN

by John Shirk, RPCV Morocco (1998-2001)

Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, has a common ancestor in the person of Abraham and for that reason these religions have been called Abrahamic faiths. In 700 A.D. the Prophet Mohammed, dismayed by the breakdown of religious values and disunity among the surrounding desert tribes in what is now the region of Saudi Arabia, entered a time of intense spiritual introspection. The archangel Gabriel revealed to him that which is now known as the Quran. The writings of the Quran provided spiritual guidance and clear teaching, and set aside the month of Ramadan for fasting. "O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may experience self-restraint."

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. The others are faith, prayer, giving alms to the poor, and making the journey to Mecca (if possible). The fast is a time for spiritual introspection and self-discipline, a time to experience hunger, develop sympathy for the less fortunate, and be thankful and appreciative for all God's bounties. The fast calls for abstinence from smoking, drinking any liquids (including water, colas or coffee) or eating any food. Exceptions are made for young children, pregnant mothers, travelers, the sick or elderly.

"You may eat and drink until the white thread of light becomes distinguishable from the dark thread of night at dawn," one source noted.

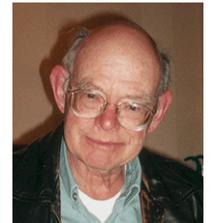
Since the Islamic calendar is based on phases of the moon, the ninth month of the Muslim year (Ramadan) does not, like Christmas, come at a set date each year. It regressively rotates. For example, the starting dates for the fast during the past three years were December 17 in 1998; December 9, 1999; November 28, 2000. This year it begins on November 16. In fact, if you were observant you could have clearly seen the finger-nail sliver of the pre-Ramadan moon on Saturday, October 21, 2001.

My own recollection of keeping the Ramadan fast during my three years in Morocco was of a spiritual journey intermingled with a heightened sense of family togetherness. It became a special time for me because it helped me feel part of the people I lived with. On several occasions when the sun set while I took the train from Meknes to Rabat, companions in my compartment would share their meals with me. That was the spirit of Ramadan. In some ways it seemed like Christmas. It reminded me how my mother baked and hoarded Christmas cookies for the holiday season. In that same way families anticipated Ramadan by preparing treats for the 30 day fast.

On the last day before Ramadan one could hear horns blowing, drums beating and somber calls in every community late into the night to signal that the fast was about to begin. Although the first few days put a strain on people as they adjusted physically and mentally, that strain gradually faded as the ritual took on a spiritual rhythm of its own. Normally crowded cafes and streets now stood deserted until sunset.

As the sunset call to prayer neared people scurried as Christians do on Christmas eve. But the scurrying here lasted 30 days. Some attended mosque then raced home to join waiting friends and families for the main evening meal. Meals varied but usually began with a date followed the common Ramadan staple, *harira*, made from lentils, tomatoes, chickpeas and bits of meat cooked in a spicy soup. Some ate cous-cous, hard boiled eggs, *b'styeea*, *sfoof*, and a variety of other sweets and pancake-like dishes. Meals were followed by Moroccan mint tea. Special sitcoms that aired during Ramadan added needed humor. It was a time of reflection, reunion and sharing for family members, some of whom returned home from afar, as evidenced by foreign license plates I saw around town.

The Moroccan national holiday, Aid el-Fitir, brought the 30-day fast to a close. Children dressed up in their finest, families spent the day celebrating and consuming huge feasts. Then, with some disappointment, coffee shops reopened, and deserted streets returned to the normal hustle and bustle. It took just as long to



Continued on Page 2



Peace Corps Update

compiled 10-22-01 by Kriste Ericsson
source: www.peacecorps.gov

- September 14, 2001, **China**

A Volunteer had to teach class soon after she found out about the (September 11) attack. Usually she opens her English class by writing an English word on the board and then spending ten minutes or so letting the class have informal discussions in English about that topic. Still very shaken, she simply wrote "TERRORISM". The whole class started crying. They stood and each hugged her and then spent the rest of class time saying how sorry they were for America, for her and for her family. To hug and cry isn't the "normal" way to show emotions over there, so this was particularly touching to her. *We are all greatly affected.*

- October 1, 2001

The Peace Corps suspended its programs in the Central Asian nations of **Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan**, due to security concerns in the region.

- October 12, 2001, **Zimbabwe**

The body of Peace Corps Volunteer Larisa Jaffe, 63, of Salt Lake City, was discovered October 10th, the result of a suspected homicide, not thought to be related to recent terrorist events or strife in Zimbabwe. As a volunteer, Mrs. Jaffe worked as an information officer for Catholic Development Commission Health Department. She developed materials for HIV/AIDS awareness education, helped staff with computer literacy, worked on information technology and program evaluation. She also helped organize festivals for an orphan outreach program. "Larisa Jaffe was a wonderful, spirited person who was a committed Peace Corps volunteer," said Lois Hobson, Country Director for Zimbabwe. "Having been born in another country (Russia), she thought that Peace Corps was an exciting opportunity for her to serve others overseas. She will be missed."

- October 18, 2001, **Bangladesh**

The Peace Corps announced its decision to suspend the program in Bangladesh for at least three months. Just prior to national elections, 43 Peace Corps Volunteers currently serving there were relocated to Bangkok, Thailand. Since that time, a volatile political environment has persisted due to election results and ongoing anti-American sentiment.

2002 Peace Corps Calendars are here

The cost this year is again \$8.00 per calendar (plus postage). As you all know, the proceeds from the sale of these calendars go towards our fundraising efforts within the MNRPCV community (i.e. grants, scholarships, etc.).

To order your 2002 calendar(s) contact Michael Smith

Phone: 651-683-0197

Email: w.mike.s@ix.netcom.com

2002 Winter Get Away Weekend

From: "Curt Rahman" <curt@pdaminneapolis.com>
Sent: Friday, November 09, 2001 12:23 PM
Subject: **ski weekend 2002**

We are really excited to announce a NEW LOCATION for the MNRPCV winter get away weekend. Only a check will reserve your spot. Send it now payable to Curt Rahman, 4209 Browndale, St Louis Park, MN 55416. The price is a flat **\$55 per person for the weekend, regardless of age**. The new location is near Itasca State Park, so it is a little further north.

This is a really nice place, we have stayed here. They have a new group lodge that will hold 35-40 people in 13 bedrooms. Check out this link to see the cabin. It is new this year.

<http://www.edgewood-resort.com/cabins/cabin1.html>

The dates are **Feb 22-24, 2002**. We can come in any time after noon on Friday and have the place until 1 PM on Sunday. We already have 10 people who have said they will book a spot, so it will fill fast.

This is only a couple miles outside of Park Rapids. Therefore, it is very close to Itasca State Park for skiing. It is also a summer resort, so it is right on a lake (snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, skiing, etc.). Please also forward this on to your Peace Corps friends.

Curt Rahman

work 952-884-3334

cell 612-207-5411

home 952-925-3118

Memories of Ramadan, Continued from page 1

get used to the post-Ramadan rhythm as it did the first days of the fast. That was my experience of Ramadan in Morocco.

I will close with a poem by the great Sufi Jalal al-Din Mumi:

"The month of fasting has come, the emperor's banner has arrived; withhold your hand from food, the spirit's table has arrived.

The soul has escaped from separation and bound nature's hands; the heart of error is defeated, the army of faith has arrived.

Fasting is our sacrifice, it is the life of our soul; let us sacrifice all our body, since the soul has arrived as a guest.

Fortitude is as a sweet cloud, wisdom rains from it, because it was in such a month of fortitude that the Quran arrived.

... Wash your hands and your mouth, neither eat nor speak; seek that speech and that morsel which has come to the silent ones."



Be all that you can be! Join the MNRPCV!!

We are always seeking new members. There are few requirements and no scary tests. Join by E-mail, phone or snail mail. The first year of membership is free to new returnees. We are waiting to hear from you.

P.S. Don't be the Missing Link!!

Contact: Keith Pearson, Membership Chair

Phone: 612-789-3851

E mail: keith.pearson@juno.com

U.S. mail: MNRPCV, P.O. Box 6413, Minneapolis, MN 55406

MNRPCV Members Note:

As a member you should receive not only this quarterly MNRPCV Newsletter and monthly MNRPCV Happenings, but also the 3/1/61 newsletter from NPCA and the NPCA Worldview magazine. If you are a member but don't receive these, or if you would like to join, please contact our Membership Chair.

We look forward to welcoming you as a continuous supporter of the Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the National Peace Corps Association.

As an NPCA affiliate your MNRPCV membership helps to:

- Advocate for the Peace Corps, international social justice and responsible development,
- Support global education in the United States,
- Promote peace-building in countries where U.S. relations are strained,
- Expand the network of RPCVs, former staff and friends,
- Promote community and international service,
- Enhance our response to international disasters

Please visit the NPCA website at <http://www.rpcv.org> to see what else NPCA does, who NPCA is, and what their other affiliate groups are doing. You may also renew your membership online with a credit card, as well as update your personal information.

Sincerely,

The MNRPCV Board

Membership Form

If you are interested in joining our group, please send in the following membership registration form.*

Yes! I want to be a member!

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Home Telephone _____

e-mail _____

Work Telephone _____

Country/Years of Service _____

Annual MEMBERSHIP (includes both NPCA and MN Local Group membership) \$40 FOR INDIVIDUAL/\$55 FOR FAMILY

INCLUDE JOB HOTLINE (listing employment opportunities in the U.S. and abroad) \$30

INCLUDE OVERSEAS POSTAGE (if applicable) \$20

TOTAL PAYMENT: \$ _____

MY CHECK PAYABLE TO THE NPCA IS ENCLOSED

or

PLEASE CHARGE MY CREDIT CARD:

MC

VISA

EXP. DATE _____ CARD# _____

SIGNATURE _____

*Note: You may also join online at <http://www.rpcv.org>.

NPCA, 1900 L Street, NW Suite 205, Washington, DC.
20038 fax 202/293-7754 phone 202/293-7728



Annual Meeting and Potluck Picnic - August 19, 2001

A large crowd of RPCVs again enjoyed a delicious Potluck dinner at Rhoda Brooks' home in Excelsior, MN, last August at our Annual Meeting. After dinner and socializing, we elected the 2001-2002 MNRPCV Board. The results of the election are listed on page one of this and every newsletter, and they are also posted on our web site, www.mnrpcv.org.

The Board's goal again this year is to increase communications within the RPCV community with a monthly mailing to members, the mnrpcv.org web site, and an email list to publicize current events and to distribute information about MNRPCV, NPCA, and Peace Corps. Please direct questions or comments about communications to Elsa Frettem, 651-222-1765 or elsa@gonzalez.com.





National Peace Corps Association Update

by Deb Most

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS VIGIL

In lieu of the 40th Anniversary Peace Corps celebration, canceled due to the events of September 11, a vigil to emphasize the need for peace was held on the steps on the Lincoln Memorial. The Peace Corps Family Vigil was organized by the conference committee and National Peace Corps Committee. With the flags of countries served by Peace Corps flying in the background, Congressman Sam Farr (D-California) served as emcee; RPCV writers spoke about their experiences; and Sargent Shriver spoke about the continuing need for service.

“PCV’s stay as you are,” Shriver said. “Be servants of peace. Work at home as you have worked abroad: humbly, persistently, intelligently. Weep with those who are sorrowful. Care for those who are sick. Serve your wives, serve your husbands, serve your families, serve your neighbors, serve your cities, serve the poor, and join others who also serve. Serve. Serve. Serve. That’s the answer, that’s the objective, that’s the challenge.”

To read messages about this from Sargent Shriver or Dane Smith, or to view the resolution of the NPCA Board to end terrorism by working for peace & reconciliation, see the NPCA website at www.rpcv.org.

NPCA CONFERENCE UPDATE

The NPCA has rescheduled the Conference for June 20-23, 2002 in Washington D.C. Rather than using the 40th anniversary as a theme, the theme “40 plus One” will recognize moving forward, and the importance of the individual plus the organization and its history. The NPCA is encouraging groups to continue working on the third goal of Peace Corps with a special emphasis toward peace building. If you have any ideas of what we can do as a group to promote the Third Goal, please contact Deb Most, MNRPCV vice president (phone: 612-521-0649 or email: debmost@prodigy.net).

Please watch the NPCA website (www.rpcv.org) and 3/1/61 for more information on the conference.

OTHER NEWS FROM NPCA

In March, MPCA was awarded a \$150,000 grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to increase the capacity for grassroots advocacy. The plan for the funds includes up to

six workshops across the country, drawing on materials developed by the Global Interdependence Initiative on how to mobilize American public opinion and promote a more engaged, humane U.S. foreign policy (see <http://www.culpeper.org/initiatives.html>) The workshops are being done under contract with RESULTS, an international citizens’ grassroots lobby working to create the political will to end hunger and the worst aspects of poverty (see results.org). The first workshop was held October 27 in Chicago.

Former National Security Advisor Tony Lake has agreed to advise future peace-building efforts such as those in Ethiopia and Liberia. Dane Smith, NPCA President would also welcome suggestions from groups on conflict resolution.

Upcoming MNRPCV Events

WHAT: Lousy Bowlers League

WHEN: every Friday through Winter, 7 to 9:30 p.m.

WHERE: Minnehaha Lanes, 955 Seminary Ave., St. Paul, 651-488-7208.

Contact Michael Smith, email: w.mike.s@ix.netcom.com or phone: 651-683-0197.

WHAT: Metro Dinner at Saji-Ya — Drop in for a tepanyaki dinner (delicious food cooked at a large grill by a performer/chef right in front of your eyes)

WHEN: Wednesday November 14, 6 p.m. RSVP to Shannon Scibilia (651-665-0123) by November 12.

WHERE: 695 Grand Ave. in St. Paul. Take I-94 to Dale St. exit go south to Grand Ave. then take a left and go 1 block to Saji-Ya restaurant.

WHAT: Happy Hour at O’Gara’s — Great Irish pub to warm you up from all the cold.

WHEN: Thursday, December 13, 5:30-8:00

WHERE: 164 Snelling Ave., St. Paul

Contact Shannon 651-665-0123.



Community Service

By Jared A. Erdmann

Greetings! Some of you may notice a new name under the Community Service heading this issue and, by the by, thank you for noticing. For the next undetermined amount of time I will be facilitating opportunities for fellow RPCVs to come together and enjoy themselves, hopefully while doing something good for their local community. So far I am six months into my recovery from re-entry to the U.S., with graduate school taking most of my time, so please bear with me. Also, if you hear of events you think may interest RPCVs, please inform me, even if you cannot personally participate. Without further ado, here is a community service opportunity you cannot miss! It's perfect for those snowy, do-nothin', sit-in-front-of-the-tube nights after work and will be a great chance to meet other RPCVs.

Feed the Starving Children is a faith-based organization that prepares packages of a variety of foods destined for the hands of a child who needs it. You can help prepare these packages from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM on one of the following dates: January 8th, 11th, 28th, or 29th. The more people interested, the better, but they need a minimum group of ten. Choose a date when you're available and call me so I can make it all happen: 612.824.6732. The dates fill up quickly, so please call as soon as possible. You can email me as well, but I prefer a call over email since I have so much email to sort through already from school. Thank you, and I hope to hear from you soon! *Hasta la victoria, siempre!*

Socialite Alert

By Shannon Scibilia

As the newly elected social chair, I'm always on the lookout for fun and interesting things to do. Do you have an idea you think would be great for the group? It's as easy as one-two-three to host an event:

- 1) Decide on an event, date, and time (popular events in the past have included dinners at ethnic restaurants, happy hours at local bars, organizing a sporting team, going to a lecture or reading, outdoor activities, anything else you can imagine).
- 2) Contact me with the details so I can post it on the listserv and website.
- 3) Show up at the designated time and place and have fun!

Treasurer's Report

The MNPRCV bank account had a balance of \$19,330.32 as of October 29, 2001.

Summary of Income and Expenses - September 1, 2000 through August 31, 2001

Income:

Calendar Sales	\$	1,775.00
Conference Revenue	\$	13,723.42
Interest Income	\$	93.12
Membership	\$	2,849.99
Other	\$	1,696.50
Total	\$	20,158.52

Expenses:

40th Anniversary Event	\$	2,229.95
Administration	\$	53.14
Charity	\$	5,626.84
Fundraising	\$	1,141.00
Conference	\$	364.00
Newsletter	\$	2,185.78
Socials	\$	269.54
NPCA Subscriptions	\$	330.00
Web Site	\$	180.00
Miscellaneous	\$	181.95
Total	\$	12,562.20



Speaker's Bureau Update

by Maureen M. Smith

If you're like me, you love blabbing about your Peace Corps experience - the friends you made, the food you ate, the languages you learned, the places you lived, not to mention the work you did. Speaking to a classroom full of school kids is an ideal way to share your memories. It's surprising how easy it is to talk to the kids. You go home knowing you helped some young people learn a little about the world.

When I've spoken to classes, some students have asked really intelligent, insightful questions, such as what's most difficult about returning home. Some asked really embarrassing questions, such as what African women do during their periods. From seeing pictures, some have learned the names of my close friends from Cameroon or even plants - coffee trees and millet stalks, for example. I usually show slides, which I love looking at anyway.

You can bring pictures, handicrafts, clothing or other souvenirs from your country of service. You can let them pepper you with questions. You need no public speaking skills. The local Peace Corps recruitment office has materials you can use in a presentation. For each talk given, the Minnesota recruitment office provides funds to MNRPCV for community service and other activities. Usually talks are arranged according to teacher needs, but you can initiate a presentation at a school if you like.

For more information, please contact Maureen Smith at (612) 378-7072 or mmswriter@aol.com.

Toastmasters + Peace Corps

by Richard Earle

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers have a lot to offer their communities when they return to the United States after serving abroad. Toastmasters has a long track record of successfully teaching people skills and knowledge to be effective public speakers. So now we have the perfect combination: a Toastmasters International Club comprised of returned Peace Corps Volunteers and other like-minded souls!

Every Toastmaster club is a part of an international organization, which has groups in more than 60 countries. Toastmaster meetings offer learn-by-doing workshops in which people can practice skills at making public presentations. This fits perfectly with the Third Goal of Peace Corps: to strengthen Americans' understanding about the world and its peoples.

The MNRPCV Toastmasters Club meets twice monthly. Our meetings are open to everyone and we are always seeking new members. Please feel free to just show up, unannounced, to learn more about us. Hope to see you there!

WHEN: Meetings on the first and third Thursday evening of every month, from 7-9 p.m. Meetings are scheduled for Nov. 1, 15 and Dec. 6, 20, and so on.

WHERE: Fairview Community Center in Roseville, MN, 1910 West County Road B.

DIRECTIONS: Take I-35 to highway 36. Go east on highway 36 to the Fairview exit and turn left (south). Go about two blocks to the stop light and turn right (west) onto County Road B. Drive past the church on the corner to the school on the left. Park in the large parking lot (for free) and walk to the middle door (entrance 2) and see the receptionist for the room number.

INFORMATION: Contact Richard Earle, 952.929.6943, Richard_Earle@msn.com, or Steve Coury at Stephencoury@hotmail.com, 612.870.1091, or Dan Grundtner at danielrg@qwest.net, 651.487.3068.



MNRPCV Annual Holiday Party - Potluck

The holiday season is quickly approaching and what better way to kick off Ramadan, Kwanzaa, Christmas, Chanukah, Winter Solstice, or the New Year than an evening of great food, good conversation, and fellowship with RPCV friends, old and new?

This is a great time to reconnect, find out what is going on in the local RPCV community, meet new friends, catch up with old ones and have fun. Charles and Terry Stander will once again graciously host festivities at their St. Paul home (address below). Friends and family are welcome. This will be a **potluck event** so whip up a favorite dish from your country of service to pass. Also, for the **food shelf collections**, bring something to share with those in need.

You may just want to bring extra money to jump-start your holiday gift buying: the 2002 Peace Corps calendar and other merchandise that supports the Minnesota RPCV group will be available for sale.

Will the geography game tickle or baffle our brains? Bring your thinking caps and vie for a fabulous prize. See you there!

- WHO: RPCV's, friends and family
- WHAT: Holiday Party potluck dinner
- WHEN: December 1, 2001 6:00-9:00 pm
- WHERE: The home of Charles and Terry Stander, **533 Portland Ave., St. Paul.**
Take I-94 to Dale St. exit, go south to Portland Ave. and take a left.
- WHY: Fun, fun, fun!
- INFO: Contact Shannon Scibilia at (651)665-0123 or email:
aishannons@yahoo.com

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