Memories and Meaning:
A 50th Anniversary Report

Peace Corps Nepal Group 17
December 2018
Foreword

In his November 2, 1960 speech at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, then-Senator John F. Kennedy proposed "a peace corps of talented men and women" who would dedicate themselves to the progress and peace of developing countries. This report explores the experiences and impacts of the 17th such group to be sent to the fifth poorest country in the world: Nepal.

The year was 1968, a time of political and social turmoil in the United States; it was a time for taking sides in the struggle for or against peace, justice, and equality. Each of the 32 lives reported here was transformed dramatically, unpredictably, and irreversibly with respect to those moral choices and guiding human values, impacting their career paths, life partners, and enduring personal relations, inside Nepal and out.

Taken together, these writers attest to an amazing diversity of backgrounds at the time of entrance into the Peace Corps. They were intellectuals; farmers; foresters; recent graduates in economics, business, political science, linguistics, math, history, psychology and philosophy; and teachers of English and agricultural science. But thanks to intensive training in pre-mechanized agriculture, four South Asian languages and Hindu culture in both Cactus Corners, California and Parwanipur, Nepal, they were transformed into a dedicated team of volunteers ─ open, willing to learn, courageous, sincere, energetic, and peace-loving ─ in a word, fundamentally good people equipped as well as at all possible for the challenges ahead.

Those challenges saw a total of 76 of us scattered far and wide into single postings across the taraai and middle hills of a 9-million-person country (see map, page 7). Our experiences were thus extremely varied and highly individual. The nearest volunteer typically lived several hours' walk away. So it is not surprising that no two stories in this volume are remotely alike. Although we spent at least two years in the same country, we barely knew in any depth more than three or four other volunteers. Even during training we were divided into groups by caste (one cabin was Brahmin, one Chhetri, etc.) in Cactus Corners, and by regional language and future geographical placement at Parwanipur.
That imposed isolation highlights perhaps the single most important objective of bringing our stories together in this volume: it is time to learn who we were, and even more importantly who we have become. So, members of our group, please treasure these stories as tangential complements to your own experience; glean and reflect upon the lessons and insights from your fellow volunteers; and incorporate these friends and their stories into your remaining years. Doing so is all the more urgent now that Stan Gerity, Bernie Gewirtz, Roger Leo, Ben Rogers, Roger Rutledge, and John Tegenfeldt from our own group—as well as our older-brother models, Jeff Malick and Sandy Hoodenpyle—have already left us.

We can all be proud of what the members of Nepal 17 have accomplished, both individually and together. It is time that our story be told. And thus we invite others to partake in, and perhaps learn from, our experiences.

Peter Calkins, Compiler and Editor-in-Chief

Gary Ender, Technical Editor
The poor don’t know that their function in life is to exercise our generosity.

-- Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Words”
# Table of Contents

Foreword .............................................................................................................................. ii  
1. Ross Anthony .................................................................................................................... 13  
2. Ray Arndt ........................................................................................................................ 21  
3. Bob Bertera ...................................................................................................................... 23  
5. Peter Calkins .................................................................................................................. 35  
6. Kent Crawford ................................................................................................................ 41  
7. Gil Donahue .................................................................................................................... 45  
8. Gary Ender ...................................................................................................................... 51  
9. Stan Gerity ....................................................................................................................... 63  
10. Bernie Gewirtz ................................................................................................................ 65  
11. Richard Godfrey ........................................................................................................... 67  
12. Stan Gray ....................................................................................................................... 71  
13. Dan Karr ......................................................................................................................... 75  
14. Bob Lake ........................................................................................................................ 87  
15. Roger Leo ....................................................................................................................... 95  
16. Chuck Ludlam ................................................................................................................ 99  
17. Paul Madnick ................................................................................................................. 113  
18. Sue Malick ..................................................................................................................... 119  
19. Jim McMahan ................................................................................................................ 121  
20. Regina Mellon ............................................................................................................... 127  
21. Dexter Newton ............................................................................................................... 131  
22. Merv Olson .................................................................................................................... 137
23. Mike Rechlin ........................................................................................................... 141
24. Ron Rude .................................................................................................................. 145
25. Roger Rutledge ......................................................................................................... 165
26. True Ryndes ............................................................................................................ 169
27. John Scholz .............................................................................................................. 193
28. John Tegenfeldt ....................................................................................................... 199
29. Buck Trawicky ......................................................................................................... 205
30. Bill Wallin ................................................................................................................ 223
31. Chris Walsh ............................................................................................................. 233
32. David Weisbrod ....................................................................................................... 235
Glossary of Nepali Terms .............................................................................................. 239
Index of terms and topics ............................................................................................. 244
Note to the Reader

This book may be read in two cross-cutting ways. First, one may read “vertically” by alphabetical order of volunteer last name (as in the table of contents on the preceding pages).

But secondly, one may explore the contents of this volume “horizontally” by geographical ordering of the 21 Nepalese districts where 57 Nepal 17 volunteers were stationed, going from Banke in the West to Ilam in the East (map 1, following page), a distance on then-existing roads of no less than 707.3 miles! This latter ordering (Table 1) will help the reader relate the stories of volunteers within the same or neighboring districts sharing the same physical climate, social conditions, agricultural challenges, and enduring friendships; or of all those stationed in the hills vs. all those in the tarai, or plains, region.

For convenience, volunteers in the same district are further ordered alphabetically by last name.

---

1 While it is true that Nepal covers only an average East to West of 550 miles as the crow flies; it is filled with mountains, rivers, and seasonal roadways that mean that linking the district centers of Table 1 through the Google-map “on foot” mode leads to the conclusion that, to walk from Banke district to Ilam in 1968 would actually mean walking more than 707 miles! Under the same analysis, Nepal 17 volunteers were actually spread out across roughly 80% of the total width of Nepal from Bhimdatta on the Western border to Ilam on the western border. The present document is thus highly representative, both of the times and of their experiences.
Map 1. Postings in 21 hill and *taraai* districts of 57 Nepal 17 Peace Corps volunteers (*map credit: Gary Ender*)
Table 1: Geographical distribution of Nepal 17 volunteers by District, Region, and Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East to West order</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Nepal 17 PCV</th>
<th>Village or Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Banke</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Gil Donahue (first post)</td>
<td>Udaipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jack Kachmarik (first post)</td>
<td>Near Nepalganj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dexter Newton</td>
<td>Karkando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Tegenfeldt</td>
<td>Khajura (<em>Guruwagaun panchaayat</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kapilbastu</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Mike Rechlin (2nd post)</td>
<td>Budhi (<em>near Taulihawa, also known as Kapilbastu</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myagdi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Suby (second post)</td>
<td>Khibang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rupandehi</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Ed Branson</td>
<td>Thutipipal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jim McMahan</td>
<td>Manigram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don Pagett</td>
<td>Kotihawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Palpa</td>
<td>hills</td>
<td>Peter Calkins</td>
<td>Madanpokhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Roger Rutledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Suby (first post)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Ray Arndt (first post)</td>
<td>Balu Khola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bob Bertera</td>
<td>Parbatipur (<em>now part of Bharatpur</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kent Crawford</td>
<td>Dibyenagar (<em>Sisawar panchaayat</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terry Howard</td>
<td>Khairahani (<em>panchaayat</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don Martin (first post)</td>
<td>Haje pur (<em>panchaayat</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don Martin (second post)</td>
<td>Belchhi (<em>Bachhayauli panchaayat</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mike Rechlin (first post)</td>
<td>Bura Khola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parsa</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Merv Olson (first post)</td>
<td>20 mis. northwest of Birganj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mike Quinn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David Weisbrod</td>
<td>Deurwana/Deukhhana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Makwanpur</td>
<td>hills</td>
<td>Gil Donahue (second post)</td>
<td>Palung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Gorsuch</td>
<td>Tistung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Howard Neal</td>
<td>3-6 mis. west of Hetauda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>True Ryndes</td>
<td>HaTIyaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bruce Shiffler</td>
<td>Namtar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Wallin</td>
<td>Borle Tade (<em>Padam Pokhari panchaayat, now part of Hetauda</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Names</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bara</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Chris Walsh&lt;br&gt;Gil Ashendorf (first post)&lt;br&gt;Gil Ashendorf (2nd post)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>hills</td>
<td>Regina Mellon&lt;br&gt;Sue Malick&lt;br&gt;Thamel, Kathmandu&lt;br&gt;Thamel, Kathmandu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lalitpur</td>
<td>hills</td>
<td>Ray Arndt (second post)&lt;br&gt;Lele</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rautahat</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Allen Davenport&lt;br&gt;Rich Godfrey (first post)&lt;br&gt;Rich Godfrey (2nd post)&lt;br&gt;Rick Clarke&lt;br&gt;Dharhari&lt;br&gt;Rajpur Bhediyahi&lt;br&gt;Bishrampur&lt;br&gt;Santapur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sarlahi</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Chuck Ludlam&lt;br&gt;Dan Karr&lt;br&gt;Greg Estes&lt;br&gt;Jerry Maynard&lt;br&gt;Haripur&lt;br&gt;Rampur (Ishwarpur)&lt;br&gt;Chandranagar&lt;br&gt;Jabdi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mahottari</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Frank Daly&lt;br&gt;Morty Marshack&lt;br&gt;Ron Rude&lt;br&gt;Bizalpur/Bijayalpur&lt;br&gt;Loharpatti&lt;br&gt;Meghraul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dhanusa</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Jack Kachmarik (2nd post)&lt;br&gt;Near Janakpur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Saptari</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Jim Moore&lt;br&gt;John Scott-Craig&lt;br&gt;Larry Paulson&lt;br&gt;Tim Moody&lt;br&gt;Vinnie Covello&lt;br&gt;Kanchanpur/Kanchanrup&lt;br&gt;Odraha&lt;br&gt;Phatepur&lt;br&gt;Joginiya&lt;br&gt;West of Rajbiraj</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Bhojpur</td>
<td>hills</td>
<td>Merv Olson (2nd post)&lt;br&gt;Pawala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sunsari</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Bernie Gewirtz&lt;br&gt;Bob Lake&lt;br&gt;Stan Gray&lt;br&gt;Banmara&lt;br&gt;Hasposa, near Tarahara ag. research station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Morang</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Buck Trawicky&lt;br&gt;Gary Ender&lt;br&gt;John Scholz&lt;br&gt;Dangihat (panchaayat)&lt;br&gt;Keraun (panchaayat)&lt;br&gt;Letang (panchaayat)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Jhapa</td>
<td>taraai</td>
<td>Ben Rogers&lt;br&gt;Dave Buerge&lt;br&gt;Paul Madnick&lt;br&gt;Budhabare&lt;br&gt;Bicharni (now part of Jyamirgadhi)&lt;br&gt;Dhaijan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Ilam</td>
<td>hills</td>
<td>Chris Busick (first post)&lt;br&gt;Chris Busick (second post)&lt;br&gt;Ross Anthony&lt;br&gt;Stan Gerity&lt;br&gt;Soyang&lt;br&gt;Jitpur&lt;br&gt;Jamuna (bazaar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doug Kimmel and Roger Leo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Ross Anthony**

Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need.

-- Kahlil Gibran

In almost all ways Peace Corps has shaped my life, from career path to values, interests, and the things I most enjoy. I cannot even imagine what my life would have been like without it. Like many others, I was going along at college not really thinking about the future. Then I got that 1-A from the Selective Service in my senior year. Nothing like a 1-A to get your attention! I had read books by Dr. Tom Dooley (very dated today) and about Albert Schweitzer and just gravitated to the Peace Corps because I kind of wanted to do it. After my sophomore year at Williams, I had spent a summer working in Japan and traveling around inspecting orders for export. Japan opened my mind to the Far East; I wanted to go back to Asia. So, having also studied development economics, when Peace Corps offered me farming
Ross Anthony

in Nepal, it seemed like a worthwhile thing to do. I knew nothing about Nepal, but it was in Asia, so I said yes.

My home state of Oklahoma’s draft board had other plans for my body and said, “no way” to the Peace Corps. Being stubborn and pissed at the way my draft advisor Addiemae talked to me, I appealed the State of Oklahoma’s decision to the State of Massachusetts, where I was in school. Massachusetts granted me a deferment, but Oklahoma was having none of that and appealed this to the Presidential level. So, there I was in Davis being ping-pong balled around, and I was not even that opposed to the war at the time. The most radical thing that happened on my campus was when someone threw a snowball at Maxwell Taylor. Anyway, that went on and on, and it was not until the last week of training in Cactus Corners that the Presidential Board said I could go to Nepal.

Calcutta is seared in my brain. It must have been 120 degrees; the airport looked like it had been bombed out with all the bamboo scaffolding around the buildings; my bus seat was a piece of ripped metal; all the beggars had to be moved from in front of the hotel door; and everyone was putting tons of iodine in everything. I was in a shocked fog and can certainly understand why some people boarded the next flight home. Somehow, I made it through Parwanipur, and along with Chris Busick and Stan Gerity was assigned to Ilam as one of the first volunteers in agriculture in the hills.

Planting green varieties in the hills made even less sense than in the taraai. Who wanted to carry fertilizer for days to grow disease-susceptible rice that tasted bad? Corn wasn’t much better, but at least the wheat worked well and was an additional crop. We complained and got retrained in Gorkha with the next group going to the hills. (Ironically, my freshman roommate from college was in that group). We learned about fruit trees, animal husbandry, bees and the like, which were skills I would later use. I planted a few hundred apple trees and tried raising rabbits for meat. The latter enterprise was a flop because everyone said they looked just like cats, and no way could I eat them either. They were a big hit in the bazaar, and the kids loved playing with them. I do remember having some of those giant pumpkin seeds sent to me. I had one grow to about 3-4 feet in diameter before someone walked off with it late one night. I just hope he had a good meal on it.
Watching the crops grow was kind of boring, and you can only read so many books; meanwhile, health care needs were staring me in the face everywhere. So I started treating kids’ cuts. That quickly got out of control when the doctor in Ilam (four hours away) started sending patients back home to me to give them shots. I knew that accidentally giving an injection of penicillin into a vein instead of the muscle, or to a patient allergic to penicillin, could lead to death. What was one to do? So I gave the shots. I even ended up sewing a girl’s half-torn-off ear injured on a ping\(^2\) back on with a needle and thread one day. You add a little bacitracin and it’s amazing what you can do. I got interested in Eastern medicine, by which I mean: how to really organize a health project in Nepal to improve the level of health and not just pass out medicine.

Somehow, I made it through two years, with the last month being a glorious trek along with Chris Busick and Lois Phillips to Everest Base Camp. Chris and I ended up waiting 10 days for an airplane and then walked out in 4 ½ days motivated by a beer at TGIF at the marine barrack in Kadu.\(^3\) At the end of my tour, I knew I had learned a lot, but felt like I had not really done anything for the Nepalis themselves.

---

2 Nepali ferris wheel, found especially in the Eastern hill districts.

3 Kathmandu
Ross Anthony

I came right home—which I regret—to be in my best friend’s wedding. All I remember about the ceremony was having to drink half a bottle of paregoric just to stave off the diarrhea through the end of the ceremony. A draw of 305 in the lottery got me out of the draft, but to say I was a fish out of water would be an understatement. I had no idea what I wanted to do, so the easiest option at the time was to go back to school and try to figure it out. I ended up enrolling in a course in Economic History at the University of Pennsylvania, mostly because they had the latest application dates I could find. I quickly gave up trying to explain Nepal to others on a college campus in 1970 where everyone was into the 60s, America being evil, and not having any real understanding of the world in which they lived. I wandered around in a daze, and hung out in the library reading books on Nepal. The oil refinery in the background and jet plane pathways over my apartment certainly did not help. But Nepal and the call of mountains lingered. I took a course in mountain climbing at the University of Washington that summer and returned to Penn to do a paper on how to build a successful health model for a developing country.

I used that paper as an excuse to go back to Nepal in 1973 to go trekking and propose setting up such a project. I met with the Minister of Health, who said I was too small, and he directed me to Daya Bir Singh at Paropakar, the first non-government organization in Nepal, which ran the orphanage in Kathmandu. Daya Bir, who is one of the finest people I ever met, sat down with me, but after hearing my pitch said Paropakar only dealt with organizations. So, on the spot I said I represented the Anthony Foundation, which of course did not exist. Next day this all appeared in the Rising Nepal. After asking myself what I had been thinking, I knew I needed to start doing something. I only had a little money but was saved by a guy from World Neighbors in Kathmandu, who had been trying to start a project with Paropakar for years. He gave me a grant and, combined with what I had, we were off and running.

I came home, started a 501(c)3 enterprise, but changed the name to the International Health and Development Trust, recruited a Canadian doctor (Stephen Bezruchka, who later authored A Trekking Guide to Nepal) and a nurse-to-be, Mary Murphy. The Ministry of Health suggested we set up a project at 9,000 feet in Dhorpatan, western Nepal, where a building existed.

Thus began some of the most exciting productive and meaningful years of my life. For the next five years we built a community health project in and
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

around Dhorpatan. Stephen and Mary did doctoring while I planted some 10,000 apple trees, which are still producing fruit today. I also flew in modern pigs and chickens on a STOL\(^4\) piloted by Emil Wick, gave shots to water buffalos, delivered horses and generally had a ball. We all gave thousands of vaccinations and treated all kinds of things from cuts to leprosy. Later x-PCV Mike Payne joined the team and built a water system and a new “hospital building.” (It was an 8-bed facility until the patients burned the beds for wood in the fireplace. Oh well!). The absence of electricity and running water did not slow down Stephen from cutting people open or flying in an eye doctor to do cataract operations on about 75 people who walked days to get to us. Seeing them come in blind and walk away seeing is something I will never forget. I also collected data in the area and in another area near Kathmandu and wrote my economics dissertation on the interactions of “Health, Population and Income in Rural Nepal.” After almost five years of training Nepalis, it was time for me to leave. This decision also came at the urging of the government, who by that point did not like Westerners in a Tibetan area.

I came home, got married to Katherine, whom I had met at Penn and who helped run the Dhorpatan Health Project from home. We had our first child, and I accepted a job at the University of Oregon, which is about as close to Nepal in the US as you can get. I trekked and climbed in the Cascades while teaching health economics, economic development, and general economics courses. In 1985 I returned to Washington, D.C. on a one-year fellowship, and have never left.

While in Washington, I spent three months at Johns Hopkins before working as an intern in the Office of Management and Budget. That led to meeting a guy named Bill Roper, who then got appointed Head of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA and today CMS). He asked me to come over and be the Associate Administrator for Program Development. This meant overseeing a staff of hundreds, managing the Office of Research and Development, and enforcing all Medicare and Medicaid rules and regulations. To say the least, I was in over my head, but somehow survived, mostly with the help of some very good assistants. The persistence and patience I had acquired in Nepal paid off in the federal bureaucracy: after

\(^4\) Short take-off and landing plane
five years, I felt like we did a good job and made a lot of changes for the better.

Then there was an election; I could have stayed on but was being put in a place with no relevance. I moved on to a small partnership doing consulting, but a year into that leapt at the offer to do a study for USAID on health care financing in Yemen. Well, since Yemen supported Iraq in the First Gulf War, there was no funding for the project I designed; but instead I came to the attention of the head of the European Bureau in USAID. She asked me to join USAID for Eastern Europe and, at the time, Cambodia and the Philippines. By the time I got there, Cambodia and the Philippines were wisely lopped off, but I still had partial responsibilities for all the Eastern European countries that were free from communism in the 1990s as well, eventually, as for health care in the former Soviet Union. I got to oversee about 1/3 of the dollars and 2/3 of the projects that in my opinion were the fun ones: agriculture, health care, the environment, energy, and democratic pluralism. We wrote constitutions and oversaw elections. I led the first teams into Albany, Macedonia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. I got to meet and give food away to Mother Theresa. I traveled through all the countries of Eastern Europe and was in charge of health care for the former Soviet Union. It was a blast and something I could not have done had I not been a PCV in Nepal.

Unfortunately, there was another election, and I became expendable. I wallowed around in the private sector for a while in consulting firms and then was asked by the think tank RAND to join them and begin a program in military health policy research. I knew RAND from my HCFA days, as they were giving advice to HCFA, and I had written a USAID proposal for financing in Russia for them that they did not get, but really military health. I knew a lot about health but had avoided the military. They said, “Don’t worry: you’ll figure it out.” At that time my wife was sick, and RAND had good health benefits. Thus began what has been 20 years at RAND doing research always designed to make a change in policy.

2001 was an eventful year for me. In January, my first wife Katherine lost her courageous five-year battle with breast cancer. Now I was a single parent trying to raise my son, Michael, alone, as his sister Jane was away at college. I threw myself into work and caring for my son.
Then someone gave RAND a big grant to look at health and foreign policy, which fell to me with my PCV and USAID experience. Our first report to the RAND Health Board was supposed to be submitted a week after 9/11; it obviously got delayed. But when they did meet, international health was a lot more important, and a one-hour briefing turned into a 5-hour meeting. Next morning, the Board started the Center for Domestic and International Health Security, which I initially directed. Eventually that spilt into the Global Health Program, which I led for ten years up until recently.

We had programs around the world, and I traveled about two hundred thousand miles a year. Among other initiatives, I was able to raise money to help programs like the one started by an incredible second-generation Vietnamese lady who pioneered delivery of primary mental health care in all of Vietnam. Another program evaluated and supported cataract surgery in rural communities in Africa; it was run by a group that got started doing such work in Nepal. I personally led large multi-year projects to reform health care services in Qatar and to transform health care and its financing in the Kurdish region of Iraq; I supported three large projects on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the last 15 years.

A few years after 9/11, I was also fortunate to meet and marry a wonderful woman from Pittsburgh, Roberta Eisen. We love to travel and continue to explore new horizons together. The family has expanded now to my two grown children (Jane and Michael), Roberta’s two grown children (Leslie and Carly) plus their three grandchildren, and our two four-legged children (dogs).

Long ago I started the father-son and father-daughter trips to just spend time with my kids alone. I took both trekking in Nepal—one to Cho Oyu and one to Everest base camp, and I can say the Peace Corps has not only affected me but lives on in my children. Jane volunteered for the Peace Corps, but they wanted her to go to a military base in Micronesia, which was not her idea of Peace Corps. Instead, she went off to Ghana to help set up a school for children with autism. That led to a degree in development studies and heading a small foundation in Britain funding programs for children with disabilities in Africa and weekends climbing mountains.

The love of mountains that comes from Nepal also lives on in my son, Michael, who went to school in Colorado. He now lives in Denver, where he does business analysis and computer programming on HIPPA-compliant
software that is frankly above my level of understanding. He is also enjoying the outdoors, climbing and hiking in the Rocky Mountains. Both of them have taken this mountain climbing to a level beyond their father’s comfort zone.

I never really stopped to think about all that Nepal has given me until recently, but it is all-encompassing. Nepal left me with a love of the outdoors and mountains in particular; a thirst to travel and experience new and exciting places and cultures; a patience that can only come by trying to get anything done in Nepal; a career in global health; a desire to help make a difference; a deeper sensitivity to other cultures; a better understanding of what the world is like; and an appreciation of how lucky I am. Lest I forget it, it also left me with a fungus that lived on for 15 years post-Nepal, deteriorating joints, two artificial hips, and a knee that is talking back to me and saying I’m next. All in all, I marvel at how important my time in Nepal and those years in the Peace Corps were for me. I shudder to think what a different life I would have had if I had not had the privilege and honor to serve in Peace Corps Nepal.
Be of service... There is nothing that harvests more of a feeling of empowerment than being of service to someone in need.

-- Gillian Anderson

Without a doubt, being a PC volunteer in Nepal eclipsed all other events in my life, with the exception of my marriage and my family. I learned so much! But now, as then, I have a difficult time summing up what that event meant to me. There are so many everyday events in Nepal that added up to a kaleidoscope of emotions. When I came back to the U.S. and my friends and relatives asked me about the experience, I would talk at length, trying to sum up the experience. Usually, their eyes had glazed over long before I finished. Finally, I learned to sum up my Nepal experience
quickly, calling it a giant boy scout trip and ended with “but it sure is good to be back.”

In many ways it had been like a boy scout adventure. As a forestry volunteer, I rode elephants in the \textit{taraai} jungle in order to ford monsoon-swollen streams and to mark trees for removal. I stepped out of hovering helicopters onto boulder-strewn streambeds in order to reach timber inventory plots. I hiked miles and miles in the Himalayas. I slept in a thatched hut and was awakened each morning with exotic bird calls and a hot cup of tea. I did more reading for pleasure then, by the light of a candle, than I have since.

Because I never pursued a foreign service career and never returned to Nepal, I have to look for ways in which the PC experience has affected my life. The biggest impact was instilling in me the value of public service. As a result, I worked as a government employee for the next 24 years. Although, as in Peace Corps, the impacts of my service came in small ways, there were many personal rewards, and, less frequently, noticeable accomplishments.

I have traveled quite a bit during my lifetime, but not nearly as much as I would have liked. But having experienced Nepal and its surrounds, I feel enriched and satisfied.

Thank you, Peace Corps Nepal!!
Little did I know in 1967 that a senior year course in Asian philosophy would lead me to make India my Peace Corps country assignment choice. When the offer of Nepal came, it took some research to locate and learn its links to Hindu and Buddhist traditions, in addition to its proximity to Tibet, India and China. Up until training in Davis, I had never ventured beyond New England, so Peace Corps tended to have an outsized influence on my life perspective, choices and competencies ever since. The diversity of backgrounds among volunteers, Nepali language instructors and training staff broadened my relationships and understanding almost from day one.

---

*Only he can understand what a farm is, what a country is, who shall have sacrificed part of himself to his farm or country.*

-- Saint-Exupéry, “Flight to Arras”

**Parbatipur, Chitwaan District, 1969, with village children waiting to pet my newly adopted puppy.**

**Biking with wife Elizabeth, Cape Cod Massachusetts, 2017**
After Peace Corps language training, my confidence in learning other languages like Turkish and Spanish was boosted in the decades that followed, even if fluency always lagged a bit behind aspiration. The agricultural classes and practice led to a lifelong interest in growing things, although I think my current ventures in gardening and landscaping benefit my current neighbors more than my demonstration plots ever did the farmers in Parbatipur. In fact I learned much more about agriculture from my villagers. I recall that my Nepalese farmers taught me how to recover from apparent crop disaster when after their rather substantial wheat crop was ready to harvest, it disappeared overnight. Of course they knew what happened and what to do: as they plowed the field using their wooden plow points to enter rodent tunnels, they revealed large caches of the grains stored just below the surface. Being adaptable Tharu farmers, they not only recovered most of their grain, but also managed to snag some grain-fattened field rodents for their harvest celebration feast!

We tried to adjust to the agricultural extension work and village life. Notable were the bike trips along dirt roads and rice fields that led to Narayanghat, where our town apartment (Deraa) served as a Chitwan meeting place for Terry, Kent, and Don, as well as occasional visitors. We usually felt restored after collecting mail, catching up on village experiences and indulging in what the shops and restaurants had to offer. Another worthy stop was Chuck Antholt’s USAID station in nearby Bharatpur, where we greatly extended our knowledge of farming and animal husbandry, while delighting in Sharon’s home cooking.

One harrowing moment was the evening that some of us decided to cool off in the Narayani River. As we swam out toward the other side, the overhead cable that spanned the river began to move. We realized that the invisible current in mid-river was strong enough to pull us downstream. We all returned safely after a bit of luck and a labored retreat that got us back to a point slightly downstream of where we started. A sobering thought that we could have ended up in India crossed my mind and has since prompted me to don a life vest, even when snorkeling.

Within a year of returning from Nepal, I was fortunate to meet and marry Elizabeth through a chance encounter while living briefly in Los Angeles. In fact, I like to think of spring 1971 as my milestone season: I met Elizabeth, quit smoking for good, got a draft notice reversed, and was accepted for graduate training in public health. My journey since Nepal through nearly
five decades has been shared with Elizabeth, who inspires everything we have undertaken. My career choices evolved directly from Peace Corps service. The population pressures visible in Indian cities and the lack of health care in most villages prompted me to apply to a public health school to focus initially on population studies and family planning program design. After graduation, I spent three years at the Ministry of Health in Turkey, where, in addition to developing proposals for programs and funding, I learned the strengths and limitations of sprawling government bureaucracies: theirs, ours and NGOs.

Upon returning, I spent four years in Baltimore learning about public health with a specialization in health education. The idea was to retool, to move beyond family planning and maternal and child health, which even in the 1970s was shadowed by polarized debates about abortion. Over the years, I have often drawn on cultural and practical lessons from Nepal to design and evaluate behavioral change programs for cardiovascular, cancer and environmental risk reduction. While the work was with employees, pensioners and community groups in the US and the like, the barriers to change and their likely solutions often came down to basics found in any panchaayat.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

4. David Buerge

It is well to be prepared for life as it is, but it is better to be prepared to make life better than it is....

--Sargent Shriver

I am often surprised at how having been a Peace Corps Volunteer retains a romantic cachet. I enjoy how when you learn that people you talk to were also Peace Corps Volunteers, you find that you already know a great deal about them and that they are, in many ways, kindred souls. I believe that having been a Peace Corps Volunteer is more significant than what I did when I was in Nepal.

It all happened so long ago, but its universe of memories remains all too vivid. I remember walking into the Husky Union Building, the HUB, the social center of the University of Washington, one fine spring day in 1968 to a long table piled with information and staffed by ex-Peace Corps volunteers. I never thought of joining the Peace Corps, and, facing the draft,
voiced aloud that I did not think I had any skills the Peace Corps would find useful. But I was encouraged to fill out a form anyway. I did.

My three country choices were Iran, then Afghanistan and finally Nepal: Iran because of its ancient high culture, Afghanistan because of its proximity to Central Asia, and Nepal because of the Himalayas. I finished my senior year, dreading the idea of going right into teaching the following fall to avoid the draft, wondering when I was ever going to live a real life. Graduation was full of delights: I wore my graduation robe all day, got gloriously drunk for the first time that night and crawled to work in the library the next day. It was the beginning of a year of wonders.

In mid-summer, much to my surprise, I found myself boarding a DC-6 to Sacramento via Portland and Reno, my first flight (and watching the screws slowly unscrew themselves from the engine cowl right outside my window, a portent of similar views watching entire plates fly off the engine pods of DC-3’s in Nepal). I remember being met at the airport and driven to Cactus Corners, crossing Putah Creek in a little car ferry. Everything was new, frightening and wonderful. I remember my first visit to San Francisco, alone with my watercolors, and hiking the Desolation Wilderness.

I am now 72. I have a beautiful granddaughter, and my wife is dying. I worked as a teacher, an historian and a writer. I have published many books and have written what may be a great book, the first biography of Chief Seattle, written 150+ years after his death, my toehold on immortality. But I want to meet people I grew up with and ask them, “How was life for you?” I don’t know what they will say; I don’t know what I would say if asked the same question.

I remember lying on my hard plank bed on the second floor in the thatch-roofed bamboo hut in the tiny village of Bicharni Hat, Nepal, dreaming of my old bedroom with the bougainvillea growing about the window. I desperately wanted to go back. Then one day I was back, in the same room I grew up in, in the same bed, the same bougainvillea framing the same window, and I thought “if I could only go back to Nepal.” How perverse! What was I going to do with that haunting experience?

Many years have passed; the memories are still vivid, still strange, still cannot find a place to roost. What have I done with my life? It all seems to have been so long, so short, so strange, so commonplace, so wonderful, so
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

terrible. A friend once told me that life was an experience to be enjoyed, not a problem to be solved, yet so much has proven problematic for me. But I still wake anticipating what the dawn will bring.

Looking back, I marvel that I actually joined the Peace Corps, got through training, was selected to go abroad and lived in my village for nearly two years. Looking back and understanding what I do now, I realize I had no business being in the Peace Corps: a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, a manic-depressive, obsessive-compulsive neurotic who used every ounce of energy just to function.

The first village visit terrified me; I could not wait for it to be over, but I remember the morning hootings of the rice mills. We visited a Brahmin village of substantial houses built atop raised earth platforms to keep them dry during the monsoon. It was hot and humid; I was given a glass of water. A tailor sat on a mat at the edge of one of the house platforms working with a Singer sewing machine that looked exactly like my mother’s. I walked over and sat on his mat to have a closer look. Immediately, there was an outcry from the Brahmin family. Was it something I did? Yes, our Peace Corps host said. The tailor was an outcast; by sitting on his mat, his uncleanness passed through me to the glass which was now juTho. No one in the family that offered it to me could use it. What could I do? Place it in the sun at the center of the courtyard and let the sunlight evaporate the water; then it would be cleansed. Here was the residue of a 5,000-year-old tragedy: the Aryans descending the Hindu Kush in their wheeled bullock carts, singing their Vedic hymns, condemning the indigenous people, the Dasyas, the “noseless ones,” the tailor and his family, to untouchability.

During training at Parwanipur Farm, several of us went up to Daman to watch sunrise on the Himalayas. The next day we hiked down to a lovely valley and climbed the next ridge to gain a closer view, but the trees were too dense to see anything. Coming back down the next morning, a village elder met us and bade us sit down. “What are you?” he asked, “American brothers, Russian brothers?” Then they gave us glasses of tea and wide brass trays heaped with boiled and salted soybeans, “badmaas" beans.”

---

5 Literally “bad” beans, perhaps because they taste sinfully good. (Technical editor’s note: the beans were bhaTmaas, soybeans, but the pronunciations are difficult for Westeners to distinguish.)
How extraordinary! Equally memorable was going to Birganj to the *daal bhaat* palace, and one evening spent buying fireworks in what looked like a battle zone to bring back and celebrate in our encampment. We never succeeded in making two- or three-stage rockets that worked, but we came close to blowing up our night watchman (*chokidaar*). I still have a chip on my front tooth from a piece of gravel thrown up from the explosion of a very powerful pop-it. How wonderful!

Going to my actual village was equally traumatic: I did not realize for some time that I had been kidnapped by a landowner to be made his own agricultural technician. Five months later, I moved across the river to Bicharni Hat, welcomed by the villagers to my rightful station. But once there, it took all the energy I could muster just to keep from coming apart. We put in a crop, and I hid out in my bamboo hut, drinking tea at the local tea shop and taking endless long walks, exploring the countryside, trying to keep it all together. I made friends: Paul Madnick in Dhaijan, Ben Rogers in Budhabare, and Subodh Kumar Rai in Bicharni.

Not thinking, Madnick and I scared village children half to death with our masks at Halloween, to their parents’ displeasure. We went to Naxalbari in West Bengal, site of a Marxist rebellion in the 1950s to buy spices stashed in heavy glass *bayaams*—jars for making Christmas and Hannukah sweets. We hiked up the hills to Ilam, and took a taxi to Darjeeling and skipped out of paying exorbitant hotel charges by exiting the window and running across the roofs of the town. But most of the time I spent alone, walking incessantly, arguing with myself, following the progress of Venus in the day sky or losing myself in the Greek classics or the Horatio Hornblower saga purchased at Darjeeling, sad because I had no decent map of the north Atlantic.

Paul, Ben and I undertook a trek to Mt. Everest from our villages in 1969. North of Ilam, we set off through a landscape out of Tolkien in the springtime haze. I will never forget descending an endless trail to Phidim

---

6 A Hindi or, more likely, Bengali term my villagers used for large square glass containers with the round little tops that rested in the round opening at the top—the kind that used to grace shelves in candy and general stores in the US, but probably introduced by the British.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

with leg muscles screaming and, once there, marveling how the architecture
of this hill town’s buildings had to be close to the Indo-European prototype
that produced the Greek *megaron* and the gabled roofs of northern Italian
hill towns.

On our way we came to a suspension bridge spanning the Tamur Khola. The
wind swept down the gorge making the bridge buck and writhe like a bull
whip. I knew I had to cross it alone, so I went down the trail and stepped off
the cliff. I have never been so terrified. At least one in four planks was gone,
and the steel cables snapped and leapt 10 to 15 feet side to side and up and
down. I struggled across the middle, where the suspension cables were only
a yard above the walkway and finally got across, crying aloud and from fear.
I stood exhausted at the far end while Madnick, Rogers and our porters
came down for their turn, waited 20 minutes for the wind to stop and
crossed in a gentle breeze. We entered the region of Limbuan, stayed at the
town of Tehrathum for several days, and on the way out crossed paths with
a party of Limbu women dressed in black saris and wearing golden crowns,
for what reason we could not guess. We sucked sweet nectar from the
blossoms of huge rhododendron trees, and crossed the Arun River in dugout
canoes.

After about two weeks we reached Dingla Bazaar, once a prosperous town
on the old Tibetan salt trail, but then a virtual ghost town. Children threw
stones at us, and I came down with a violent case of dysentery. Two days
beyond, Ben and Paul continued on to Everest base camp, but I had to turn
back. With the aid of a porter, I headed south, crossing seven ranges to
reach Biratnagar, where I caught a flight to Kathmandu. I had weighed
about 150 pounds when I arrived in country; when I got to Kathmandu I
weighed 98.

During my convalescence, I rented a room behind the Peace Restaurant,
where one could get decent meals. I also met Mary Kay, the nurse, who
brought me to her apartment for observation. She became my best friend in
Nepal and remains a best friend today. I probably owe her my life and
certainly many of the shreds of sanity I retained. It was while sitting on the
outdoor deck of her third-story apartment overlooking Hanuman Dhoka and
looking north to the snowy ranges to the north that it occurred to me how
presumptuous it was for me to imagine that I would come to this ancient
country to impose American notions of how to get things done. I was coming to terms with my failure to promote any real change in my village. My successes can be summed up in a single sentence: I cured the village's chickens of Newcastle disease; I helped heal a child suffering from severe burns after falling in a fire pit, and, on request, I painted pictures on several village doors. But most of the time I spent longing to be somewhere else.

It was only after I came back to the US, finding the country awash in flags and still fighting the Vietnam War, that I happened to read Sarge Shriver’s assertion that the rationale behind Peace Corps was to educate American youth about the developing world. I realized then that I had fulfilled at least that part of the program. My inability to do more may have been a gift to the people I lived with.

I lament not doing the things that might have made a difference. So much of my energy was spent just trying to survive mentally and psychologically. At one point I determined to paint images of the vivid exterior wall decoration—parquetry—on Rajbanshi tribal houses, but got only one done before the energy failed. Toward the end, I got enthused about assembling information posters about family planning that I posted in local tea shops. It was something I thought through and seemed a positive contribution, but then the time ran out.

My memories of those two years are so vivid and strange that I still do not know how to connect them with the rest of my life. I assume I never will. The intensity of the Peace Corps experience blended with a strong admixture of grief is a lovely, persistent torment. I’m sure it has to do with the passage of time and the ephemeral nature of youth. I witnessed a very different part of the world’s life on a profound level, and it changed me. It certainly affected my teaching and writing. Perhaps that is what was intended by the founders of Peace Corps. It is something, at least, that I can say is true for me.

A final memory is of our goodbye dinner at the Solti Oberoi hotel in Kathmandu near the beginning of July, 1970, enjoyable but heart breaking. I came to Cactus Corners and met you all; we went to Nepal and, from time to time, groups of us re-connected and shared our stories. There was a Christmas at Darjeeling’s Windamere Hotel and a week at Birgunj where, after one year some of us met with new volunteers. I got to know many of you, and then we said goodbye. Forty-one years later we assembled at Lake
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Tahoe, and again we had a going away dinner; and again, it was enjoyable and heart-breaking. Is life a series of expectant hellos and grieving goodbyes? It seems so. Although I cannot be with you at this time because of my family situation, I send my love to you all. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me. I wish you all the very best. Please keep me and Mary Anne in your thoughts.
5. Peter Calkins

As a 22-year-old in 1968 intent on becoming a professor of ancient Chinese literature, I would have laughed if you had told me that my career would be in agricultural economics, my current family would hail from the very country the U.S. was at war against, or I would end up in Canada without dodging the draft! Peace Corps Nepal changed all that.

In an initial effort to finagle a safe posting in the Army, I feel sheepish to say that I actually tried to enlist as an intelligence officer/translator of Vietnamese messages from far behind the front line. The ignorance of the “intelligence” branch came to my rescue, however. Seemingly unaware that Australia, my mother’s home country, was our ally on the ground, the recruiter barked at me: “Son, you get the hell out of my office: your Mother’s

A sincere peace is better than an insincere war.

– Yiddish Proverb (inverted).
an alien!” It was only then that I took the entrance exam for the Peace Corps.

I feel even more sheepish that I actively fought the idea of being assigned to Nepal 17. Within an hour of receiving “congratulations” from Peace Corps Washington on my posting as a village-level agricultural agent in Nepal, I phoned back to complain: I didn’t know where Nepal was, my expertise was in EAST Asia, and my only brush with agriculture had been back in Indiana baling hay and drinking lemonade on the farm of the prettiest girl in my class!

But then I met all of you and our marvelous trainers in Cactus Corners and Parwanipur, and quickly got caught up in the spirit of doing the best job possible for people in very desperate circumstances.

I was stationed in Madan Pokhara village, Palpa district, two hours’ walk from Roger Rutledge and not too far from Tom Suby (when he was in his village 😊). True, the garden I planted with my students at the village school failed, the beautiful Israeli and German carp in the fish pond we built were stolen a week before harvest, the rabbits ate their young, and Tibetan horses on the way to the taraai devoured our improved wheat trial because it was the only green spot in the valley. Still, sharing the hopes and failures of those projects with the villagers made me identify with them; my emotional investment and moral commitment deepened with each passing day.
The experience that tipped my life balance toward development economics as a career was the horrible landslide that occurred suddenly in one of the wards of the panchaayat in the middle of a torrential night. Shouts rose up and lanterns were waved by the door of the panchaayat office building (where I slept to make sure no one stole the fertilizer and pesticides). I raced out to see people of all ages running towards the stricken houses. The scene was gut-wrenching. Several bodies had already been pulled from houses that had simply collapsed under the mudslide. But then I saw a sight I will never be able to erase from my mind: one of the girls I taught at the school was wedged in a collapsed window in the middle of a wall under the weight of stones and a huge amount of mud. She could not move, and could hardly breathe. There was no way to get her out as the life seeped out of her. She was able to say a few words to her family, and then she left us. The next day, her body was put in a cloth sack and suspended from a tree to keep it from the animals while we waited for the river to subside. Then and there, I decided that teaching ancient literature to a handful of students in a dusty
office would betray all that I had become; I wanted instead to help improve the physical and food security of people in villages like that one.

I first tried taking the Foreign Service job interview in Washington, to resounding failure. The six-person panel informed me at the outset that the previous interviewee had been Gil Donahue and there was simply no way I could do better! So I transferred to a different graduate school (Cornell, where I was soon joined by Gary Ender!), forced myself to learn calculus and economics—for which I had NO natural aptitude—and went back to Nepal for two years to collect data for my thesis on the potential for fruit and vegetable production to improve the income, employment and nutrition of hill farm families in the Trisuli Watershed.
I then worked for 38 years as a professor of economic development at Iowa State University, Laval University (Quebec), and Chiang Mai University (Thailand) alongside students from 31 countries in East and Southeast Asia and in East and West Africa, who returned to their home countries to collect and analyze pertinent microeconomic data for enhanced village development. One of those students, Krishna Belbase, returned to the same villages in Trisuli where I had done my research, collected new data, and did comparisons with my original benchmarks of well-being. Another was Hari Prasad Sharma, one of seven doctoral students I recruited in Thailand for a multi-country research project to measure and optimize the impacts of the East-West Highway in Asia.

As part of this work, I was invited to return to Nepal three times in the 1990s to work on the Nepal Prospective Plan, an ambitious 20-year strategy to improve road infrastructure, electrification, resource conservation, agricultural production patterns, and economic policies, with the objective of maximizing economic well-being and living standards throughout Nepal by the year 2015. On the first of those trips, I took my 12-year-old son, Adam, back to the Trisuli Watershed study villages to show him what life was like in Nepal. Also on the team were Dr. Ram Prakash Yadav, my housemate from graduate school at Cornell and future member of the Nepal Economic Planning Commission, and Dr. John Mellor, our professor of development economics.
Needless to say, the (actually pretty good) Prospective Plan we ultimately produced was never implemented because of subsequent vicissitudes in both the identity and integrity of Nepal’s leaders.

Then in 2001-2, I found myself spending a sabbatical year teaching economic development in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. That is where I met my wife Anh-Thu, also an agricultural economist. I had come full circle from protesting the war in Vietnam to celebrating its peace!

I am very, very happy with how my life has evolved. I can only imagine what it would have been like if I had not joined Peace Corps Nepal: certainly different, undoubtedly smaller and more staid. I do know that I have grown enormously in knowledge, confidence, and compassion as a direct result of the transformative experiences we have shared. I met and worked alongside people from all religious backgrounds in Nepal, and this has informed my belief in the oneness of God and the unity of religion. So I wish to say thank you to the Peace Corps, to all of you in Nepal 17, and to the many wonderful Nepalese people I have known over the years.
6. Kent Crawford

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

– Mahatma Gandhi

Every story needs a good opening line, but I found that “Call me Ishmael” had already been used. So,

Once upon a time...

I came to the Peace Corps through the back door, twice. Having heard the “call of my country” and deciding that it sounded more like certain politicians in power at the time wanted their children to go kill somebody else’s children, I did not heed the call. Maybe Lyndon Johnson or Nixon or (God help us) Trump do have the power and deification to forgive us all our sins; but I had my doubts, so I became an emigrant to Canada. After a month of being an official landed immigrant in Vancouver, I received word
that I had been accepted into the Peace Corps! To my requested Nepal! They were giving draft deferments! I hadn’t written my F--k-you-letter to the draft board yet! Lucky Kent! So I came home and met all you wonderful people at Cactus Corners for fun and games.

Training was fun! I so much enjoyed all of you people, trainees and staff. There is something so much in common among Peace Corps volunteers. I guess it is the core of wanting to be of service to others and the openness to differences among people and cultures? We were from all over the country and from different backgrounds (even if 90% white bread, college-educated males). Of course, all good things must come to an end, so as we got ready to head to Nepal, I got drafted. Well….sh-t. You know?

To make a long story short, through the efforts of the Peace Corps and my parents’ letter writing to our local politicians, I won a Presidential Appeal against my induction, so I’m still not a Canadian! I doubt that the successful appeal had much to do with my own letter to my draft board explaining my need to fight Communism by planting rice in Nepal? I didn’t arrive in Nepal until December of 1968, three months after the others in our group. I had spent about a week in Cactus Corners with Nepal 18. They weren’t having much fun. Christine Carlsen—who I never suspected at the time would one day become my wife—went so far as to scowl at me!

Nepal was, of course, amazing! The people in western Chitwan were mostly fairly recent arrivals from all over the hills: Gurungs, Magars, Tamangs, Chhetris, Rais, Newars. And of course the Tharus who had always been there.

I lived up on the (dirt) road with an extended family of Gurungs at first. The patriarch was an old minister in the parliamentary government that was overthrown by Shri Panch Sarkaar (the King) when he took over. He was retired, but his son I.B. carried out the undercover politics of the Congress party in the neighborhood. I.B. is a current member of Parliament. I moved down to the khets 7 with the Tharus later, where I lived happily on a 6’ by 15’ platform under a thatch roof. My friend master sahib was my host. He had been an elementary teacher at some point in his life. He was the literate confidant and scribe for two of the local Tharu zamindaars. A wonderful

---

7 Rice fields, often on the valley floor or lower hillsides.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

friend, he was the only one who had passed away at the time of my return in 2011.

Well, you in the group all know: *daal bhaat*, no electricity, no running water, dysentery, more *daal bhaat*, giardia, beautiful mornings, *raksi, chilim* wizardry, Narayani river, *maasu*[^8], demonstration plots, Kathmandu, magic window if necessary, monsoon, boiling hot, *khorsaani*[^9], mountains, Bertera, Howard, Martin, friends. Occasional boredom that would make you want to eat your head. Book lockers!

Then Christine Carlsen smiled at me, so we got married at Ganeshthan in the jungle outside Bharatpur. This is without doubt the best decision that I ever made in my life. Some of you were there. Hope you enjoyed the goat!

Of course there was more!

[^8]: Meat

[^9]: Hot chili peppers.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

7. Gil Donahue

Peace does not rest in charters and covenants alone; it lies in the hearts and minds of the people

-- JFK Address to United Nations

Peace Corps experience impact

Many will recall that the summer of 1968 was a critical time for our country. For those of us in Peace Corps training, it seemed to be a good time to leave for a place as far from the United States as you could get. We were all, to some degree, concerned about what was happening in our own country at the time. We were a generation transformed by events way beyond our control: the Vietnam War, Presidents Johnson and Nixon, Civil Rights, campus demonstrations, free love, drugs. The Washington Post recently published a reminder of that period: many black and white photos showing parts of the District of Columbia that were burned during riots following the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Despite worries about what was happening to our country, we were still filled with pride for the U.S. Our education had taken place during the cold war period, and we were very cognizant of the fact that our work in a developing country would take place in one of the battlefields of that war. Furthermore, it was the era of former colonies becoming independent of the imperial powers, and there was a real opportunity for economic development. In fact, it was a major historical moment.

Finally, we were drawn to the exotic nature of a country that few Americans had ever visited. It was a unique opportunity to learn a foreign language that would allow us to get to know the people, understand the culture, and enjoy traveling to all the sights. Going to Nepal was the opportunity of a lifetime to apply in a real-world setting all of our education up to that point, and to help needy people get a leg up on life.

All of us who spent two years in Nepal surely learned a great deal. We learned to survive the food, water, parasites, cold, heat, long treks, village festivals, mountain views, cold and hot springs, temples, monkeys, frustrations, and religious pujas. Especially we learned to get to know and really appreciate people who were culturally so different from us that we couldn’t imagine their being our neighbors in the U.S. And yet they welcomed us into their lives, invited us to meals in their homes, shared happiness and sorrow with us, taught us how to help them, and cared for us as much as we cared for them.

While in Nepal, I read a great deal about Indian history, Hinduism and Buddhism. I visited all the major religious shrines in Kathmandu and in northern India. So, I thought I understood the religion/philosophy and could get inside the mindset. That was before I had a deeply intellectual debate with the principal of the high school in my village, Palung.

One evening after sharing dinner, Rup Chandra Bista asked me the age-old question: “Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?” At first, I thought this was just rhetorical, a way to open a new topic, and certainly one that pertained to agriculture. But no: Rup was deadly serious. He assumed there really was an answer; one or the other really did come first. Many times I tried to explain that the question really had no answer, but he assured me it did. We talked way past midnight, but never came to a conclusion we could both agree on. However, after that conversation we did a lot of useful work together for the good of the village, including building a
high school. Rup organized the village children to carry stones to the construction site.

Years later, after deep studies in Chinese, Japanese and Zen Buddhism, I came to the conclusion that this particular question argued with Rup Chandra was akin to a Zen koan. It’s not that there is no real answer; rather, it goes to the nature of life itself: where does it begin and is that important? Even though Rup Chandra was a communist, I think his insisting we discuss this question was really a deep spiritual exercise. It would be interesting to know whether it influenced his life as much as it did mine.

Nepal then and now

We arrived in Nepal during a sweet spot in its history, and in ours. The kingdom had been open to foreigners only since 1960 or so. The Embassy and USAID operations were relatively new, and the country was one of the most challenging places where Peace Corps operated. We experienced Kathmandu during its early pre-modern phase. There were still clear differences between the capital and the other, smaller cities in the valley, with lots of rice paddies in between. There were very few foreigners, and especially few who spoke Nepali. We enjoyed a privileged status. Our meager Peace Corps allowances enabled us to experience occasional trips to Kathmandu because life for us in the village was almost free.

I left Nepal in October 1970, returned home to Maryland by December, had my State Department interview in January 1971, started training for the foreign service in April, and in September moved to Mexico on my first assignment. While in Mexico I met and married my wife, Linda, a fellow foreign service officer. Then, we were transferred together to Ivory Coast, West Africa; Taiwan; Hong Kong; China; and Brazil; with Washington assignments in between.

While living in Hong Kong in 1981, I traveled to Nepal with a foreign service colleague to trek in the Annapurna area. Although Kathmandu was immediately recognizable, and we hit all the major spots, there had already been significant change. The country was developing, traffic was intense, the U.S. Embassy had moved, and there were many more foreigners,
including serious trekkers. Nepal seemed to be on the way to development. However, the storm clouds of civil war were already threatening.

Most recently, Linda and I spent time in Nepal in the wake of the April 2015 earthquake. Despite the widespread devastation, with many buildings collapsed or condemned, it was apparent that Nepal had made many strides in joining the “modern” world: the streets were filled not with bicycles but with motorcycles; all the young people were fixated on their smart phones and their playlists; the television stations were flooded with Hindi language programs and movies; and Kathmandu city appeared to have taken over the entire valley, leaving very few agricultural fields among the urban sprawl. I was surprised at the number of private boarding schools in the valley; it appears they became popular during the period of the civil war, as Kathmandu was safer for children than many areas outside the valley. Although pleased for the many Nepalis who were enjoying a higher standard of living, I could not help but feel they had lost something of the simpler life we had experienced years ago.

Enduring interests

I retired from the State Department in 1998 and then worked for defense contractors until 2010. After several years of part-time consulting, I fully retired in 2013 when my wife did. Since then we have indulged our interest in travel to places we wanted to get to know better: Europe, the Middle East, and South, Southeast and East Asia. On a regular basis we visit our three sons: Adam, who lives in Tokyo; Jason in San Francisco; and Ian in Los Angeles. Linda and I look forward to spending occasional time with our grandsons Preston and Aiden, who live in Tokyo.

For my entire life, I have been interested in, and concerned about, the issue of poverty. That, plus my interest in foreign languages and cultures, propelled me into the Peace Corps, and later the Foreign Service. I remain deeply concerned about the process of economic development, and I have closely studied several models, including those of India, China, Brazil and parts of Africa.

I was fortunate to be able to live in many countries and get to know those cultures fairly well. My Peace Corps experience in Nepal was an important base for my later career in the foreign service. Occasionally, my experience with agriculture at the village level in Nepal helped me understand some of
the issues common to developing countries dependent on agriculture, such as Mexico, Ivory Coast, China and Brazil.

In my community in Northern Virginia, I have become increasingly aware of systemic factors in American culture and law that tend to trap many people in poverty. My Catholic faith calls me to render assistance to the poor. I approach this issue intellectually as a Franciscan, and in practical terms as a Vincentian (the Society of St. Vincent de Paul provides material assistance to those in need, as well as advocating for legislation and social action).

My philosophy is that we are in this world for each other. We connect more fully with people if we eliminate the barriers between us. Everyone has dignity and deserves to be treated with respect. When we seek the improvement of others, we benefit ourselves as well. Stemming from my experience working in Nepal, this philosophy developed further during my foreign service and private sector careers.

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? The specific answer you choose is not so important as the knowledge that both are necessary. Also, you have to start somewhere.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

8. Gary Ender

To serve is beautiful... if it is done with joy, a whole heart and a free mind.

– Pearl S. Buck, “Men and Women”

My experiences as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal affected the path and the nature of my life profoundly and in many ways: my career, my hobbies, my wife, and my outlook on life. My first “job” after college was in a village in Nepal, and my last “jobs” will be as a volunteer. The jobs are different, but the volunteer spirit lodged in me and has surfaced in retirement as a rewarding way to interact with and help others. I am still basically an introvert, but volunteering brings me out of myself to my great benefit. (There’s actually research that shows it improves ones health!)

In some ways the story starts in an undergraduate course on the economics of development, in which I learned that agricultural development is essential before any other kind of development can be successful, largely due to the high proportion of the population that is initially farmers. This little bit of
knowledge came into play during the Vietnam war, when the choices upon graduation in 1968 were: Canada, jail, and Peace Corps. As lovely as Canada is, somehow I wound up in Peace Corps. And then I had to choose where to do agriculture.

My country choice process was the epitome of chance and whim and sloppy analysis. First I was offered Iran, where I would have been driving around in a Jeep. Next was India, a poultry project. Somehow I convinced myself that Nepal was less allergenic (perhaps imagining conifer forests in the hills?), and wound up in the taraai. (I had no allergy symptoms at all in Nepal, probably due to totally different flora and seasons, and for many years after my return to the US, my mild pollen allergy was almost dormant.)

I have always enjoyed learning languages, and in this area, my luck has been manifest, in the form of a good ear. Even with that gift, a new volunteer needs to work on language skills to live and work, so I was again lucky that a somewhat educated and very open-minded Nepali took me under his wing, accelerated my language learning, and started a lifelong friendship.

His name is Agni Prasad Koirala. He was the secretary of the panchaayat and a tenant farmer on land owned by a family he knew from his ancestral home in the hills, Bhojpur. During my Peace Corps time in the taraai, I enjoyed Dashaain and bhaai pujaa with Agni Prasad, his parents and his younger sisters in Bhojpur more than once, after a two-day walk from Dharan.
Whether it was trekking with Bernie Gewirtz and Bob Lake or just that walk to Bhojpur, I always enjoyed looking for birds along the way. Was it a Peace Corps/Nepal tradition to make a trip to Penang or Hong Kong to buy cameras, etc. cheaply? Why did I come back with binoculars also and go on to so enjoy birding, both in my village and on treks, and with more great luck, in so many other beautiful places around the world?

Comedians and stock brokers will tell you that timing is everything. I agree. Returning home after almost five years in Nepal, my trip to Boston to visit a close college friend coincided with the trip of my future wife, Jill Randell, to visit the same person, so I got a ride with her (and we’re still riding). (If Nepal had been less enticing and I’d come home sooner, I’d most likely be riding in a different car with a different partner.) That ride was in 1973; we married in Ithaca in 1975 on a former farm converted into a gourmet French restaurant, an omen of the great food I was going to enjoy from Jill’s kitchen.

The basic story continued in graduate school, where I decided to major in agricultural economics instead of law (in which I had been accepted but didn’t attend) or city planning (about which I had thought seriously). And with a little help from my friends... I became a doctor with no stethoscope. Peter Calkins kindly gifted me all the data I needed for my MS thesis, and
Gary Ender

Agni Prasad did some data collection for my PhD thesis. Jill and I lived in Kathmandu for a year and a half then, and she directed the training program for a new group of single, female Peace Corps Volunteers in nutrition and child care (we think we had it tough!).

I wasn’t great at thesis writing but letters I could do, and it was great that Peace Corps taught us how to write Nepali. After Peace Corps, daajyu (Agni Prasad) and I kept in touch for a few years writing aerograms. In 1980 Greg Heist and I were recruited via a lucky Cornell connection to be part of a USAID evaluation of 17 years of agricultural research and extension in Nepal. That included a village visit and a chance to meet up with daajyu and get his update on krishi bikaash into the evaluation. After many news- and thought-filled letters, Agni Prasad and I lost touch, but we somehow got back in touch years later.

After graduate school I joined USDA in the Asia Branch of the Economic Research Service. In 1989 I started working at Abt Associates, a consulting company that does contract work for USAID and other USG agencies. I stayed at Abt until I retired.

In 1992 Jill and I and our son and daughter returned to Nepal from Pakistan, where we were living, working on USAID projects. We did a short fun trek with the kids just up the hill from Pokhara. We also had a great rendezvous with Agni Prasad and several of his family members in Kathmandu and visited the sights there.

In 2000 I flew to Nepal at Dashain from Egypt, where we were living. Daajyu and I walked the taraai footpaths, enjoying the food and hospitality of his adult children. His eldest daughter’s family had several water buffalo and a gobar gas tank that provided light and cooking fuel. Some time after I returned to the US, the Koirala family got a great upgrade to their technology: Skype. We could then do video calls when Agni Prasad came down to Biratnagar. (He still had no electricity at home.) On my end there was just me (unless Jill did a cameo); on his end with him were his eldest son, daughter-in-law, grandchildren and various other children and grandchildren. So much fun. Some time after that he got a cell phone and a small solar panel on his home in the hills to charge it, so we could talk any

---

10 Dung from cattle or water buffalo.
time his phone was charged and he could get through. We talk a few times a year.

At the end of 2012 I retired and started looking for volunteer opportunities. Volunteering had matured from a one-off to a major part of my life. My two regular gigs now are with a “meals-on-wheels”-type organization and another NGO that supports seniors who want to remain in their homes as long as possible.

In 2013 I managed another quick visit to Nepal and Agni Prasad as part of a vacation in Rajasthan, but there was no time to reach Bhojpur and bhāaujyu.

In 2015 Nepal suffered a huge earthquake, killing thousands and destroying many cultural treasures in the Kathmandu Valley and its surrounding areas. My instinct was to get on a plane immediately. I contacted many organizations on the ground in Nepal, but none could support international volunteers at that time. Later I found out about All Hands and almost made it to Nepal that fall, but a border blockade left All Hands unable to guarantee basics like clean drinking water to arriving volunteers. Finally in January 2017, with fantastic support from many of my fellow RPCVs in Nepal/17, I made it to Sindhupalchowk and helped build two schools. (All the earthquake clean-up had long since been completed.) Volunteers brought their amazing spirit from all over the world. And with all the school kids calling me baje 11, I instantly acquired about 200 inquisitive grandchildren. I finally made it back to Bhojpur and met my new bhāaujyu. (Agni Prasad’s dear first wife had died many years before.) Living with the family for several days, I observed the subtly displayed love between two people who supposedly did not marry for love.

In December 2017 I went off on another All Hands trip to the Florida Keys, where I had the great pleasure of working with that same close friend from college, cleaning up after Hurricane Irma. Same great volunteer energy. This is our new volunteer gig; we hope to do it once a year.

Serendipity is a long, pretty word for luck. As you can see, it has accompanied me almost all my life and almost everywhere. One other little

11 Grandfather
thing I inherited from Nepal/17 is the enjoyment of noting down striking thoughts or experiences in haikus, which, appropriately, have 17 syllables. Here’s one example:

**Infinity of Luck**

*I am luckiest,  
but strange infinities tell  
us: you can be, too.*

Agni Prasad did one of my first IR-8 rice demonstrations and at age 74 is still a careful early adopter searching for ways to upgrade his farm in Bhojpur. Currently these include cardamom as a cash crop and an improved cow brought back from Ilam. Over the years, I’ve had some success as a backyard farmer, but much less so recently. I still enjoy gardening, mostly flowers and shrubs.

In the village we would sit together eating or talking. Now those memories are ever-present when we talk from the opposite sides of the planet. We don’t need to say much. The weather, the crops, what our kids are doing. While the cell connection may cut out sometimes, the personal connection is strong and clear.

What are also clear are my memories of some of the amazing experiences I had during my years in Nepal. (Fortunately old age affects short-term memory much more than long-term.) Here is a sampling.

**What probably no one else knows**

When I arrived in Keraun, I was given meals at the zamindaar’s house. Sanitation was apparently awful, so I got bacillary (dysentery), with all of its awful symptoms, for what seemed like forever and was probably three or four days. At that point with no end in sight (but actually just around the corner), I thought I had to do something. Despite pitiful language skills, I convinced myself that I could do the following, and did. I drafted a “telex” to Peace Corps/Kathmandu, asking them to send a helicopter to rescue me, I instructed a villager (undoubtedly someone who just happened to be available to make the significant trip to Biratnagar) to carry the message to an office whose location or even existence I did not really know, and have the message sent. I found out after I recovered that nothing was ever done.
with my message, and of course I felt quite silly about my attempt. Then I set up my kitchen and cooked my own meals for the next four years, with the exception of a short period during which I had a cook.

Looking at the moon

One of the best farmers in my panchaayat was Teju Lal Rajbanshi. He was an older, very traditional and very modest farmer who achieved excellent results by local standards and was renowned for producing all kinds of vegetables. One day he and I happened to be walking together to the local haTiyaa. I happened to be carrying my small transistor radio, which I never did otherwise, because there was a US moon shot and someone was going to be walking on the moon that day. I thought listening to that would make a great reprieve from all the worldwide war news that eventually prompted me to give the radio away to a good friend in the village. The moon also happened to be visible that afternoon, so I said casually to Teju Lal, ‘See up there? There is an American walking on the moon.’ That of course blew his mind completely; it did not compute at all. His response: ‘That’s impossible; a god lives there.’ It was a beautiful day and we continued our walk to the HaTiyaa, where I undoubtedly bought some very special vegetables from his wife.
Pigs

Many different “higher” and “lower” castes and ethnic groups lived in Keraun: Brahmins, Chhetris, Kams and Sarkis; Tharus, Rajbanshis (related to Bengalis), and Dhimals (related to Limbus); plus assorted other hill groups. This was a good audience for an improved pig demonstration. Great project for a boy from Brooklyn. I rounded up some sawn board remnants (flat on one side, round on the other) and tree trunk rounds and somehow got a very nice, elevated pen made that had both sun and shade and two nice troughs for food and water. Then all I needed were two piglets. My best friend and I went to the agricultural research farm, Tarahara, where I purchased two improved piglets, and we took them to the gate in a sack. There was a bus stop at the gate, so the plan was to put the pig sack up on top with the cargo and head back to the village (there would be at least one transfer to another vehicle, but the rest of my initial plan is unclear to me now). The bus arrived and I went to give the “kalindar” (from “cleaner”?) the sack. Despite the bus’ carrying all manner of other types of cargo, he determined that my cargo was not suitable for his bus. Maybe his bus was a Brahmin?

It was getting late in the afternoon, and I was really pissed off. By this time, my ability to swear in Nepali was quite good. I let loose with everything I had, in front of both genders of passengers, and to the tremendous embarrassment of my best friend. The insulted kalindar jumped off the bus, took off his belt and prepared to use it on me, when my friend intervened. He was able to calm the situation, but the bus left without us. In the end we were able to flag down a friendlier jeep and it took us all the way to Keraun. I obviously did not know anything about selecting piglets, as one of them was a runt. When it was old enough to slaughter and sell, I got someone to do that. But I was so depressed about the killing that I could not eat any of the meat. Pigs are highly intelligent. My pen was right next to where I lived, the two-story wooden panchaayat building. When I came home and walked noisily up the wooden steps, the pigs would call to me. When it was hot and I came to the side of the pen with a bucket of cool water, they would come to where I was and position themselves for a shower. This project was one of those bittersweet ones, where there were nice outcomes (several people liked the new breed and starting raising them; there were even rumors that some upper-caste people sent representatives to buy meat so that they could taste
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

it) but then there was the sadness of ending the life of these two smart animals.

Trekking through Raspberry Fields

Those were the days of Sergeant Pepper and Strawberry Fields Forever. I didn’t know then whether there were any berries at all in Nepal, but there was a town in the eastern hills called Aiselu Kharka, which is, approximately, “raspberry field” (technically, yellow raspberry, but I didn’t have a good dictionary back then, so I pictured the raspberries as red, like strawberries). Ron Bender (Nepal 19), Bernie Gewirtz and I planned a trip to the Everest area so that we could walk up and get acclimated to the altitude as we went, and then hopefully fly out of Lukla in one of those 6- or 8-seat Pilatus Porter STOL planes. We routed ourselves from Dharan (where our Dera was) through Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Okhaldunga, Aiselu Kharka and then on up to Namche Bazaar. The towns along the way would all have food and lodging, but just to be boy scouts, we also carried some rice and daal and one small pot to cook them in. There were no berries in Aiselu Kharka, probably the wrong season, but it was a pleasant jumping off point toward the Himalayas. From there to Namche Bazaar was a route that probably no westerners traveled. We went by very small villages that seemed to get poorer and poorer, and when it came time to stop for the night, there was only one house anywhere nearby. We asked about sleeping on the porch and paying for food, but the owner had no food to give us. He was able to give us some firewood, so we cooked and ate the food we brought in our little pot. As if we needed one, that was one more stark reminder of how close to the margin many people in Nepal were living (and of course how lucky all of us were). When we reached Namche Bazaar, we relaxed in a tea shop/restaurant. The owner asked if we wanted meat in our meal. When we said yes, he said, Excuse me, and reached under the bench on which we were sitting and pulled out a large chunk of meat, perhaps dried or perhaps just preserved by the ambient cold. That became part of dinner. We went on to enjoy the area, proceeding up only a half-day’s walk at a time, to try to stave off altitude sickness. One of the few pictures I still have is of the three of us at the Thangboche monastery, a picture that I passed along to Bernie’s family when he passed away.

Jute finance
Farmers in the eastern *tarai* grew a lot of jute, just as they did in Bangladesh. There was actually *bikaash* jute seed, so I decided to see what I could do about getting some in the hands of the farmers in Keraun. I had no experience in finance or loan sharkng, but I somehow determined that I would sink my three months’ living allowance into the purchase of jute seed on behalf of farmers who said that they would buy it from me and plant it. It was clear that the agricultural bank loan system was never going to be effective for these farmers. So I did it, and then for the next three months I came to appreciate what it was like to be poor and dependent on others for the next few meals. I can remember a few days when my objective for the day was to hit up a poor farmer for the few rupees he owed me and then head to the *haTiyaa* to buy vegetables for *tarkaari*. (There were several friends by then who would have fed me every day if they knew my situation, but luckily it never came to that.) As far as I know, I got almost all of my money back, almost all of the seed got planted, and most of the results were good. But I decided that that was not a good extension model for replication.

**Bandhu Lal’s Too Piro Banquet**

For an occasion the nature of which I cannot recall, my very good friend Bandhu Lal Chaudhuri invited 8-10 people important to him to his home for a grand meal. I was one of those people. His home was a pretty ordinary mud-wall-and-thatch affair, situated in a small compound. We sat on the floor in a kind of loggia, with nice clean banana leaves in front of us to receive the food. I was prepared with my trusty tincture of iodine to treat the local water. His wife and another woman brought rice, then *daal*, then vegetables, and finally meat. So far no problem. Then we all started eating, with the iodine clock ticking silently in my head. Usually I could deal with pretty significant amounts of *piro* because there was plain rice in unlimited amounts, and I could eat lots of it, especially because I was only eating two large meals a day. The meat and vegetables were very spicy, so I took a large handful of rice. What I had not focused on until that moment was that the *daal* had been poured directly on the rice (Tharu style, no little bowls for the *daal* or vegetables), and the *daal* was also *piro*! No plain rice to counter the burning sensation in my mouth! What was Plan B? There wasn’t any really. Water was only a feeble antidote to *piro*, because it was only the cooling effect that was of any help, and that stopped as soon as one swallowed. And then, was the iodine finished doing its work? Triage time: relief now vs. parasite later? The fire in my mouth continued burning, and I soon heard
from the talk around me that it was not comfortable eating even for the other guests. From the tone of their Tharu Maithili I could tell that they were putting up quite a stink, although probably in a somewhat friendly way. Poor Bandhu was very embarrassed. If I remember right, some of the small talk before we started eating mentioned the famous raangaa khorsaani, a tiny hot pepper, one of which was hot enough to spice all the meat from an entire water buffalo. Prophetic, eh? In the end Bandhu pledged to invite us all back for a redo and ensure that no one’s mouth was offended by excess heat. And he did.
For me, trees have always been the most penetrating preachers. I revere them when they live in tribes and families, in forests and groves. And even more I revere them when they stand alone.

-- Hermann Hesse, *Bäume*

**Stanley J. Gerity**, forester and lawyer, died Monday, Nov. 21, 2011 at his home in Bellingham, WA. He was born on January 12, 1945 in Longview, Washington to Christopher "Joe" and Sarah Gould Gerity. From an early age, Stan's passion was hiking and climbing in the Cascade Mountains. He attended high school in Longview and then earned his degree in 1967 from Western Washington University.

From 1968 to 1970, he volunteered with the Peace Corps in Ilam, Nepal, and while there he trekked with friends to the Base Camp of Mt. Everest. It was to remain one of his fondest memories.

Later he obtained a degree in Forestry, and spent many years working for the Port Gardner Timber Company in Stanwood as a Timber Cruiser. In the late 1990s, he embarked on a second career in law when he became a Paralegal for the Howson Law Office in Mt. Vernon, where he worked until
Stan Gerity

his retirement in 2011. Stan also volunteered time to the Mt. Vernon Kiwanis.

Stan was a kind and generous man who deeply loved his friends, family and grandchildren. He is survived by his son, Philip J. Gerity of Bellevue, WA; his grandchildren, Katherine and Nicholas, and former wife Sibyl Sanford.
10. Bernie Gewirtz

Yesterday is history; tomorrow is mystery; today is a gift, which is why we call it the present

-- Bill Keane [this was one of Bernie’s favorite quotes]

Bernard's life on earth moved peacefully to its close on February 3rd 2014 with brothers, Frederick (Elaine) and Richard (Lori) by his side and sisters, Mary Jo (Chris Wood), Barbara (Tom Sellers), Deborah (Marvin Henige), Sandra and brother Joe (Diana) in his heart. He also leaves behind 12 nieces and nephews and 13 grand-nieces and nephews. Bernard was preceded in death by his parents, Ann (Eickholt) and Arthur Gewirtz and sister, Patricia Peters.
Bernie Gewirtz

Bernard received his Bachelor of Arts degree from St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, MD.

He served three years in the Peace Corps in Eastern Nepal working under the Ministry of Agriculture to assist farmers in increasing their production. He also organized vaccination programs to combat tuberculosis and small pox.

Upon his return to Chesaning, Michigan he worked for one year at the Gewirtz Hardware and Appliance Store.

Bernard began his career with the Berlitz Language Center teaching English in Tokyo, Japan and then as the Local Instructional Supervisor of Tokyo and the Greater Tokyo Region. He supervised the planning and opening of the Sukhumvit Language Center in Bangkok, Thailand. He returned to Tokyo where he was the Manager of Human Resources for thirty-three Tokyo/Yokohama-area Language Centers. His final position with Berlitz was as the Director of the Berlitz Language Center, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

For his last ten years Bernard was employed by The Beachcomber Hotel in Pompano Beach, FL. Bernard was an avid reader, a life-long seeker of knowledge and a collector of quotes.

He was admired for his devotion to his family, his gentle spirit and his compassion. Those wishing to honor his memory are encouraged to consider the Catholic Relief Services, local NPR, or the charity of their choice. Bernard will live on in the hearts of his loved-ones and friends.
11. Richard Godfrey

A karass\(^{12}\) ignores national, institutional, occupational, familial, and class boundaries. It is as free form as an amoeba.

--- Kurt Vonnegut

What was I thinking?

To join a “karass” of miscreants refusing to kill Asians and take the American way of agriculture to a distant land to show Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims how to farm – really? Was I serious? There were better things to do. With a degree from Berkeley – in Psychology and a recognition that I was certifiably insane – including lowest GPA in the history of a state run amuck, with roommates Country Joe and the Fish yelling “F-*-*-K” and protestors dropping LSD before heading off to San Francisco, flowers in teeth. Girls burning bras in hemp-loaded fires of lust – and I’m going to

\(^{12}\) A group of people linked in a cosmically significant manner, even when superficial linkages are not evident. Concept created by Kurt Vonnegut.
Richard Godfrey

grow rice ten thousand miles away? Oh, come on. I had another choice. As a rising NROTC candidate, I could have slipped into khakis, brass-buckled belt and black shoes so polished you can see the shine of your buzz cut. Glistening with supremacy I could have flown jets to teach the world to live better with chemistry. Napalm and cluster bombs would educate Vietcong that Cambodia is not their back yard. What were they thinking? Could they hold off the aphrodesiac power of Kissinger’s Realpolitik, born again and again capitalism? Be real!

I wandered into the taraai and a thousand-year tradition of rice farming to show the Madheshi how to do it right! Add a little N-P-K, water, DDT, the best seed that Texas could hybridize, mix it together with a five-year old’s explanation in Bhojpuri (strange no one spoke Nepalese in my village) and you have the Green Revolution. Forget the soil, don’t worry there’s not enough water, the rice tastes bad, and ignore the problem that only rich farmers profit in a land without cars, radios, or cooperatives. Because fossil fuels fix everything, or so I imagined. “If you can do a half-assed job of anything, you’re a one-eyed man in the kingdom of the blind,” said Vonnegut. I wasn’t just blind, just deaf and dumb.

Fast forward to a year of dysentery, three genera of worms, my mother dies of a stroke and I can’t return for the service. The love of my life deserts me for a law school lover in the new Berkeley of black panthers, People’s Park, and Reagan’s death-dealing helicopters. Meanwhile the Pradhaan Panch’s son is sneaking into my hut to steal money. I’m really depressed. Reading Ulysses about “the ineluctable modality of sight” and Joyce’s Odyssey through language and Vedanta realization that tat tvam asi\textsuperscript{13}. It’s my journey into adulthood, and all I can think of is good sex and how to commit suicide. Here’s how – when you don’t have a gun, poison (well we had Coumadin, but that takes a long time), or a tall building to jump off, you need to stand in front of a train. Thing is. Indian trains are big and heavy. They can squash you ok, but when you stand right in front of them they sometimes stop for no particular reason and just sit there, like the time Bob Heavenrich and I rode a coal car between Birgunj and Bhirghinia in pitch darkness, coal dust covering our blue lungsis, sweaty faces, and flip flop-

\textsuperscript{13} तत्त्वमसि, a Sanskrit phrase, meaning “You are that,” “That you are,” or more simply “You’re it.” It implies that your Inner Being is at one with the Great Universal Being.
protected feet; for no particular reason Indian trains just stop, for days. So, train death doesn’t work.

Were it not for the friendship of Walsh, Clarke, Estes, Weisbrod, Suby, and Davenport (despite Alan’s giardia-laden breath), I never would have survived. It really came down to the love of a Muslim family and all my Nepal 17 friends that I had the audacity, perhaps futility, to stick it out two years. I ended up switching villages (to where they spoke Nepalese, which I had by then forgotten) and grew corn where there was no water. In the dry season with a hand pump we pumped and pumped, till blood ran out our noses. Later some elephants came and trampled the field. “And so it goes.” I read the Alexandrian Quartet by Durrell, hundreds of other books, played blues and tunes Estes taught me on guitar, and waited. And waited. When I finally got home, I was crazier than starting off, drank too much before taking the LSAT, realized I would not be Gandhi’s protégé. Truth, *Ahimsa* and *Satyagrahi*? Instead I wrote a novel called *The End of the Race*. Incredibly successful, so much so that you cannot find copies today. Even my mother gave it a good review, while in heaven, so it’s hard to find that review.

What I love about writing, it makes you honest. Lots of alternative facts and less fake news. I love that Peter, Chuck, Gary, Mike, Chris, Robert and all of our magnificent crew—could we have survived without Mary Kay, Sue, and Regina?—tell their stories of well-spent youth. I hope for more and am incredibly proud to have been a part of a group with ideas of exploring new cultures and practicing non-violence. It was the hardest time of my life, and the best.

I am still practicing medicine in Oakland, Guatemala, and Kenya. Reconnected with the Peace Corps, somewhat. Chuck is spot on about all the PC problems and why it’s worth continuing the good fight—despite tweets and tribulations from above—and hope to connect PC with Rotary. Rotary has 36,000 clubs worldwide. We engage with Guatemala and have the potential to try and eliminate cervical cancer. Despite arthritis and a diminishing surgical career, I love to travel, hike, and sail; and I dream of someday returning to Nepal. I’ll visit India, stand in front of the coal-driven train. And make it stop so I can make up more stories. Much love to you all, amigos!
If that vital spark that we find in a grain of wheat can pass unchanged through countless deaths and resurrections, will the spirit of man be unable to pass from this body to another?

-- William Jennings Bryan

I was born to be an ex-pat. My parents took me to Europe for six months in 1956. When we returned, I announced to my mother that I would live abroad when I grew up, and I have spent most of my life trying to achieve that goal. (I am writing from San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.)

The Peace Corps was the finest of these experiences. I had lived in Italy during my junior year in college, but my real dream was to live in Asia. I had immersed myself in Vietnamese history and politics and was an antiwar activist, so I knew I wanted to go to an Asian country without overt ties to the American war efforts. And I knew I wanted to go to work in places that would allow me to live in rural areas. I applied for Nepal, Ceylon, and Afghanistan. The Peace Corps assigned me to Tunis as an English teacher. I turned this down and was assigned a wheat-growing program in Afghanistan, which I accepted. A month later, this program was cancelled,
and I once again asked for an agricultural program in Nepal. That turned out to be Nepal 17, and it changed my life.

The training experience introduced me to some of the most extraordinary people I have met: bright, funny, politically astute, and committed to a mostly altruistic life of service and adventure.

On the flight to Nepal, I sat next to the conservative Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Allen Drury. He was amazed that this rather bedraggled and motley group was being sent abroad to represent the United States; but after several hours of conversation, I seemed to convince him that we were the best and brightest young Americans and the perfect ambassadors of peace and good will. At least one other passenger did not agree and wrote a letter to the State Department complaining about our unkempt appearances. But critics were wrong. We really were an extraordinary group that has done so much good, both in Nepal, and wherever we have gone since then.

I entered my village (Hasposa) with a Kelty pack on my back, a raging fever, and a severe case of dysentery. I had to walk for miles through rice fields with my assigned Nepali co-worker. I had no choice but to continue, and this difficult and miserable entrance into my new life was the first of many times when I had to face challenges which were unlike anything I had ever experienced. It was hard, but I was so grateful not to be in Tunisia.

After three miserable days sleeping in the village leader’s house, with nightly card games going on in my room, I was introduced to the local school teacher. He offered me a room with his family and a friendship that is still a vital part of my life fifty years later. Purna, his wife and his father gave me advice, and provided endless stories and information during our nightly discussions about religion, politics, world geography, and local gossip.

The daily walks through the village to meet with farmers and talk to anyone in the tea shops sounded like a great Peace Corps plan. The reality was quite different. The Nepalis found me amusing but less than trustworthy with my agricultural suggestions. Although I diligently arranged for demonstration plots, I never pushed the new varieties of rice, fearing that failure would be devastating. I had much more success with wheat, since their local variety provided such low yields. They hated the taste of the soft, red variety, so I arranged to collectively sell the crop in India and buy the wheat they liked with the proceeds. This turned out to be my biggest
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

success. When I returned to the village in 2016, I was pleased to hear that virtually every farmer now plants a winter crop of wheat.

With technical support from Kathmandu, I was also able to help a farmer start a piggery and another farmer to build a fish farm.

My biggest achievement, however, was surviving the heat, the dysentery, the isolation, and the huge cultural differences. Without Purna and his family, and the brotherhood of the Dharan hostel gang, it would have been a much harder situation. And so I am proud of my limited agricultural successes, and very proud of my cross cultural communication achievements.

The main lesson which I learned in Nepal is that there are many ways to view and experience the world. Our cultural differences are cultural truths. This opened an entire world of acceptance and forgiveness to me. My experience of the world became one of wonder and exploration instead of rigid judgments. For this I will always be grateful to the Peace Corps. I may have done some good for Nepal, but Nepal gave me the ultimate gift of changing my life.

-- Stan Gray, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, December, 2018
13. Dan Karr

Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.

-- Helen Keller, “Optimism”

Thank you, Nepal! I started college as a religion major, but quickly changed to psychology. Looking back, it is interesting that the one area I specifically had no interest in pursuing was medicine. There were also the draft issues to consider. I was accepted into a joint theology-psychology graduate program with a reasonable expectation for deferment during my graduate work. Graduate school was put on hold once I was accepted into the Peace Corps program for Nepal.

I had been interested in the possibility of joining the Peace Corps since starting college and initially, my dream country had been Micronesia. By the time I applied, I fully expected to end up in Africa, and the only request I
made was to go to a non-Spanish speaking country in hopes of learning a new language. The invitation for Nepal was an exciting surprise. I too was one who ended up looking at the library world globe to find exactly where this mysterious country resided. The subsequent full field FBI investigation with dark suits and shiny black shoes was also a surprise for my small very liberal college in Florida populated by a shorts-and-shoes-optional student body.

Training was an exceptional experience: meeting and learning to work with a group of strangers comprised of “BA generalists,” a few foresters and a genuine farmer or two. We each had a unique and personal training/bonding/cultural experience.

I was fortunate enough to have a weekend in San Francisco with Jodi, fresh off the plane from Florida, directly before we left for Nepal. My Hong Kong roommate was Dave Buerge, who lost his passport. Calcutta was a hot, humid, fluorescent light haze.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

My introduction to Kathmandu was everything I had not yet realized I was hoping for. I was enthralled by the people, especially the children, the architecture and the amazing surround of the mountains. Utilizing rudimentary Nepali was excitingly frustrating but workable. And then of course there was our favorite hang-out for food and discussions: the Peace Restaurant.

![Jodi with Mr. Wong and staff of the Peace Restaurant on a return trip to Kathmandu](image)

Parwanipur agricultural station provided the genuine taraai agricultural and second-language, Maithili, experience. Overall it was not a favorite time for me, since I ended up at the mission hospital in Raxaul with pneumonia. I can still feel the daily, very dull, large-needle penicillin injections.

Finally we were assigned to our villages. The quartet consisting of Greg Estes, Jerry Maynard, Chuck Ludlam and I, along with our substantial Peace Corps trunks, made our way to Sarlahi District, a brief stay in the district center, Malangwa, and then on to our respective villages.
Rampur was my village, populated by former hill tribe natives, so I switched back to Nepali. I never counted the number of people living there but would estimate there were less than 200, maybe closer to 100 in the village. On my first return trip to Nepal some 30 years later, I had a bit of difficulty finding the village, since they had changed the name from Rampur to the original name of Ishwarpur.

This small village established an amazing legacy of influential and educated individuals. In addition to the panchaayat leaders, the village children now number an owner and director of a major Kathmandu dairy, a Director of the Nepal Rastra Bank international division, a pediatrician now practicing in Michigan, and a computer/IT specialist in California. Several grandchildren are PhD candidates in Florida. The district school headmaster, Ram Hari Joshi, became a member of Parliament and the Minister of Education and Tourism. He formally addressed the United Nations at least twice during his tenure.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

I worked at agriculture and did several experimental plots with wheat (eaten by cows), vegetables (very poor yield) and a somewhat publicized potato-growing contest with the panchaayat minister’s wife. As expected her potatoes did wonderfully and mine never really germinated. I later found Peace Corps had sent me high-altitude potatoes to grow in the taraai. And so it went for agriculture. I gravitated to a position best defined as a cultural representative from the United States to Nepal, exchanging information between cultures. By default I also became more of a village medical provider on the basis of minimal first-aid training and our Peace Corps medicine chest. This was the beginning of my transformation to medicine as a career, with full intent to bring these skills back to Nepal.

The other factor that strongly influenced my medical career decision was our collective state of health. I, along with all of us in our group, had a recurring string of fevers, diarrhea and parasites. I also was nipped by a dog in Darjeeling, resulting in the rabies series. I had a still undiagnosed disorder with high fevers, enlarged spleen and questionable blood work, which the WHO malaria expert swore was not malaria, since “there was no longer malaria in Nepal.” This resulted in a 2-3 week home stay with (Dr.) Jeff Mast and his wonderful cook. Jeff was afraid I was going to rupture my spleen, so he wanted to keep an eye on me. Listening to his stories and getting a better understanding of the medical school process prompted me to start the application process and cancel my grad school plans.

Towards the end of our first year in Nepal, my village’s attempts to find me a “good wife” appeared a bit more serious. They were relieved when I talked to them in terms of bringing someone over from the United States and getting married in the village. So that is what I did in September 1969. My girlfriend from college, Jodi, arranged to do her junior year abroad in Switzerland. She just made it so she could fly from Virginia to Switzerland by way of Nepal. We were met at the Indian border by an elephant, which we rode for three hours to my village.
A Brahmin from the hills performed a traditional Nepalese wedding ceremony, with us dressed appropriately for the occasion. The village women dressed Jodi like a hill tribe woman. Jerry and Greg attended, with Jerry serving as her family representative.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Greg Estes, I and Jerry Maynard at my wedding ceremony in Rampur,
September 1969
Group picture at our wedding, Sept. 1969 in Rampur. To Jodi’s left is Ram Hari Joshi, then headmaster, later member of parliament. To my right is Ram Ji Babu Thapa, “senator” in the old Panchayat system.
When the draft lottery occurred, Chuck was fortunate enough to get an extremely high number. Jerry, Greg and I had numbers low enough to guarantee we would be drafted. We never actually discussed what our post-Peace Corps strategies would be, so it was at least a little surprising that we all ended up performing two years of service as conscientious objectors. I was able to work in a hospital moving patients and laundry, but I did get to start the premedical courses needed for medical school.

The rest of the medical profession quest is history. I did residencies in pediatrics, ophthalmology and a fellowship in pediatric ophthalmology. I still work full-time as a medical school (Oregon Health and Science University/Casey Eye Institute) program director, seeing patients, doing surgery and teaching medical students, residents and subspecialty fellows. Just this week, however, we drafted a job description to start searching for my replacement, which will likely take a year or two. This will roughly coincide with the opening of our soon-to-be-started pediatric eye Institute.
The early goal to return to Nepal as a physician has materialized. We have formal ties with two major programs, one based in Kathmandu and the other in Lumbini. The current professor and director of the Lumbini Eye Institute is actually here working with us in Portland until mid-September. I am most proud that her associate trained with us in 2012, returning to Lumbini to begin their own pediatric ophthalmology fellowship based on our program model. They have now graduated six fellows, which essentially has doubled the number of pediatric ophthalmology specialists in Nepal.

*Return to Rampur (now renamed Ishwarpur), 1997. Seated left: Gomu Bahadur Shresta, with whose family I ate most of my meals as a PCV. Seated right: Ram Ji Babu Thapa, same person to my right in the 1969 wedding photo.*
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

I have very strong memories of all our Nepal 17 members, those who left early and those who completed the program. Unfortunately, the limited times we actually met and the distances between our villages resulted in getting to know only a few of you very well. I must say, however, I’m very proud to have been a member of this experiment in international relations and cannot imagine where I would have ended up if not for Nepal. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you at our soon-to-happen reunion.

Jodi and I today thinly disguising our Nepalese hearts in Western garb.
Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.

-- John F. Kennedy

Life seems to unfold by luck or accident as much as by intention, and it was luck that brought me to Nepal. I intended to join the Peace Corps after college—my father had seen Cairo and Teheran in his twenties, and my sister was a PC volunteer in Ecuador; now this would be my turn to see the world. I was fascinated with India, and that’s where I applied, but Peace Corps said there were no openings in India, but how about Nepal? A map showed that Nepal was close to India, so I turned down a graduate school fellowship from the University of Wisconsin and signed up for Nepal. At the time, growing up in Queens didn’t seem like an impediment to being an agricultural adviser; such is the arrogance and naiveté of a twenty-something who had never experienced adversity and for whom everything seemed possible.
Bob Lake

Peace Corps training was eye-opening. My small liberal-arts college had been a pretty insular, somewhat smug, and rather self-satisfied place unto itself; encountering a new set of people from around the country, I had to struggle to learn different ways of being and doing than what I was accustomed to. The transition from college, where I had become comfortable with how things worked, to a new set of people and expectations was challenging, and I wasn’t always fast enough to respond to these new circumstances. I often felt that things were going on around me that I wasn’t fully aware of or that I caught onto only after the possibility to respond had already passed. But I got help along the way. Bill Wallin was patient and generous and overlooked my awkwardness on many occasions. John Tegenfeldt, Bob Betrera, Bernie Gewirtz, and many others offered friendship and a willingness to not be judgmental, for which I was (and will always be) grateful. And so I made it through training and arrived in Banmara, a village of 300 families in the eastern taraai, within sight of the first foothills of the Himalayas at the northern-most edge of the Gangetic Plain. Finally, I thought, I was close to India.

But Banmara quickly became home, the place to which I wanted to return whenever I was away. Arriving on that first day, I immediately appreciated our intensive, small-group language training that made it possible for me to explain my existence, make my needs known, and eventually to become accepted as an early-morning presence in the chiyaa pasal. The most frequently asked question I was asked in those early days was: “How long will you be here?” And though I answered “dui barshaa”\(^\text{14}\) over and over, the question kept coming, until the passage of time was its own irrefutable answer. I found housing in the village Brahmin’s converted storage shed, raised up on stilts, with the family’s water buffalo tethered below. Friendships quickly followed, first with my host family and his two young daughters, who probably had given names but were only and always “Thuli\(^\text{15}\)” and “Kaanchi\(^\text{16}\).” Chandra Mani Thappa and Hari Prasad Sharma became good friends with whom I spent many evenings practicing English (them) and Nepali (me), listening to music, and just passing the time; and

\(^{14}\) Two years.

\(^{15}\) Oldest daughter.

\(^{16}\) Youngest daughter.
many others were unfailingly generous, supportive, welcoming, and inclusive.

Indispensable to making it through those two years was the two-room Peace Corps hostel in Dharan Bazaar, the market town an hour’s walk from Banmara, where those of us in the district could stay when we came in to pick up mail or restock food and kerosene. The origin of the hostel (Derea), and who maintained it or paid the rent, was always a mystery—apparently it was left over from some previous PC group and all you needed was the combination to the lock on the door. The place offered bedbugs, a place to sleep, and meals at the nearby Pardesi Hotel run by K.B. Gurung, a retired Gurkha, and his wife that offered momos and thukpa and the signature menu item called “meat and eggs”—a welcome respite from daily daal bhaat. Most importantly, it was a chance to meet whoever else came into Dharan that day. And here I lucked out again because it was a fantastic group: John Scholz, who rode in on his horse; Gary Ender, always laid-back, unflappable, no-nonsense, dependable; Buck Trawicky, who had a tool or gadget in his rucksack for any eventuality; Bernie Gewirtz, mellow and good-natured, the least prone-to-drama person I’ve ever known; and Stan Gray, who had apparently read every book ever written and could fill hours with literary commentary laced with wit and intelligence. This was my
second family in Nepal (the owner of the water buffalo was my first) and was as much a treasured part of my Nepal experience as was living in Banmara.

The agricultural-adviser thing, however, was conspicuously unsuccessful. My demonstration plots produced abundant foliage but very little harvestable grain, most likely due to my over-application of fertilizer on the grounds that, if a moderate dose of fertilizer would increase yields, then more fertilizer would produce even higher yields. Here was where growing up in Queens meant that there was a lot I didn’t know about agriculture, and the idea that there was anything I could teach life-long farmers about farming revealed itself as patently absurd. It was a lesson in avoiding the arrogance of “expertise,” a lesson that I have tried to remember and act on throughout my professional life. It was only later, on reflection, that I realized that my ignorance caused my partners to lose both food and income on failed demonstration plots, yet not a single person complained, got angry, or demanded compensation—an indication of how classy, honorable, and forgiving my Nepali friends truly were.

But there were larger problems as well. The so-called Green Revolution, of which I had suddenly and unwittingly become a part, was misplaced and misdirected in that corner of the taraai. The introduction of seed and fertilizer may have been intended to increase yields but it also had unintended effects, or would have, had I been more “successful.” Integrating subsistence farmers into the cash economy—euphemistically called “modernization”—would change social relations in the village and could potentially destroy traditional customs. Had I been a more competent
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

proponent of the Green Revolution, I might have been responsible for changing far more than the variety of rice, wheat or corn being grown in Banmara, but what higher power had authorized me to change lives in such unknowable ways? Furthermore, it was only with the distance of space and time that I have been able to recognize, and acknowledge, that I was responsible for spreading fertilizer and insecticide on plots of pristine land where that had never been done before in the entire history of the planet. In retrospect, it’s interesting (to me) that none of this was ever discussed in our PC training, at least not to my recollection. We had outstanding language instruction, we learned about Nepali traditions and culture, we heard lectures on plant biology, and we played at planting rice in Davis and Parwanipur—but the larger “development” project into which we were recruited was never discussed. “Higher yields” provided their own unarguable justification, so what was there to discuss? But how was it decided, and by whom, for example, to translate insecticide as “aushadhi” (medicine) rather than, say, poison?

The long months between planting and harvesting provided ample time for travel, and this meant that I could finally get to India. And here again I was in luck, because living in Nepal provided a level of cultural competency and an ability to navigate that I could never have attained as a tourist. Language proficiency helped enormously, and Nepali was close enough to Hindi that it opened many doors. I had clearly come a long way from that first bewildering overnight in Calcutta to criss-crossing the sub-continent on half-price student tickets on 3rd class Indian rail. A few things stand out: the Taj Mahal by moonlight; buying fistfuls of bangles under the arch in Hyderabad; listening mesmerized to an all-day, open-air, live music performance in Benares; reading Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha while lying on a rope bed in sweltering heat in Delhi with a ceiling fan turning slowly overhead; eating daal bhaat on a banana leaf at a communal table somewhere in the south while waiting for the ferry to (what was still called) Ceylon; walking the sun-drenched beach at Goa one Christmas and attending a Christmas Eve church service in snowy Darjeeling the following year; hours spent in packed railcars sharing food and small talk with whoever was there. But splendid and awesome as all this was, returning to Nepal meant coming home. It meant going from the harried crowds and frenzied pace of urban India to the ineffable peace and indescribable beauty
of Nepal. It meant that instead of going to Nepal to be close to India, I could travel in India and still come home to Nepal.

Another part of the time spent waiting for the harvests that never came could be spent experiencing parts of Nepal beyond Banmara. The trek from Pokhara to Jomsom with Gary Ender, along the river valley behind Annapurna, was awesome and awe-inspiring. Another trek with Gary north of Dhankuta was shorter but no less spectacular. A few other solo treks provided welcome opportunities to test myself, learn self-sufficiency, and push my limits. Other unforgettable experiences included riding atop the cargo trucks from Birgunj to Kathmandu and that moment when the truck topped a rise and you got your first glimpse of the snow-covered peaks in the distance; or waking up before dawn to watch the sun rise over the mountains, spreading golden light over the valley below; or the PC office in Kathmandu, where I learned that my high draft number meant that I probably wouldn’t be drafted to do my alternative service as a CO obtained by virtue of my membership in a Quaker meeting in Queens.

When my two years were finally up, I gave away most of my belongings and traveled west through Rawalpindi to Kabul and Kandihar, then north through Shiraz, Isfahan, and Teheran, across the Caspian Sea to Baku in Azerbaijan, and then by Aeroflot to Moscow and Leningrad, and eventually through Finland to Trondheim and Bergen in Norway. At the youth hostel in Bergen, I found a telegram from my parents with news (more luck!) that a graduate fellowship had become available at the University of Chicago and the next day I found myself on an SAS flight full of American tourists headed to New York City. After months of traveling through South Asia, the Greyhound bus that I took from New York to Chicago seemed like ultimate luxury.

My life since Nepal has continued to be a matter of luck and accident. A visit to the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University, in search of data for my doctoral dissertation, turned up no data but instead the offer of a job, and the semester that is about to begin as I write this marks my 44th year of teaching in the urban planning and public policy program at Rutgers. This has been a life-long opportunity to teach, conduct research, and write about issues of social justice, discrimination, inequality, and exploitation, and to mentor successive cohorts of doctoral students whose work inspires me every day and gives me hope that the future will be better than the past. It was in graduate school in Chicago where I met my
wife, Carol, who recently marked her twentieth year as executive director of a non-profit that builds permanent housing for domestic violence survivors in NYC. My daughter, Julia, works as a public-interest housing attorney doing anti-eviction advocacy in the Bronx. A friend once told me that I was the only person he knew who had only one wife and one job but I can’t imagine that it could have been any other way.

Two years in Nepal changed me in profound and enduring ways. I gained confidence and competence and, without doubt, came out a better person than I had been going in. Sometime at the beginning of my second year in Banmara, I was visited by an in-coming PC volunteer who had been assigned to spend a couple of days with me as part of his in-country training. As we watched the sun setting behind the hills that evening, he expressed his concern that two years in Nepal would cause him to change into a different person than who he already was: if he changed, he feared, his fiancé in California might no longer love him, and the career track he was on might begin to seem less appealing. “Do you think I’ll change,” he asked me nervously, “if I spend two years in Nepal?” “Without a doubt,” I answered, “I think that’s the point.”
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report
Maybe part of maturity is being able to ... savor joy of the fleeting moment in the shadow of inevitable sorrow.

-- Roger Leo, on the death of friends

Roger Leo of Princeton, MA, a writer and photographer whose journalism career took him from Alaska’s Arctic coast to Iraq’s deadly triangle, died July 25, 2011 by suicide. He was 64.

A retired columnist and editor at the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, Mr. Leo was perhaps best known to readers for his long-running columns on skiing and the outdoors, a smorgasbord of news, advice and conversational reflections on man’s place in nature, such as this 2005 account of canoeing the Tully River: “Particularly early or late in the day, when the wind is still and the light is rich, the process of paddling can approach a form of meditation,” Mr. Leo wrote, “with each stroke followed by a pause as drops of water fall from the raised paddle blade onto the river’s luminous surface, and ripples from the passage of the boat spread outward in perfect symmetry.”
Roger Leo

Roger Alan Leo was born July 4, 1947, in New York, NY, the third child of Elinore Leo, a homemaker, and Arnold Leo, a Madison Avenue ad man. In 1956, Arnold Leo cast 9-year old Roger as a Campbell’s soup kid. But it was behind the lens that Mr. Leo discovered his calling.

Starting with a Kodak Brownie camera, Mr. Leo’s parents indulged his early passion for photography. In 1960, Mr. Leo brought his cameras to Greece, where he attended the American School in Athens. Although he returned to the United States for college, his years abroad sparked a lifelong passion for global adventure.

After graduating from Brown University in 1968, Mr. Leo enrolled in the Peace Corps, which dispatched him to Nepal as a foot soldier of the Green Revolution. It was there that Mr. Leo met fellow corps member Beverly Spiller. Together, they traveled overland across South Asia and Europe, pausing in Switzerland to marry. They would have two sons before divorcing in 1981. A second marriage also ended in divorce.

In 1971, Mr. Leo inquired at the Evening Gazette about openings for a photographer. There was a position, he learned, but it would also involve some writing. “I asked how much writing,” he later recounted. “The answer was: About 80 percent.”

So began a news career that would take Mr. Leo from reporter and photographer to regional bureau chief, acting city editor and editorial writer, where he provided a liberal counterpoint within the conservative editorial board. He gained recognition for his environmental reporting, which included an investigation of mercury levels in Quabbin Reservoir fish that spurred hasty health warnings from the state.

After retiring from the Telegram in 2005, Mr. Leo founded the ski news site Leopard Report and contributed to several other publications, including On the Snow, where he served as Executive Editor. He also served as President of the Princeton Land Trust.

In essays, photographs and film, Mr. Leo documented the impact of oil exploration on the wildlife of Alaska’s coastal plain. That experience contributed to his work at Clark University’s continuing and professional education program, where he taught journalism and environmental studies.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

He also traveled to Iraq in 2004 and 2005 and to Afghanistan in 2005 and 2008, where he documented military and relief operations. A blog, Men at War, detailed his deep admiration for the servicemen and women he met and, later, his growing disillusion with the two wars.

In one of the blog’s last entries, Mr. Leo reflected on the deaths of friends in uniform, and invoked the advice of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy to move forward, fold the death into ourselves, and use the experience to better appreciate life. “Maybe part of maturity is being able to do that,” Mr. Leo wrote, “to savor joy of the fleeting moment in the shadow of inevitable sorrow.”

Mr. Leo is survived by two sons: Alan of Melrose and Ben of Raleigh, NC; brother, Arnold of East Hampton, NY; sister, Christine Roussel of New York and two grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Princeton Land Trust.

Roger Leo Guest Book | View 2 of 17 Entries:

"...back in 1970 on a cold winter morning in New York City Roger Leo gave me shelter. I was just a kid with troubles. I knocked on the door looking for his brother to let me crash there for a bit. His brother..." - Susan Meyers

"My deepest condolences to the Leo family. Roger was a school chum at the American Academy in Athens, Greece and we kept in touch via Facebook. How wonderful and very special it was to find him and..." – Anonymous
16. Chuck Ludlam

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.

– Mahatma Gandhi

In terms of what my Nepal service meant to me, the list of influences and benefits is very, very long. Most important it led me to Paula and our second-time service in Senegal, and then our nine-year fight for Peace Corps reform. Aside from that, my Peace Corps service toughened me and gave me a vivid imagination and fascination with the world.

In terms of Paula, she has been a fabulous wife and life partner. We’ve been together 30 years, and our relationship has only grown stronger and stronger. I admire her tremendously. I love her community spirit. She’s compassionate, adventuresome, and an activist.

In terms of toughening, Peace Corps service is tough. I had many days of violent vomiting in Nepal. I had fevers of 104 for three days once and four days another time. I had spider bites—my legs swelled to double size. I killed perhaps 200 rats in my small room. I went months at a time without any mail or contact with my family or friends at home. Jerry, Dan and Greg were
the nearest volunteers, but I rarely saw them. I had some horrible experiences on the Sitamarhi-Roxaul train and in Birgunj. Mosquitoes and fleas galore. I had no outhouse; where I shat depended on what was growing in the fields. I suffered on two treks in the Himalayas. I had a site that was totally unprepared for development and got next to nothing done to spread the new varieties of rice, wheat and corn. Mostly I lived with Tharus who were even more unprepared for development than the Nepalis and Madhesis in Haripur. But I loved the people in Haripur and have kept in touch with many of them since 1970. Loved our reunion with them in 1998 when Paula and I returned.

Senegal was tough because of my horrible conflicts with the Peace Corps. Our Country Director targeted me. We were threatened by Peace Corps Washington. We didn’t blink. My 40-year political career led me into innumerable rough fights. Brutal fights. Not just in defending the biotech industry. In all of these, the toughness I gained from Peace Corps Nepal was crucial. I could always say, “Nothing that is happening to me now is as tough as my experiences in Nepal.”

My public service career was interrupted multiple times: in 1978 my Senate boss retired and I was out of a job; in 1980 I was almost fired from my position in the Carter White House; he got beat by Reagan in 1980 and I was out of a job; in 1984 my House boss died and I was out of a job; and in 2000 I was fired from my biotech lobbyist job and was out of a job. In all these cases, I landed well, stayed in public service and thrived. Never cracked under the strain.

Outside of work, I had some tough times with relationships. In 1978 my wife of eight years ran off with another guy. In 1987, my girlfriend of eight years did the same. In both cases, I crashed but found I could survive and thrive. I found Paula.

In terms of my family, I was alienated from them until my parents died in 2003 and 2007. The tension in the family was brutal and continuous. I stood my ground and found ways to secure the support I needed from friends. I found ways to become a healthy person despite the extreme dysfunction of my parents.

In terms of my imagination and fascination, I loved the adventures in the Himalayas and also a month vacation spent in Afghanistan. Those iconic
adventures have led to a lifetime of adventure travel – 85 countries. Trekking, sea kayaking, snorkeling, and off-road driving all over the world. I am still living on the edge; am off to the Northwest Passage for 34 days this August. Off again to Patagonia this winter and to Papua New Guinea next year. Off to Namibia for elephant research and the NE Passage (north of Siberia) last summer. Looking into trips to Nubia, India (Tibetan regions), and Raja Ampat (for more snorkeling). I have often sought out aboriginal peoples. I have sought out remote and desolate places – the Danakil Depression in Ethiopia and the Sahara in Chad.

So, that’s the bottom line, and here is the story: Start with Nepal. The context for my service in Nepal is that I’d led the antiwar movement at Stanford from 1965-1967. I was committed to not serve in Vietnam. Friends of mine refused induction. I organized the first protest at a graduation ceremony in Stanford’s history (1967), which horrified my family.

During the summer of 1967, before I started law school at the University of Michigan, I was an intern on Capitol Hill (again) and one of my roommates was a close friend of Al Lowenstein, who recruited McCarthy to run. I witnessed the recruitment and then had a role in Johnson’s cancelling a reception for the DC interns that summer. We were going to stage a Vietnam protest from the south lawn of the White House.

Michigan was a poor fit, with its heavy emphasis on commercial law when I was headed into public policy. The law school was ultra-conservative, had nothing of the vibrant counter-culture life I’d experienced at Stanford. I had to wear a coat and tie to dinners. During that first year I went “clean for Gene” and worked for McCarthy in primaries in Nebraska and Wisconsin. I was in Milwaukee when Lyndon Johnson dropped out; all of us on the campaign felt as if we’d forced him out.

In February, 1968, the US government abolished graduate deferments and I reapplied to join the Peace Corps. I’d been accepted in 1967 (to go to Tonga), but had deferred to attend law school. Just before I reapplied in 1968, I met a woman in the Michigan library who had been in training for Nepal. She’d been rejected but she advised me that the best country in the world for the Peace Corps was Nepal. So I told the Peace Corps I would only go to Nepal. A bluff. But I was accepted to go to Nepal.
I requested a draft deferment to serve in Nepal. My local draft board—run by the John Birch Society in my hometown—unanimously denied my request. Noting that I’d be 25½ at the end of my Nepal service, they could see that my application was, in effect, for an exemption, not just a deferment. My California state draft board did also. Unanimous. This meant that I had no right for a national appeal. However, the Peace Corps was regularly petitioning General Hershey (who headed the Selective Service) to take Peace Corps trainees to the national appeal.

Meanwhile, I’d been working full time on the McCarthy campaign in California. I was in LA when Robert Kennedy was assassinated. I collapsed. I camped on San Gregorio Beach near Stanford for a week trying to collect myself.

Then off to Davis, which I loved. I found the interviews by the psychiatrists entertaining. And probably useless as a part of the selection process. I survived the cull of trainees. In fact, it was quite common then for the Peace Corps to wash out lots of volunteers in training.

When I finished Peace Corps Nepal training, I still did not have my deferment. Some in the Peace Corps doubted that I’d be granted a deferment and feared their investment in me would be wasted. But they took the risk and sent me to Nepal. I got my deferment six months later. If I had not received a deferment, I’d have probably headed for Canada and exile. I went to Nepal on the verge of emotional collapse. I’d never been angrier or more confused. Totally alienated politically.

I also loved the training in Parwanipur, just north of Birgunj. I remember well my village visit near Janakpur. The volunteer there gave me good advice, “Never walk so fast that you break out into a sweat.” I remember well Dave Buerge’s expurgating the ghosts in a nearby village.

The trip to Haripur, my site in Sarlahi District, was also memorable. Dan, Greg, Jerry and I took the narrow gauge train from Raxaul to Sitamarhi (both Bihar), across the border from Malangwa, district capital of Sarlahi. The train was a harsh experience. But the East-West road did not connect through to Sarlahi so traveling via India by rail was our only route. From Malangwa, I walked to Haripur – maybe 15 miles. My trunk came along by bullock cart. The first three nights in Haripur I was besieged with rats. One
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

got stuck in my underwear. But I loved my two years in Haripur and made dear, life-long friends there.

I needed the two years in Nepal to calm down. It was great that I was so isolated. That helped me heal from the tumult of the ‘60s. I came out of the Peace Corps much less radical than when I went in, the opposite of many other Volunteers. By the end of my service in 1970, I was ready to go back to law school and start a career in public policy.

The Peace Corps staff in Nepal did the best they could to support us. Our ag program had a spectacular product to sell. The IRRI and Mexican seeds. And mid-way through our service we organized a conference to reform training. There was no doubt that the staff supported us and wanted us to succeed.

By the way, my wife, Paula Hirschoff, and I returned to Nepal and Haripur in 1998 for a six-week trip that was one of the most emotional experiences of my life. Everyone was growing bikaash rice, wheat and corn. I had kept track of four families for 28 years and they all greeted us like royalty. I donated funds so that they could double the size of the village high school. I’m still in touch with these friends in Nepal.

In 1970 I returned home from Nepal. I was in deep culture shock for a year. But I returned to law school, gutted it through, and graduated in 1972. Then I returned to Washington, D.C. where I’d had two internships on Capitol Hill (through a Stanford program) in 1965 and 1967. That led to a career in public policy that lasted until 2005. A fabulously fun and productive career. Fit my interests and talents very well.

In 2005 I retired from Capitol Hill 40 years and eight days after my first day on Capitol Hill. The highlight was eight years when I served as the principal lobbyist for the entire biotechnology industry (1,000 companies). Best client in Washington.

Paula and Senegal Service: In 1988 I’d met Paula at a Peace Corps function in the Capitol Rotunda commemorating the assassination of President Kennedy. She had been a Volunteer in Kenya (1968-1970). She had a fabulous site and great accomplishments. We had many RPCV friends and shared many values. We got married in 1992. We’ve organized our neighborhood into the Springland Farm Community, just what you’d expect
from RPCVs. We have also traveled widely and were both heavily involved in community service. We were and are active with RPCVs from Kenya and Nepal.

I left the Hill in 2005 because Paula suggested that we serve again in the Peace Corps. Wow. What a great idea. It had never occurred to me, but it was a long-time thought of Paula that she’d serve three times, early, middle and late. Brilliant thinking. I asked, “Can I serve with you.” She agreed, and that was it, an agreement. Three sentences. Deal. This was in 2014, and it took us a couple of years to survive the onerous selection process, tie up our US affairs, and head off for training. So, I retired in 2005 at age 60. I gave an oral history of my career with the Senate Historian, mostly aimed at deciding if I had accomplished enough in my public policy career to justify retiring. I concluded that I had.

In terms of rejoining the Peace Corps, it was a pain to get through the Peace Corps selection process. I’d received a heart stent in 2004 and had to convince the Peace Corps that I was fit to serve. We got assigned to Senegal. We loved our second-time service and have many dear friends in our village, Guinguinéo. Just as we have a thousand stories about our previous service in Nepal and Kenya, we have a thousand about our service in Senegal. Serving together was a dream.

By the way, we returned to Senegal in 2017, and it was another very emotional trip. Paula had returned to her site in Kenya in 1990, and that was a very emotional visit. We are blessed to have had three return trips to our Peace Corps sites.

Peace Corps Reform: During our service in Senegal, we were shocked to see the pervasive mismanagement of the Peace Corps. The agency was rife with condescension, bureaucracy and unprofessional conduct. The Peace Corps had not made much progress in working out what an inexperienced young American could do as an agent of development. The highest priority seemed to be to keep the volunteers from embarrassing the administrators. Volunteers (and staff) had no whistle-blower rights and would be dismissed out of hand if they criticized the Peace Corps. The agency had no tolerance for dissent.

We quickly became targets in Senegal. Indeed, the Country Director had seen a Washington Post article about my retirement and said, “He’s going to
be nothing but trouble, and we’re going to sit on him as soon as he arrives."
I was told this by the training staff the day I arrived! We had clout as
RPCVs, and we had strong opinions about how the Peace Corps had
debated over the years. On several occasions the Senegal Country
Director—nearly a sociopath—tried to terminate our service. We were just too
tough for him to pull that off.

Then we upped the ante on Peace Corps reform. I’d served for several
decades in the Senate and knew the staff of the Senate Peace Corps
Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee. They told me that they’d
be writing a Peace Corps bill. I offered to draft it (as I knew how to do from
my career on the Hill). My draft became the Peace Corps Volunteer
Empowerment Act (2007) introduced by Senator Dodd, an RPCV. It was all
about empowering Volunteers to fight for better treatment from the Peace
Corps bureaucrats. Giving them whistle-blower rights was key.

Then the Subcommittee staff invited us to fly in to testify on behalf of the
8,000 Volunteers at a hearing. The Peace Corps had found out that I’d
drafted the reform bill and hated the idea of empowering Volunteers. It did
everything it could to prevent us from appearing. Current Volunteers
testifying against management—it was unthinkable given the Kennedy Peace
Corps myth. The agency threatened to terminate our service if we testified. I
said, “We’ve been formally invited to testify, and if you terminate us, you’ll
be held in contempt of the Senate for obstructing a hearing.” The Peace
Corps blinked. So we flew to Washington, at our own expense, and testified
about much needed reforms. Needless to say the Peace Corps was opposed
to our testimony and the idea of empowering the Volunteers.

Meanwhile in Senegal, we tried to reform the language training and institute
a beekeeping program. The Country Director ignored us. Training in Senegal
was of very low quality. Three of the four programs in Senegal were poorly
managed. Early quit rates were high and morale, low. One APCD was
sexually harassing women Volunteers. Another was lazy and only wanted to
play baseball in Dakar. A third was wedded to a millet seed program that
was a 100% failure.

At the end of our service, we blocked the Country Director from getting an
extension. We connected with the incoming Country Director, and I gave
him a 45-page dossier on how to resurrect the program. He loved it and
implemented it. He fired two APCDs, reformed training, set up much higher expectations for Volunteers for their projects, funded their demonstrations, stopped the bed-checking mentality, welcomed reform proposals, etc. A total transformation.

We completed our service in Senegal in 2007. At our close of service conference, I organized our Senegal group to hold reunions and we’ve had two since we left Senegal. A third is scheduled. On our way home we traveled to Madagascar, Kenya and Ethiopia. We’d traveled to Mauritania, Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso during our service. The outgoing CD had wired the Peace Corps in Madagascar to warn the Volunteers there not to meet with us. He also put in a formal request that RPCVs never again be posted to Senegal.

Upon returning home, I was in line to be the National Security Council lead on bioterrorism and infectious disease. I was in deep culture shock, but I was willing to return to public service. Sadly and astonishingly, President Obama decided that this policy portfolio was not important, so he abolished the position for which I was applying. So that was it, I was fully and finally retired. This was May of 2009.

We immediately renewed our call for fundamental Peace Corps reform. Over the next seven years we campaigned, together and as a team, for fundamental Peace Corps reform. There are hundreds of chapters in this fight. It was basically non-stop. Constant. Intense. And ugly.

We provided the financial support—and much of the content—for a Peace Corps reform website. We filed many Freedom of Information Act requests for information about Peace Corps performance and received files that revealed the lies Peace Corps was telling. We posted 20 YouTube videos on our critique of the Peace Corps. We were relentless.

We found out that the Peace Corps was lying about the Early Quit rate, lying to OMB and the Congress. The true rate was 35%, but they said it was 8-9%. We found out they were lying about the surplus of applications. They said there was a huge surplus when, in fact, they were struggling to meet quota and just fill the slots. We found out they were lying about the campaign to double the number of volunteers in the field and about countries lining up to get volunteers. There were none.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

The agency was rotten to the core. And extremely defensive. They hated critics. The iconic reputation of the Peace Corps had to be protected, even with lies. The press didn’t investigate the Peace Corps, nor did the Hill. And the RPCVs had no interest in tarnishing the Peace Corps reputation. The Peace Corps was being ruined by its friends, who didn’t hold it accountable.

What outraged us was that the Peace Corps was hurting young, idealistic volunteers. It wasn’t hurting us. The Volunteers were being hurt in their first job, when they were vulnerable. I’d spent 40 years mentoring Stanford students; mentoring students was a huge priority of mine. And we were serving as mentors of the young Volunteers.

We felt that only we were in a position to fight for them. The young Volunteers often quit early, or were sent home, blamed themselves, and were hurt. But we had the resources to thrive. We could self-fund our projects. We had an internet connection (very expensive). We had a lifetime of experience and the confidence that goes with that. We were RPCVs. When the young Volunteers finished their service, they were busy with the next stages in their lives. Not able to devote themselves to fighting for reform. We had the time and because of our years in government, we knew how to fight. The Peace Corps couldn’t retaliate against us. So it was our fight to fight…on behalf of the young Volunteers. And we fought tenaciously. Year after year. Alone.

I secured enactment of one law and one regulation helpful to older Volunteers. The law waived a provision of the tax laws regarding home owner sales. The regulation permitted Civil Service retirees to suspend their health care coverage during Peace Corps service and to reinstate it afterwards (avoiding having to keep it going during Peace Corps service, a waste of money). The Peace Corps did nothing to help me get this done.

I got elected to the Board of the National Peace Corps Association and became the leading gadfly against its President, Kevin Quigley. He’d toadied up the Peace Corps and opposed the 2007 Dodd bill and was the leading champion for doubling the Peace Corps. He was also looting NPCA. He got the Board to eject me, first time that had ever happened.
We published a huge report in 2009 outlining 20 major reforms. It was widely disseminated. It included rankings of the countries in the annual Volunteer survey. This enraged the Country Directors whose countries were poorly ranked. We wanted applicants to see the rankings so they’d put market pressure on the poorly ranked countries to reform. But the report was ignored by the Peace Corps. Aaron Williams, Obama’s first Peace Corps Director, was a total bust on reform.

One of our reforms was to experiment with a decentralized Peace Corps. Funding for every domestic non-entitlement program is being crushed by cash flow shortfalls in Medicare and Social Security (and spending on Medicaid), so the Peace Corps simply has to reduce its high cost per Volunteer (something like $50,000 per year per Volunteer). In 2009, I secured inclusion in the Kennedy Serve Act a title authorizing an AmeriCorps-like program run though NGOs. I’ve hyped it with the Peace Corps multiple times, so far to no effect.

Backing up a bit, Dodd did not press for our bill in 2007, and it died. We didn’t get whistle-blower rights for Volunteers or staff. In early 2009 we became aware of the awful case of Kate Puzey, who was a whistle-blower who was murdered by Peace Corps staff in Benin in early 2009. She had no whistle-blower rights; her complaint against Peace Corps staff (who were raping students in her school) was leaked to the perpetrators, and they murdered her. Slit her throat. Nothing about this surprised us given the darkness we’d seen in the agency. If we’d won whistle-blower rights for Volunteers in 2007, perhaps Kate would be alive today. The Peace Corps arrogance killed her. We fought to publicize this incident, and this led to enactment of the Kate Puzey Act.

17 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/538124b8e4b0bc0d91a55152/t/5742198562cd9402347055b1/1463949702936/LudlamHirschoffPeaceCorpsReformPlanJuly2009.pdf
When Obama proposed to double the size of the Peace Corps, we were the leading opponents. We thought doubling would only aggravate the horrific mismanagement. We were also the lead opponents to a Peace Corps monument on the Mall. We thought if the Peace Corps got a monument, that would kill any effort at reform. We also sued the Peace Corps in Federal District court—a long story. We won. This got us all the data we needed to publicize annual rankings of the countries to give to applicants (who then had the right to choose their country). In the meantime, we also secured whistle-blower rights for both Volunteers and staff.

In 2015 we established a close collaboration with Carrie Hessler-Radelet, the Peace Corps Director. In 2016 she agreed to implement all of the reforms we’d championed. To publish the rankings. To stop lying about the Early Quit rate and publish rankings of the EQ rates country-by-country. Under Carrie the Peace Corps had already reformed the selection process; they did this because they were not even meeting filling the training slots. But it spurred applications so that they finally had a surplus of applications, a big surplus. (Carrie said to us that the problem was that the Peace Corps didn’t know how to determine which of the applicants would
make the best Volunteers.) We wanted to give the applicants the rankings so they could be selective. And put pressure on the poorly ranked countries. With this agreement, in 2016 we could finally retire as critics of the Peace Corps.

The fight for reform took nine years, it was bitter, and we lost many friends during the process. We were considered as pariahs, traitors. In the end, we accomplished a great deal and are proud of our fight. We loved the agency enough to fight to reform it. We didn’t criticize for its own sake; we were always focused on reform.

Conclusion

Over 50 years Paula’s and my lives have been dominated and framed by our Peace Corps service and love of the Peace Corps. 1967-2016. Nearly fifty years. Both me and Paula. Many, many chapters. It’s an overarching theme, and whole value system. It was seminal in so many ways as I have fashioned my life.

We thrived in our service in Nepal and Kenya. We met through the Peace Corps. Regina Mellon and I established Friends of Nepal, and Paula was active with Friends of Kenya. I’ve worked hard to keep Nepal 17 together and, with Sue and now Gary, have helped organize reunions. Paula and I served again and loved serving together. We fought tenaciously and resourcefully for reform. We have many RPCV friends. We cherish our connections to Nepal, Kenya and Senegal. We love our association with the Peace Corps and are very proud to think of ourselves as RPCVs.

So I am thankful to Ron for publishing his thoughts on what Nepal meant to him. And for Gil for doing the same. And to all those who followed. We’re all old enough to be reflecting. We might have 10-20 more years left to live. But not much more than that. It’s time to sum it up, pull the threads together and become more and more grateful.

I couldn’t be more grateful for Peace Corps Nepal. A fabulous place to serve and grow. It’s led to so many positive and sometimes even glorious chapters in my life. Especially Paula. And I have gratitude for the terrific members of our Nepal 17 group. I admire each of you tremendously. I am fond of you. I love seeing you at reunions, and I feel deeply that we share so much history and so many values. You’re a fabulous community, and we look forward to keeping track of you over the years. Love to you all. Thanks. Comments are
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

welcome on my story and more than that, I hope others of you will write up your stories. It’s time to reflect!
17. Paul Madnick

Fortune does not change men, it unmasks them.

-- Madame Necker (Suzanne Curchod)

It seems odd to me that now, when “meaning” and “memories” are far less precise than when I was young, that my impressions of, and the lessons I learned from, my time in Nepal remain clear and unchanging, if deepened.

Our cohort of volunteers, I’ve always maintained, was the brightest, nicest, most amiable, interesting and amusing bunch of young white men (no offense Regina and Sue) I had and have ever known. Educated do-gooders would seem to share certain characteristics. Except geographically, it was not a shining example of diversity, but, outside of the military, there are few examples of diversity, then or now. Training in Davis, the flight to Asia and more training in Parwanipur, which could have been tedious and stressful, was actually festive. It was 1968. We were young.

The real world of Nepal began. We sampled the first of many close encounters with new microbiomes. Then the village visit. Hours by train
across northern India, back into Nepal, switch to a bicycle, trying to ride between rice paddies for hours under what felt like a grueling sun (even though it was the fall and I was yet to know what a grueling sun would be). I only fell off the bandh once, pinned by the bike under the water) and arriving, sporting my first leeches, to “the village,” where I was greeted, after stripping off my soaking shirt and exposing my oh-so-white skin and sun-burned face and head, with a children’s chorus of “Raato, Seto. Raato, Seto”. The village food vied with Parwanipur cuisine. I began composing my resignation.

I stayed, buoyed by the spirit of my comrades, and went on to my assigned village, Dhaijan in Jhapa jilla. Within three months I learned the great lesson of my Peace Corps experience. The people of Dhaijan, a collection of different ethnic groups with varying levels of tolerance for each other, treated me, the first Western, white person they had known, or even seen, with kindness, (I’m sure we all recall the 180-degree stare, sometimes in complete, dumbstruck silence but often the women laughing, the children shouting, the toddlers crying, the dogs barking) if also with wariness. They were clearly as smart as I. As decent as I. But I was rich, privileged, and powerful (in their eyes).

I had done nothing to earn this status. I was just lucky. Lucky to be born white, male, of reasonably good health and intelligence, to middle-class parents in North America after World War II. Essentially a Roman citizen. Sheer luck. This realization tempered any sense of entitlement I may have had and has informed my subsequent experiences. Karma, beyond the consequences of one’s own actions, is something I have never accepted. My own luck has varied greatly over the years but that lesson, “La Forza del Destino,” which was again made emphatic and crystal-clear to me in the draft lottery the very next year, has been only reinforced since then.

It was early evening, and I was out on a bluff in the exposed bed of the Mechi River watching another spectacular sunset, as was my custom, unwinding, though from what I couldn’t say. Three or four of the village kids, ages 9 to 12, came by to join me, and we watched the changing sky in silence. When the show was about over, one of them said he was hungry and asked if anyone had anything to eat. Others were also “peckish,” but no one had anything. The village was only a few minutes away, but we didn’t want to leave yet. The hungriest climbed up a spindly tree growing from the bluff, about 20, 25 feet to a nest, grabbed the 4 tiny birds, came down, built
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

a fire, cut off their heads, threw them in the fire, and handed out the snacks. Horrified, I began to protest and admonish him for killing these tiny, innocent birds. He gave me one of those looks, a “sahib” moment look, a look that spoke to my pathetic privilege and ignorance. “We’re hungry. This is food. We’re going to eat this food.” I nodded.

Saran was a mature, decent, curious, quick-witted boy about 12 years old. He liked to practice what English he knew (though he and his friends would mock me when I would speak English with Dave Buerge and Ben Rogers. They said we sounded like dogs barking. You’d think they were ancient Greeks referring to barbarians.). Very soon after teaching him to play chess, he was beating me regularly. One day I asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. Again, I got that “sahib” look. “What I want to be? When I grow up? A peasant (we’ll say “farmer”), like my father (who ran a tiny dokaan on the “strip” and had a small plot of land). What else could I be?” The absurdity of my question, my premise that he had a choice almost amused him. But not quite. I knew he would have loved to have had a choice. I was too obtuse, too immature, self-centered and short-sighted to realize I could have given him one. I could, I should, have offered to pay his school fees at the next level. It’s really my only lasting regret.

I was 4 or 5 hours from Dhaijan, returning from a trip to Siliguri (right near, you know, Naxalbari) for a cold beer and was loaded with goodies and supplies. It had rained, and the stream I had hopped over on my way to Siliguri was now waist deep, 30 feet wide and running fast. There was an empty shed nearby, and I tried to calculate if I could safely cross the water, or if I should spend the night in the shed and hope the rain would not resume. It looked more like a swift ride to the Bay of Bengal. Two young guys, in their 20s, came by headed in another direction. They saw me eyeing the river (and cautiously eyeing them) and asked me what my story was. I explained I’d like to cross and get back to my home before nightfall. No way could I do that by myself, they said, but if we linked arms, they could get me across. “But you’re not going that way”, I replied. They just shrugged, each grabbing an arm and, with difficulty, proceeded to get me, head above the water and my supplies over their heads, across. Then they turned around, re-forded the river and went on their way.

18 Shop or store.
Paul Madnick

This was a lasting lesson to me of the potential decency of humans, of their capacity to help complete and utterly foreign strangers. Afterwards, in Turkish snowstorms, in the Iranian desert, when down and out in southern Thailand, I have experienced this over again. Now, when I increasingly question the judgement and basic decency of so many of my own fellow citizens, of my own neighbors, who don’t bat an eye at separating children from their parents, at putting children in caged detention and support a government that “didn’t think people would mind,” who remain wedded to a neoliberal plutocracy indifferent to suffering and survival, who shrug at endless war, I call upon these memories to temper my opinion of human nature.

In the fall and winter of 1972-1973, I returned to visit Dhaijan during a journey to the East. I was staying with my closest friend, Chudda Muree Sitola and his family, (wife and three children). An intelligent, pensive, restrained man, he’d built a new wooden house (two stories) and seemed to be thriving. Must’ve been that wheat we’d introduced.

One evening we were relaxing on an upstairs veranda, smoking, listening to the radio I’d given him when I had stopped listening to it after my first year in country. The one I’d picked up in Japan en route to Nepal in 1968. The news came on and he started shaking his head. It was a report of the Christmas bombing of Vietnam. He said he was concerned, afraid the United States would bomb Nepal. “That’s ridiculous,” I said and went on about the history of the Indo-Chinese wars, Nepal’s remote location, American governmental anti-communist antipathy, domino theory fears, etc.

He just looked at me, almost a “sahib” look, and said “The Vietnamese are peasants, and they grow rice just like us, right? They are far away from the United States, like Nepal, right? They don’t have any missiles or real weapons that can threaten the United States, like Nepal, right? They’ve never attacked the United States, like Nepal, right?”

What we both knew but he left unmentioned was that Jhapa was considered a “red” district and that Naxalbari was not far away.

I closed my opened mouth. Looked down for a moment, nodded and said, “You’re right. If the United States can bomb Vietnam today, it could bomb Nepal tomorrow. But I hope not and I don’t think so.”
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

I still hope not. That was a time I had some belief the United States (or any “great power”) could be a force for good in the world.

There were the exotic, colorful moments that lend a touch of wonder and mystery and menace to the memories.

Of lighting bonfires (no small risk when fire could be devastating to a village made of wood and straw) and sounding horns and drums and all sorts of noisemakers for hours during the night to drive away a group of elephants that had partially wrecked a neighboring village.

Of the sight at the edge of a neighboring bazaar of two headless corpses.

Of the two young brothers taken by a shaman into the jungle, instructed in herbs and prayers, returning and began healing people, the shaman disappearing.

Of scenes of feudalism and slavery I’d rather not revisit.

Of the giant medical “kit” and the lack of enforced malpractice and licensing laws that allowed me to play “Rama of the Jungle” and steered me, as with so many of us, to a health field career: 40 years of nursing.

Of the book lockers that doubled my recent college education.

Of the group of about 25 men, women and children walking single file along a path in the neighboring jungle, wearing loincloths and feathers and carrying spears, bows and arrows that my friend and I encountered one day. When I asked who these people were, where they were from, he just shrugged and said, “Jungle people.” I’d never seen them before, and I would never see them again.

Of the beauty and awe of the natural world we lived in. The starry, starry night skies, undiminished by any human illumination. The sweet nectar of the blossoms of rhododendron forests. The heat, the dust. The monsoon rains that could pour down in depthless sheets and sweep across the jungle and the plain like a curtain where, if you looked at just the right angle, you could see, as Mishima writes, “the borderline, the edge between worlds.” And always, the mountains.
Paul Madnick

The “meaning” of Nepal 17? We each have our own “memories” and from these memories we draw our meaning.
18. Sue Malick

The real ornament of woman is her purity, her character.

– Mahatma Gandhi

When I got the letter from Peace Corps inviting me to a training program for Nepal, I had to look it up in the world atlas. I had no idea where it was.

I came across my invitation letter recently, and it said, very clearly, "Although you will be training with a group preparing for the Nepal agriculture project, you will receive training appropriate to your future assignment." Hmmm. I don't remember any training that was "appropriate" to my future assignment. It was all so new and different, but, I remember, lots of fun.

What sticks in my mind about the trip over to Nepal - my first outside the US - was Hong Kong, with Peter as guide and interpreter, and Calcutta, the scariest place I'd ever been. Regina and I were so terrified that we wouldn't go out of the hotel without escorts. Luckily we had plenty available. The
next time we were in Calcutta, just the two of us, we were walking down a
deserted street early in the morning of Holi when we were ambushed with
water balloons being thrown from windows. Afterwards we realized we
should have noticed that there was something definitely wrong with a
deserted Calcutta street.

Kathmandu was a welcome change from Calcutta, and we decided that the
"missed flight" in Calcutta was probably planned, to mitigate the culture
shock in Kathmandu. Good plan. Nothing, however, prepared me for my
village visit. Dharan was probably, in retrospect, a pretty cushy village visit,
but the cockroaches in the charpi\textsuperscript{19} almost did me in. It's still a vivid
memory. I couldn't wait to get back to Kathmandu.

Regina and I really had the best of both worlds with our assignments. But it
also had the downside for me of not feeling like a "real" Peace Corps job. I
still struggle with that feeling when another RPCV asks me what I did in
Nepal. Al Dieffenbach was very good about getting me out in the field to visit
volunteers, and I took advantage of it whenever possible.

Meeting and marrying Jeff was, no doubt, the high point of my Peace Corps
adventure, and the two of us spent the next few decades living, working and
traveling in South Asia and the Middle East. It was a wonderful life that was
made possible because of our Peace Corps service. Or at least made easier.
We were lucky, too, that we managed to get back to Nepal many times over
the years. My last trip was this past November, when my daughter and
youngest son went with me to scatter some of Jeff's ashes at Pashupatinath.
Kathmandu has changed unimaginably, but the Nepali charm is still there.

Peace Corps has changed greatly too in Nepal. With internet connections in
most places, and cell phones everywhere, volunteers can Skype home every
day. I think that must make it more difficult to really engage with the
culture. It convinced me (not that I really needed convincing) that we were
the lucky ones who served in Peace Corps and lived in Nepal at the very best
time.

\textsuperscript{19} Outdoor latrine.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

19. Jim McMahan

In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.

-- Albert Schweitzer

Before

My story about Nepal begins with an Indian student at a local technical college in Fort Wayne who stayed with our family for an academic year when I was a senior in high school. Honed Gogowalla was from Gujarat and was a great ping pong player, but the added perk was a big canister of anise seeds and sweets in his room – the kind of things you pop in your mouth after a good Indian meal. Hearing from him about India piqued my interest in the country. However, I was only a high school senior at the time; so Nepal came later. My parents opened our home to many international students (India, Ghana), so I was introduced to people from other countries at a young age. And, as you will see, that is a practice I have maintained to this day.

As a senior in college, I was torn between letting myself be drafted into the Army or doing something else. I wasn’t ready to flee to Canada. To cover my bases, I had applied for OCS school and was accepted; but I put off the recruiter for my final decision to see whether something else would turn up.
I had also applied to the Peace Corps but had not heard anything from them. I may be one of the rare ones in our group who actually asked for a Nepal assignment. I wanted a country similar to India, but a little less India. The Army recruiter was getting impatient, so we agreed that I would give him my answer by Wednesday of the following week. Days passed, and I still had not heard from the Peace Corps. When the Wednesday deadline arrived, I went to an early class and returned home, knowing that I had to give the recruiter my answer a few hours later…..

Surprise, surprise! When I got home, my landlord handed me the telegram that had just arrived from Peace Corps inviting me to Nepal! I called the Army recruiter later that day and told him that I would not be joining the armed forces. Such is \textit{karma}: the fortunate timing which can change the course of a life!

During

My memories of Davis and Parwanipur have dimmed over the years, but I remember the delicious little roasted birds in the market. I also recall a growing attraction to Pushpa Rai, our language trainer in Parwanipur; and meeting Bill Borsa, the previous volunteer in my village, who introduced me around.

I also remember the hot afternoons in my \textit{Deraa}, and the \textit{lu haawaa}, the hot wind in the spring that dried everything out. I recall snake charmers coming through the village and seeing a little boy with his penis in one hand and the tail of a goat in the other, trying to catch up with it.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

I remember trips with Peter Calkins all over India and Sikkim when we took leave from our villages. Lucknow, Delhi, Bombay, Goa, Darjeeling. Those are lasting memories.

With Peter Calkins at a teashop, 1969

Peter and I took a trip to Sikkim with questionably procured visas and asked how we could meet with the queen, Hope Cooke (whom the papers called “the American debutante”). When we got there, we were told to dial “1” to get the palace. We talked to the queen’s secretary who set up the appointment. When we got to the palace, he asked us whether we had a white silk scarf to present to the queen as part of normal protocol. Of course, we didn’t have a scarf, but he opened his desk drawer and pulled out a scarf for each of us for our 30-minute appointment. We met with Hope Cooke, who was pale and thin and marveled at how developed Nepal was, that is, compared to Sikkim. We ended up staying for nearly an hour because Hope did not seem to tire of talking to us.

Late in my second year, something happened that colored my Peace Corps experience in Nepal. Manigram, the village where I was living, started to be hit by a number of break-ins by thieves. The cane walls of the huts were cut and possessions were stolen. This created hysteria among several men, who undertook to discover the perpetrators. They hauled in people they thought
Jim McMahan

to be suspicious and tortured them with foot beatings and needles under their fingernails. A Muslim teashop owner died from the beatings. It was a horrific scene that tainted the remaining months of my service. My lasting regret from that experience was not using my voice to try to end what was going on. I felt—and still feel—a great deal of shame that the tortures went on and I did not do more to stop them.

Since

I did not learn to use my voice in Nepal, but have tried to change that over the years as I advocate for various social justice causes such as homelessness, immigration issues, environmental issues (I helped start a composting program in my church), and legislative issues in North Carolina.

Peace Corps in Nepal gave me an appreciation of the importance of clean water (a servant girl had to walk a mile several times a day to come back with a large vessel of water on her head) and of small families. Or as the family planning sign in my village proclaimed: *Saano pariwaar, sukhi pariwaar.*

After a stint in Davis as a language instructor, I was offered a job as Nepal Desk Officer in Washington, which I held for two years. I finally realized that I needed to get a graduate degree if I wanted to expand my opportunities to help others. Remembering the burden of large families in Nepal and the parents unable to feed, clothe, and educate their children, I decided to get a master’s in public health from the University of North Carolina, so that I could work on expanding the options of such families around the world.

From there, I worked as the executive director of some rural health clinics in east Tennessee, an experience that reminded me of being in the Peace Corps: different language (or at least different use of words), extreme poverty, and low education. It was a fulfilling experience, but the social isolation finally led me to leave. Care International then hired me to work on an emergency food program in Uganda. I was there for nearly a year in the post-Idi Amin era, managing food warehouses and distribution of food to starving people. It was a bad time in the country, rife with lawlessness, child soldiers, and hyperinflation. But I admired the resiliency of the people who

20 “A small family (is a) happy family.”
sent their children to school every day, even if the teacher might be absent trying to find food for his/her family.

I returned to the US, and after a stint of underemployment as a health consultant, got a job with Family Health International (now FHI360), a large non-profit organization in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area that worked internationally with contraceptive research. I enjoyed traveling to South Asia again, working with doctors and scientists on trying to introduce “new” contraceptives (they were already approved by the USFDA, but not available in the target countries). I worked a lot in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Thailand, and later started our first projects in Vietnam.

I was in Bangladesh reading emails when I learned of a young exchange student from Kazakhstan who needed a “permanent” placement for her year in high school. My wife, Barbara, back in the US read the same email and when we compared notes, we realized we both wanted to take this young woman in. That led to a life-long friendship (and a visit to Kazakhstan) and six other high school-age exchange students from Germany, all of whom enriched our lives immeasurably. We have kept in touch with all of them and their parents and visited many of them in Germany and Kazakhstan after I retired in 2017. So the family tradition, dating back to Honed Gogowalla from my own teenage years, has been carried forward.

After 11 years at Family Health International, I got laid off and was hired by another non-profit in the area, which worked in training for family planning in Africa and Asia. Our work expanded over time to maternal child health, and later to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and planning for human resources in health. This meant I had to learn about all these areas in enough depth to be conversational and credible—not an easy task! I started working on projects in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal and then transferred to East Africa when the money for family planning started to dry up. We had offices in Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Zambia, and Tanzania, many of which I got started.

Having worked in so many countries, I learned that people are wonderful in every country, without exception. There are loving and generous people everywhere who welcome strangers and can become good friends. Although my time in Nepal was a crash course in cross-cultural adjustment, it was just the beginning of a lifetime of international relationships and
understanding. I can affirm that I have been blessed by those relationships. When my family, including my 24-year-old son, traveled to Europe to see our former exchange students, we also met some of their parents for the first time and discovered how unique and interesting they were as well. Even in Kazakhstan, which does not have the best international reputation, we visited the two-room apartment of our student’s parents and older sister. They were poor but offered us warmth and love and the local meals. We were barely able to bridge the language barrier—only with our student Farida’s help—but we got to know them and value them as persons.

Appreciation of people from other countries, which did not begin with Nepal, but certainly grew during my time there, is probably the biggest gift I have received from my overseas experience. Empathy for their challenges, respect for the internal resources they bring to bear on surmounting them and learning that there are many different ways of living life will be with me always.
20. Regina *Mellon*

I believe in luck and fate and I believe in karma, that the energy you put out in the world comes back to meet you.

-- Chris Pine

Unlike many of you, I received a phone call to train for the program in Nepal. Never having heard of Nepal, I was somewhat overwhelmed with the invitation. I had to respond to the call within 18 hours, and was to be on a plane to the west coast within 72 hours. Thankfully, it didn’t give me a lot of time to think about the decision. So
after several hours of pros and cons, I called Peace Corps the next morning, and two weeks later I was in Davis, California.

Training at Cactus Corners was quite overwhelming, since the group was already two weeks ahead of me in language and other cultural areas. The total immersion language program was quite a challenge and transition from my six years in a Philadelphia law firm.

The journey to Nepal was a study in contrasts, from the overwhelming excitement of the hustle and bustle in Hong Kong, to the sensory overload in Calcutta. The ride from the airport to the hotel through the haze of the dung fires was otherworldly. Sue (McBride) Malick and I were so overwhelmed on arrival at the Great Eastern Hotel that we sat up talking most of the night before setting out to explore the city early the next morning. That was our first real taste of culture shock. It was an overwhelming experience forever imprinted in my mind.

Flying into Nepal was like paradise found: being able to spend a few days in Kathmandu prior to village visits and Parwanipur training was a welcome gift that provided many opportunities for exploration and discovery in my soon to be “hometown.”

For my village visit, I was sent to an area outside of Pokhara to visit a teacher at the British Boys’ School. Since she was unable to meet me on arrival, some kind trekkers and town folks introduced me to the system of hiring a porter to prepare for the journey. So off I went following a wizened little man carrying my Kelty pack as if it were just a 10- or 15-pound package. The journey took what seemed like hours, but how the mind exaggerates. Naturally, I was completely unprepared for this minor trek and must have presented quite a sight, hopelessly trying to keep up with the porter.

There was something mystical being in this part of the world at night....the quiet, the darkness and the stars in the distance. It left one feeling incredibly small and insignificant.

Each morning we’d head to the nearby lake for our daily swim. The local women would erupt with raucous and contagious laughter as we two joined in the practice of morning rituals. My freckled face was a constant source of amazement and good humor.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

My posting was the Director's office in Kathmandu, working for Bruce Morgan and Sheldon Rose. The only downside of the posting was that I worked more closely with the administrative side of Peace Corps as opposed to being directly involved with the volunteers in the field through the regional offices. Bruce was a great boss and was incredibly protective of the Nepal Volunteers. He gained a strong supporter in Ambassador Carol Laise. She was quite pro-Volunteer. In addition to doing annual events for new PCV groups, she entertained frequently and would call Bruce's office to tell me to get down to her residence, where trays of leftovers were packed to be brought back to the office for Volunteers to share.

Being a volunteer secretary was a double-edged sword. Were it not for that position, I would not have been blessed with the opportunity to serve in Nepal. The downside was that we were never looked upon as true Peace Corps Volunteers.

With Sue and I living in Kathmandu, our home became the “go-to place” for a majority of the group. It was always fun having familiar faces show up at the door for a week or so—depending on circumstances. Our first Christmas in country was shared with many of you, with everyone contributing goodies from packages from home: honest to goodness coffee, canned ham and other homemade treats. It was a first-class Christmas, to be sure, with a Charlie Brown Christmas tree decorated with the silver wrappings from Cadbury bars, along with the beautiful glass bangles from the bazaar. What more could we ask for? It was the precious company that mattered.

It’s difficult to remember the many amazing adventures and experiences. One that still stands out in my mind was a trip to Darjeeling for Christmas in 1969. True Ryndes, Gil Donahue, Bruce Schiffler and I were making the journey together—a la planes, trains and automobiles! During the night, we awakened to the realization that the train wasn’t moving, and that our car had been uncoupled and left on a side track in the middle of nowhere. Completely undaunted, we gathered our belongings, disembarked from the darkened car, and proceeded on foot til we found the next station. And in true Peace Corps fashion, we unrolled our sleeping bags and fell asleep on the station floor until the arrival of the next train.

The Windamere Hotel was like something out of a Dickens novel and the perfect gathering place for many Nepal PCVs, and the perfect place for a
Christmas celebration. The most awe-inspiring moment was midnight Mass in the Darjeeling Cathedral. There were so many people, of so many colors, from so many places, meeting as one. It was a moment I will carry in my heart and my head forever.

Serving in Nepal opened my mind to seeing the world through a wide-angle-lens perspective. It has truly been the most gratifying and rewarding experience I have had in my life—and there has been much competition for that honor.

While we were in-country, Pan Am or TWA used to run advertisements in the international editions of *Time* and *Newsweek* which read...

“See Nepal before the rest of the world gets there”

How we all lucked out!!!
21. Dexter Newton

With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow – I have still joy in the midst of these things. Riches and honors acquired by unrighteousness are to me as a floating cloud.

-- Confucius

I was so lucky.

Nepal was my first choice, and I got it. I had been teaching for two years and had decided I liked it and might even become good at it and so would make it my life’s work, but I was twenty-three and didn’t want to do anything for the rest of my life, and teaching was, after all, something I had been raised to do. For once, I wanted to do something for which school and college had
not prepared me. Why Nepal? I knew the country had only recently been opened to foreigners and so was as unadulterated by Western influence as any, that it contained many cultures, and that it had mountains. I chose forestry first because I thought I’d like to learn about that, and agriculture second because it sounded useful. I refused to teach English.

The draft was not a concern. I had been deferred as a teacher and after some squabbling among members of my draft board, was deferred as a PCV.

So first choice of country, second choice of work. Lucky. Then I was posted in Karkando. I know the mythology concerning Nepalgunj and its environs and would not for the world disabuse anyone of a preconceived horror of the place. It can get hotter than the hinges of hell out there—103 at three AM one time when I was visiting Teg. When the light hit the thermometer, we laughed. What else could we do? But my village was a gift.

It didn’t start well. The DADO, Sharma, had been forewarned of our coming and was supposed to have made some arrangements. He had informed one family in Karkando, the local Brahmin family, who were the dominant zamindaars in town. Unfortunately, they had not yet found me lodgings. Could I perhaps live with Jack Kachmarik and John Tegenfeldt in Kajura until a suitable situation could be found? So I did.
A couple of days later, I wandered unannounced into Karkando to tell the people of my intention to live there for two years and work in *krishi bikaash*. Reactions varied, but happy curiosity predominated. Eventually, I arrived at the zamindaar’s house, and he told he had decided I could live in a room tucked just inside the courtyard of the temple next to his house. The zamindaar’s son used his halting English to inform me that he would be my best friend, because everyone else in the village was ignorant.

I didn’t like the zamindaar. I didn’t like his son. I didn’t want to be co-opted by the most powerful family in town, and I definitely didn’t want to live in the temple courtyard where every move I made would *juTho* the place.

Then luck intervened again. A group of young men accosted me on my way out of town and insisted that we talk. Eventually, I told them about the room in the temple courtyard. For a minute they spoke to one another too rapidly for me to follow. Then a pock-marked man squatting next to me put his hand on my wrist and said, "You will not stay in the temple. We will find you a house." And they did: a house with a courtyard with fruit trees and space for a vegetable garden (I grew stunted sweet corn there from seeds my parents mailed me) and for company, the ghost of an old woman who had died there a year or so earlier. The house was on the far side of town from the temple, surrounded by the homes of farmers and oil pressers and untouchables.

The pock-marked man was Mahato, my next door neighbor and best friend in the village, a brilliant man, funny and generous and patient. His best friend was Gupta, the local shopkeeper, at whose home I ate and in whose store I sat and listened to all the town’s gossip. Gupta had worked in a British-owned rubber mastication plant outside Bombay, so he naturally became the village’s interpreter of the odd ways of white folk.

He told those who expressed concern that my beard meant nothing: some white guys just didn’t shave. Despite his being a relatively high-caste Hindu vegetarian, he let it be known that he should not be offended or consider me defiled if I ate at the homes of others, including Moslems. (That news resulted in sixteen invitations to celebrate Eid with Moslem families, sixteen servings of curried goat—"He doesn’t like it." "No, I do like it. It’s very good." "Give him some more."—and a colossal bellyache.) Gupta rendered
Karkando tolerant even of personal quirks of mine that had sometimes offended people at home. More luck.

Mahato and Gupta ran with a multi-caste bunch, Baniya to Bangi, a gang of whom I became one. They took me everywhere with them: eight miles through the night to bathe at dawn in the Rapti River near the home of their four favorite holy men; to an upper room on an alley off the bazaar in Nepalgunj where they had their futures predicted by a man with water spouting from his head; to the reservoir at the edge of town to swim with the buffaloes and wrestle on the bank; to one of Mahato's family's fields to help dig a grave for his nephew, too young to cremate. They also found me every simple thing I claimed I needed—everything but one. A couple of days after I had told them that Mary Kay would be coming to visit me, Mahato reported that scour the village though they might, they could not locate a spare bed for my guest. He said that with a straight face.

I was lucky with my work as well: a solid demonstration of wheat, several plots of rice, more farmers planting more bighaa’s of wheat for the second time around. No, the stuff didn't taste good, but they could sell it, make a little cash, and we used so little NPK that we did the fields no harm. I drew the line at Folidol. I didn't go to Asia to kill people. I wouldn't put out Warfarin, either; let the gandhi bugs have their share. Let the Tharus dig out and eat the rats. Some years after I left Karkando, Mahato became the panchaayat JTA. By then, he said, most farmers were planting at least some of the new grains.

As a cultural ambassador, I had a spotty record. Because I hated the caste system that kept my sweet untouchable neighbor, Killowan, so humble and deferential, I told the old lie that in my country everyone was equal, and we all agreed on that: it was written down. On religious matters, I did even worse. I spared them my agnosticism and tried to give them the straight Christian line, but got hung up on the Holy Ghost, and in response to a question about whether God didn’t need supernatural helpers, I said he did not, thereby dismissing the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, because I knew my Hindi was not up to distinguishing between the cherubim and the seraphim. Neither is my English. The only positive thing I can say about my cultural diplomacy is that I very much liked most of the people in my village, and if their openness, kindness, and generosity towards me are any indication, most of them liked me.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

After Gil Donahue and Jack Kachmarik left their untenable posts to move east, John Tegenfeldt and I were the only two volunteers in the district, and in this I was lucky, too. John and I are different enough to agree that if we had attended the same college, we probably would never have met. He had a practical, orderly, decisive mind, while mine tends to resemble an attic in a mild earthquake, with all kinds of junk bumping into each other and causing confusion and distraction. Still, we could trust each other to care about what needed caring about, to slough off difficulties and discomforts, and to keep encouraged. We traveled together, in-country (often with Jack and Chuck) and out (we tried to drown together in a Siamese rip current); we worked together (on a ground-water survey of the district in hopes of getting USAID to drill some wells, about which the agriculture honcho at USAID said, "What these people need isn’t water, it’s increased yield per acre."); sweated together; and laughed a lot.

And I was lucky that when we returned to Parwanipur after a year to help train the next batch of JTAs, when I walked into the mess hall, there was Mary Kay.

*With Mary Kay, in the early days of our courtship, on the rooftop of her Kathmandu apartment, 1969*
What did it mean to me? The question calls for generalization and synthesis, and as you can see, all I've done is tell stories and list particulars. But that's how it comes to me, in specific memories: of lying on top of grain bags in one of twenty bullock carts bumping and creaking single-file through a star-filled night towards a distant mill; of walking to the Queen's Forest with David Buerge to hold a private sonnet-writing competition; of crapping my pants while riding a bicycle.

We were Out There, far from home however you measured it: more than 10,000 miles by distance, more than three weeks by mail. (I remember getting the New York Times Week in Review and reading about Kent State, my God, they were shooting kids in Ohio... and what had happened since?) We were sick; I left Nepal weighing 135. We were frustrated—by bureaucracy, by caste, by our own incapacities. We were deeply suspicious of those in power. We were free: free of bills; free of the scrutiny of bosses, the judgment of professors, the expectations of anyone but ourselves; free of the tyranny of ownership and the limitations of career paths. We were young.

A friend of mine once told me, "Everyone mythologizes his youth." Well, edits it, at least. The way I remember my time in Nepal has helped to sustain me in my core values, has made me uncomfortable in a society that disproportionately rewards behavior that we try to socialize out of our children by the time they head off to kindergarten, has helped keep me to stay encouraged (against growing odds) about the essential decency of most people, and has confirmed in me a preference for simplicity over luxury. And wherever we've lived, I've always grown some of our food.

I'll tell you this: I wouldn't trade those two years for any others.
I won't give up ‘til goats sing and walruses fly.

-- Jonathan Lockwood Huie

It's a little strange how some experiences remain so long and so clear, while so much else lies somewhere in the tangles but not quite reachable. My short time with Mallory was unforgettable.

I was returning from Kathmandu well into my third year, and by chance met Bernie Gewirtz in Biratnagar. He was in town to receive one of the imported Saanan breed of goats he had requested long before from the Kathmandu breeding farm. I had been to that facility much earlier and admired those animals, originally from the Saanan valley in Switzerland, and by then the most widely distributed in the world: The largest popular dairy type weigh 120-140 lbs, are very hardy, have a gentle, sweet disposition, and are always white. Like most Peace Corps volunteers.

Bernie had a slight problem: his original sponsor in his village had backed out, and he had no one else to adopt the goat. So was I interested? I was
Merv Olson

overjoyed; not only was I sure of a great reception, but my village at a little over 5,000 feet was just where the baby goat—whom I christened Mallory after the climber who went up but not back—would feel most at home. So the plane came in, and Bernie and I carefully took our bewildered little charge. I say baby goat, but he was already not so little, had long legs, weighed 15-20 lbs., and sported knobby buttons on his head. I was confident that he would contribute great new genes for our local goat stock.

I thanked Bernie, said goodbye, and arrived in Dharan looking for a good porter, not realizing how long and crazy this little hike was going to be. My Rai porter had modified his basket to carry Mallory, and we set out on the initial leg (so to speak), through the lower mountains to Dhankuta. Adjusting our speed for Mallory, and being as the monsoons were in full swing, it was a slow trek. A couple of nights Mallory ended up sleeping by my side (and I smelled like it). Upon reaching Dhankuta my porter was fed up: I paid him, and he left.

The kid (Mallory, not me) was in sad shape as well—exhausted and stressed, with little food and long days in that basket. We had bonded admirably however, and Mallory was clearly quite intelligent. So we gave ourselves a respite of one week so that Mallory could rest, acclimate, feed, and get his sea legs (er, *pahaad* legs). The villagers were very helpful, as always, pointing out the best forbs, and teaching about nettles (most nutritious) and to boil them first. An old village woman gave the best advice: a small amount of *gaanja* (for Mallory, mind you) whenever things got rough; so I got some of the freshest. Mallory and I were in fine fettle (and nettles) to begin the second, most arduous stretch of the journey.

First, a fairly slow, easy morning trek to Hile, a small, Tibetan village above Dhankuta; then a steep climb down to the Arun river. Halfway down, Mallory kept trying to keep up with me, but baa-ing piteously. His hooves were soft from those Katmandu pastures, and had become somewhat torn and bleeding from the sharp stones. Nothing else for it: I tossed most supplies from my Kelty pack, arranged my sleeping bag, and up he went on my shoulders. Mallory and I became closer than ever during that descent.

We were trekking down a steep gorge, a feeder stream into the Arun. At the bottom, in the past, the stream had never been too deep, a fairly easy crossing. Now, however, it was in full flood, a roiling mess. We rested, I fed Mallory some foliage and a little magic herb. So, he was pretty calm. But I
was a nervous wreck. For the first time, that stream scared the Bejesus out of me. I couldn’t think of going back, kept telling myself it wasn’t all that bad.

I made a very stupid decision to go for it. Mallory on my shoulders, I used a short, strong walking stick for a third leg, and I slowly walked out into the water. Since the bottom was all large rocks and the current very strong, every step required digging in my walking stick, slowly feeling out each footfall to the next. I made progress to the middle, then all went to hell. The water was now waist-high, rising, and any further movement ahead became impossible. I was losing what little resolve I still had, my stick barely serving to hold me upright. The only feeble option I could think of (and detested) was somehow pitching Mallory, but I would probably lose balance in the process. Mallory could sense my fear and began struggling a bit.

Then came one of the most serendipitous moments in my life. Normally, you would never meet anyone at this crossing. But that day I saw a short, stout, Nepali watching from the bank. Without waiting, he waded out, met me where I had solidified and, without a word spoken, I carefully transferred Mallory to him. When we reached the bank, I was a babbling idiot, thanking him over and over, offering him my watch, but he only took a few rupees. Things being a bit calmer, he explained how close to Mother Arun, the local name for Heaven, Mallory and I had been. A week earlier, a villager attempting to cross had lost his footing and been swept down. No body was recovered.

So Mallory and I went on to the dugout ferry crossing. It being almost dark, we camped with the ferryman and a few passengers. Smoked some dope with them (my turn), and they treated me to their curried chicken potluck, giving me the head, which, being both stoned and famished, I ate with relish. My first and only chicken head, it was both tasty and interesting. They approved.

The rest of the journey, after crossing the Arun, was a cakewalk. Mallory was well received. Although still a kid when I finished my time there, he showed promise for the future.

I must have integrated the lessons of independence and persistence from that quadruped, for today I am (along with Buck Trawicky) one of the last
bipeds with no cell phone (out of choice). On road trips I pick up a burn phone for short use. Ditto for disdain of any popular social sites, like Twitter, Facebook, *et al.* My Nepal 17 friends are always welcome, of course, and it’s no big deal or anything. I’ve just lived off the tracks most of my life and find the fact that corporate and political America is squeezing with more and more ingenuity and vigor into everyone’s lives both tiring and somewhat alarming. I do have a landline. Actually, a V.O.I.P. thru my internet provider; but I mostly ignore it. It’s just a need number, so I check my voicemail weekly. Mostly, I call out to friends, appointments, etc.

Rummaging around enough, I came up with two photos for this book. I’m not all that particular about such things, but I preferred to replace my photo from Cactus Corners, in which I look like some sleazy grifter or a crazed high school chemistry hobbyist. So the first photo at the head of this chapter, which I found in one of my mom's albums (she died two years ago at age 98), shows me just back from five years overseas: three in Nepal, then two kicking around Southeast Asia. I don't know *that* kid much anymore, but I will always remember Mallory. So, until the next rodeo, kiss the pretty nurses for me.
I am starting this piece on the impact of Peace Corps service on my life at quite the appropriate place: the village of Port Narvin on Erromango Island, a remote and seldom traveled to part of the country of Vanuatu (The New Hebrides for those of us who studied geography a while back) in the South Pacific. I am here visiting my daughter, Bethany, who just finished a year with Peace Corps Response and is now in Port Villa working for World Vision. Bethany spent a tour of Peace Corps service in Benin, completed a master’s degree in international agriculture at Cornell, then signed up for another year with Peace Corps just to see what the South Seas looked like. She will tell you that she grew up hearing the stories of Peace Corps Nepal,
and could not wait to set out on her own adventures. So for my family the Peace Corps experience is intergenerational, and the stories continue.

I grew up outside of Buffalo, NY, in an extended family that all lived within an hour’s drive of each other, and where a trip to Canada was counted as a big international event. After all, in that age of innocence, if you were not careful you might get caught smuggling oranges across the border. Then you were in real trouble. As you can imagine, when I announced I was joining the Peace Corps and going to Nepal, it caused quite a stir, and questions like “Is that some place in Italy?”

As with many of us, I traveled through India and Europe before landing back in the USA in 1970, enrolled in graduate school, and for 20 years pretty much left Nepal behind. Peace Corps was a few boxes of fading slides, a trunk with a Kathmandu address in the attic, and some good stories. Then in 1989 I got a call from Bill Burch at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, asking if I wanted to go back to Nepal to run a project at Nepal’s Institute of Forestry. I told him NO, that part of my life was over, went home and told my wife, Nancy, about the conversation, and she asked, “Why not?” That led to spending the next two and a half years in Pokhara as Chief of Party (a title everyone should aspire to) for the USAID-funded Institute of Forestry Project. I would have never gotten that call had I not had Peace Corps Nepal on my resume.

Settling back into Nepal I soon discovered that many of the bright young foresters I worked with in Peace Corps were now in senior positions within the Government and the international development community. Those days in the field together in the late ‘60s paid off with instant credibility in the early ‘90s. The cultural awareness and sensitivity along with a re-emerging language ability, all due to Peace Corps, were all essential to my success in this position. Renewed contacts in Nepal, new contacts, USAID experience, and a comfort living and working with Nepalis has led to a continued and ongoing relationship and love affair with “mero dosro desh.” I just counted up: I have 25 Nepal entrance visa stamps in my passports.

The lessons learned in Peace Corps Nepal have carried me into other adventures. I spent five years as an environmental advisor to the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, India. My first assignment with the Honorable Gegong Apang was to find out who was stealing the State’s timber. Arunachal is in northeastern India, beyond the “Inner Line”; you
can’t go there unless invited. I got met in Assam by a government official who informed me that we had to keep a low profile because the ULFA terrorist group was active in the area and had a nasty habit of kidnapping folks like me. We then got in his shiny black government car with official plates and state flag flying on the hood and headed for the border. Some way to keep a low profile!! Finding out who was stealing the timber turned out to be a challenge. As we all know from our Peace Corps experiences with what used to be known as “His Majesty’s Government,” there are two realities: one is what is supposed to be true, and the other is what is actually happening. When asking a government official a question, you will always get an answer based on the former. Also, when questioning timber theft, you just can’t go up to someone and ask, “Is it you?” And, if someone is stealing the timber, then someone else (and that could be the official you are talking to) is “on the take” allowing it to happen. After getting nowhere on this assignment, I drew on my Peace Corps experience, excused myself from the formal meetings and focus groups, and spent a few late nights drinking *apang* (the Arunachal equivalent of *raksi*) in low-down dirty bars with loggers. You all remember those places in the village, or at truck stops along the roadside. Anyhow, as the liquor flowed and night got late, it was not that hard to figure out who was stealing the timber.

I went from there to working in China and Tibet. These assignments were with the international NGO, Future Generations. I asked them at one point why they kept calling me, especially because much of Tibet is anything but forested? There answer was that “we can send you out, you’ll get there, find the place, get the job done, and get back without us having to rescue you.” Fair enough, and those are skills we all gained while in Peace Corps Nepal. We all know that you can get deathly sick and not die. We know how to travel to villages without a map and find people without an address. We can live “unplugged” from the world, and off the grid. We appreciate different cultures and enjoy interacting with folks who think differently from us. We find innovative ways to solve problems. Those are all skills I learned in jungle camps in the Chitwan and village life in Taulihawa. *Jai* 21 Peace Corps! *Jai Nepal*

\[21 \text{ "Victory to…!" or " Long live.....!"} \]
Mike Rechlin
24. Ron Rude

Train up a youth in the way he should go: and when he is grown he will not depart from it

-- Bible, “Proverbs”

As a junior in college at Wisconsin State University, Eau Claire, I became interested in the Peace Corps. After some study of what it was all about, I made application in October, 1967. I took the Peace Corps exam at the Eau Claire post office. I remember my language exam was in Farsi, a language used in Iran. I passed and, in January of 1968, was offered a place in the 17th program going to Nepal. India had been my first choice, so this was culturally very close. Since I knew where I was going before my final
semester at Eau Claire, I took an independent study on Nepal as a part of my geography minor. It was good preparation.

Following graduation I went home to my parents’ dairy farm near Blair, Wisconsin and waited until it was time to report to camp in California in late June. My parents drove me to Minneapolis, where I would catch my plane to San Francisco. Strains of “Are You Going to San Francisco” reverberated in my mind. My first letter home told of the difficulties I had getting out of Minneapolis. I was staying with my sister, and we had to make at least two trips to the airport because my flight kept changing. I finally got off the ground, and when I arrived in San Francisco, the airline put me up for the night, and someone with Peace Corps picked me up the next day and drove me to camp. So that’s how the adventure began.

Cactus Corners

I had hoped to keep a diary of letters covering my experiences, but I was soon to learn there wasn’t going to be much time for writing. This Peace Corps camp was a very busy place. I did ask my mother to save all the letters I was able to write. She did so dutifully, and her diligence in this would archive my experiences for the next three years.

We were at a migrant labor camp, which we called Cactus Corners, in the Sacramento Valley, a few miles from Davis. It was very dry there with irrigated farming, and the temperatures were around 95 degrees most of the daylight hours. With so little cloud cover, however, the nights cooled off quickly. Most of the vegetation was brown, and the dust was all over! Our language program, called emersion, was very challenging (all by rote), with absolutely no English used during the sessions. We were forced to learn the words by context and by what instructors were pointing to. Our instructors were Nepalese students who were studying in American universities. It was good to know we were getting the real thing.

Our agricultural projects, all of which were irrigated, included vegetable gardens, wheat, and rice. We got up at 6:30 a.m. and studied until about 9:30 p.m., and with the dirt and heat, we got pooped!
Sessions were very exhausting, especially when we had shot reactions to contend with. We had eighteen inoculations during the training period of two months, with more to come. It seemed strange that people should come here to Cactus Corners and the drought to plant gardens, but we were preparing for what we might need when we arrived in country.

Some of the guys hadn’t the slightest idea how to plant. Irrigation planting was different for me as well, and to do so with heat in the 90s was hell!! The dryness and the deathlike brownness were depressing. Nobody in their right mind would hoe and work in this dust and heat from 1 to 5 in the afternoon, but this was Peace Corps, and at this point in my life that made all the difference.

Finally our rice paddies were ready to be irrigated. It was nice to see water in the fields and vegetables in the gardens. I had my fingerprints taken and made a visit to the dentist. The following Tuesday I had my first interview with the shrink, one of the three camp psychologists. He only wanted to know my background and interests, but I understood he had a loud voice on the board of selection. Allegedly, for our group, deselection by a board was to be very much deemphasized with emphasis on self-deselection. Every new group was an experiment.

Most of us were impressed with the camp’s operation. Language progress was amazing. It was interesting to note the sacrifice that many of these Nepalese instructors made to come here to teach and study. Because their
customs were so different from our own, they had really endangered their caste and status back home by doing so. They became involved with habits, such as eating of beef and pork, which were dirty and sacrilegious to their people. It would be difficult for many of them to return to their old customs, and, perhaps, many of them did not.

We had a very energetic field group, and our rice planting was soon completed. Wheat planting would follow. The sizzling heat had been a bit more bearable in the rice fields. We had worked the land, flooded it, and leveled it. The mud for transplanting rice seedlings had to be about a foot deep, and since we had to work it with our feet, a lot of our work rubbed off on us. I wore tennis shoes the first day, but later gave up and went barefoot. When we transplanted rice, the Nepalese had a rice planting ceremony for us. We received flowers, red colored rice on our foreheads, and rice and yogurt mixed for us to eat. I learned to like yogurt, since it was served as a part of our meals occasionally and would be a good source of protein in Nepal.

I was having tire troubles on my bike. I stated, “That darn thing had better straighten up soon.” By now both tubes had been changed. The bikes were essential for travel, since Peace Corps volunteers weren’t allowed motor vehicles of any kind. We traveled into Davis once or twice a day for language classes, which were held in empty dormitory rooms. Agricultural extension lectures were held in the auditorium of the university as well. Davis was “Bicycle City, USA.” Almost all of the students used bicycles, and there were special bicycle paths for them to use. On the way in to Davis we passed the Primate Center, a place where monkeys were kept, assumedly for experimentation. We also passed orchards, and I will admit to stealing a ripe peach or two every once and a while as I biked by.

I felt the need for extra study, but there was no place where I could do so. Our dormitories, large metal Quonset huts stuffed full of bunk beds, were very hot, dusty, and overcrowded. Our group of 99, a record number, taxed the camp’s capacity. Likewise, there was no privacy in the toilet, as our ten or twelve seats were all in one communal room. This was all good conditioning for the lack of privacy we would experience in Nepal, I suppose, and it also gave a shocking picture of how the migrant laborers who were here before us had to live every day of their lives. Our bath house and shower facilities, also communal, were on the other side of the camp from
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

the toilets—to insure convenience! For the first four weeks in training, we had no days off to relax, not even Sunday. Those days would come later.

There were experiences to laugh about as well. One of the fellows in my section thought he had baby spiders in his bed. It was the middle of the night, and he went to get one of our counselors for help. Now the counselor thought it was all pretty funny and was cracking jokes about it, while the poor trainee was frantic. I was pretending to be asleep, but could hardly keep from laughing out loud. A little later that same night my friend, Bernie, who slept across from me, started talking in his sleep about how we needed to plant faster in our gardens. I didn’t sleep much that night, but I was handsomely entertained.

Near the end of the first month of training, I was back in San Francisco. We had Friday afternoon and all of Saturday off, so that gave us a chance to do a little sightseeing.

I could easily have used a lot more studying in Nepali, but life in Cactus Corners, though quite acceptable by now, left room for an occasional change
of pace. A group of us enjoyed dinner in Chinatown, followed by a trip to the Haight-Ashbury district. This was the heart of hippie country and flower children in their bellbottom pants were everywhere. Even though illegal marijuana was at the heart of their culture, they seemed to me to be very friendly and outgoing people. Frankly this scene was a little unnerving for a naive farm boy from Wisconsin, yet untouched by the drug scene. San Francisco was quite an eye opener, and my horizons were rapidly expanding.

I had more to learn about human relationships from a whirlwind tour of the Sacramento Valley during my community development weekend, the purpose of which was to develop independence and get acquainted with migrant laborers. Tom and I traveled all over the valley trying to pass ourselves off as such. Oh, the stories we told, and as tough as we looked, I think some of them believed us. We were taken by bus to a camp near Brentwood called the Blue Goose, where we were expected to ask for work and stay for the weekend. As it turned out, there was no work. Apricot picking had just finished, and there would be nothing else for a few days. So we went into town to look around. We had a contact there, a Father McCullough, and hoped he might be able to direct us to a different camp or at least tell where we could spend the night. Finding him wasn’t as simple as we had thought. We couldn’t find anyone who spoke English. These labor towns in California were very Hispanic and even Chinese. We finally met a white serviceman who showed us where the Father’s church was, but the Father was out of town. We settled on a walnut orchard as our sleeping quarters for the night, unrolled our sleeping bags and stretched out under the trees. I can still remember the squeaking and the rustle of the mice as they scampered through the grass beneath our heads. How I jumped when the train engine blew its whistle at what seemed only feet from my head. The shaking of the ground as the train rushed by was like an earthquake.

The next morning, looking even more like migrant laborers, we went back into town to consult with the labor office. We learned there would be no work in Brentwood until Saturday. A place called Moraga had pears, they said.

We were off again on what turned out to be a hitchhiking spree all over the Sacramento Valley. We hitchhiked about 50 miles to Moraga, only to find the nicest labor camp any one could imagine—obviously someone’s tax exemption. We decided to pick a few pears anyway, and found out that most
of the pickers were part-time college and high school students. A few were hippies down from the surrounding hills to get a little “bread.” One of them said he had a place up in the hills he had built himself. There he lived with his “woman” and two “brothers.” They kept chickens and goats, besides what they could make from picking pears. We picked pears for a total of $1.50 each. Then we left, hitchhiking back from near San Francisco, going east towards Stockton. Here I remember the friendliness and unselfishness of the many people who gave us rides. Between Concord and Antioch we were picked up by a Hispanic family, and by coincidence their daughter had given us a lift early the previous day. She remembered us immediately, and because of this they were determined to take us all the way to Stockton, which was 30 miles out of their way. They were extremely generous people, and it was here that giving and receiving took on a new dimension for me. Receiving is often as important as giving. Accepting a ride from this family, which had little else to give, was very humbling. We stayed overnight in Stockton (in a real hotel this time), and the next morning we attempted again to mix with the townspeople and particularly the migrant laborers of the town. Later in the day we took the bus home to Davis, pretty satisfied with our weekend experience.

The following weekend, Thursday through Saturday, I was off on another adventure to experience independence and solitude. I found myself alone in the high Sierra Nevada Mountains east of Sacramento near Lake Tahoe. Actually I found it quite satisfying, a welcome change from the heat and closeness of Cactus Corners. It was quiet, fresh and beautiful. The scenes were breathtaking, and so was the altitude at 7,000 feet. With the pines, the moss, the waterfalls and some of the clearest blue lakes I had ever seen, this was quite a contrast to the Sacramento Valley below. Here, next to my campfire, I wrote a letter home by firelight.

On Saturday I returned to camp. On the way down the reality of how steep the climb really was came back to me. It seemed even harder getting down—sliding and being pushed by my pack. One place I nearly fell into the cascade. My shoe soles were slippery, and I had nothing to grab onto. Next, the worst thing happened. I stopped for a drink, and my sleeping bag fell off my pack and rolled into the river. That was a stupid thing to let happen, but the bag took off so quickly I couldn’t do anything—one of those freak accidents. It cascaded down through the very swift water, and I thought I
Ron Rude

had seen the last of it. I found it again some distance further down in the center of the river. Retrieving it was a hairy job because of the swiftness of the current, but I did manage. Have you ever tried to ring out a sleeping bag? I returned to camp safely, turned in my wet sleeping bag and learned that everyone had returned in good shape. I may have been one of the last.

The next day, back at Cactus Corners, I faced mid-boards. This was an evaluation halfway through our training to tell us how we were doing. We were expected to self-deselect if things were not going well. The pressure was mounting and already nine of our fellows had left.

The climax of an emotionally-charged, two-month training program came at last as we headed to our mailboxes to see what had been written on the little white slips of paper each of us was to receive. When I read “Ron, congratulations; have a good trip to Nepal,” I could have hollered for joy and kissed everyone in sight. It was the greatest feeling I had had since receiving the original letter from Peace Corps inviting me to train. Then I realized it was not the same for everyone. At least ten of us had actually been deselected by the board. These volunteers had the opportunity to appeal, but none that appealed were accepted. After all the talk and emphasis on self-deselection, we felt cheated somehow, or deceived. Our number had now been decreased from the original 99 to about 65. From my sub-group of 10, only three of us remained.

In addition to the confusion about deselection, we were suffering from the last terrible shot we received in California—4 cc of gamma globulin in each butt cheek. It was given according to weight and was a guard against hepatitis. It made us sore and somewhat sick.

We who were approved would have a three-day holiday before flying to Seattle on our way out. In such a short time there was no point in traveling home to Wisconsin. Instead, Bernie and I planned to spend this time in San Francisco. The itinerary was as follows:

1. **Sept. 9**: Leave for Seattle. Catch Flight 74 for Tokyo at 1:30 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time)
2. **Sept. 10**: Arrive Tokyo. After 1½ hour layover, depart Japan for Hong Kong, arriving same day. Overnight at Empress Hotel on mainland Hong Kong.
3. **Sept. 11**: Fly Cathay Pacific from Hong Kong to Calcutta. Arrive Calcutta Sept. 11 in the p.m. Overnight at Grand Hotel.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

4. Sept. 12: Fly to Kathmandu and travel to Parwanipur (near Birgunj) for seven more weeks of training before placement.

In preparation for all this, I received a foot locker, which I packed with 100 lbs. of supplies. It would arrive in Nepal sometime later. I bought a backpack, a sports coat (20 cents), a raincoat (10 cents), a sweater (10 cents), and a shirt (10 cents), all at a rummage sale. I also had a new pair of horn-rimmed glasses (they made me look intelligent) and a $25 pair of sunglasses. I was ready for whatever might come my way. Anticipation was building.

During my three-day holiday, I did go to San Francisco with Bernie. Coming from Michigan, he didn’t go home either. The cost of my round trip to Wisconsin would have been $160, too much in those days for a three-day furlough. On our last full day, September 8, which was a Sunday, we attended a service and had communion. The pastor invited us to lunch, but we had plans to explore the Golden Gate State Park. We did, and it was a wonderful, clear day. We walked across the bridge to Sausalito and took a lot of pictures. On September 9 we boarded a plane in San Francisco, bound for Seattle on the first leg of our long trip to Nepal.
Ron Rude

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA EXTENSION

Ron,  
Congratulations—  
have a good trip  
to Nepal!

[Signature]
With Peace Corps approval in hand, I was off on an adventure that would impact the rest of my life. Our 65 remaining volunteers boarded a plane in San Francisco at 9:30 am for a flight to Seattle. From there most of the people on our plane were excited Peace Corps volunteers, so you can imagine the planes’ environment with 63 young men and 2 young women all talking at once. We had a slight layover in Seattle before boarding our plane for Tokyo. The most memorable event at the Seattle airport was meeting Bob Hope and getting his autograph. Conveniently I had a post card of the Seattle Space Needle in my hand for him to sign. I remember his makeup—or lack thereof—made him look green.

On this trip I was wearing my beautiful 20-cent sports coat. Since the sleeves were too long, I had asked Sue (McBride) Malick to shorten them, which she kindly did. That coat would meet its demise a year or two later while it hung in our Janakpur gathering place. A shrew took a liking to it and chewed it up to make a cozy home. I got my revenge with that rodent when I flattened it between a mustard oil tin and the block wall of our sleeping area following a furious chase and a mighty kick. Poet Robert Burns, who in his ode “To A Mouse” penned the words “I wad be laith to rin an’ chase thee wi’ murd’ring pattle,” had nothing on me!

Next we were off to Japan. I don’t remember much about the Tokyo airport other than the duty-free shops. I did purchase a radio in the short time we were there.

Soon we were off to Hong Kong and our first overnight stay in a very nice hotel (the Empress). My roommate was Bernie Gewirtz from Michigan. I think we were allowed to choose our roommates rather than being assigned rooms. Bernie and I chose to sleep, but I remember clearly the liberal nature of Hong Kong made women from the street readily available. Sixteen- or seventeen-year-old girls were offered for the bargain price of $5 each. Those who partook paid dearly with treatments for venereal diseases upon arrival in Nepal.
Ron Rude

Since Hong Kong was a longer stop, we had a chance to go to the top of Victoria Peak and view the sights of Hong Kong below. I also remember that Hong Kong was one of our most breathtaking places to land. The airport was right on the ocean, and it looked like we were landing in the water.

The next morning we were off again on a beautiful Cathay Pacific flight en route to Calcutta. The food, the hot towels, and the spacious seats would certainly not be experienced today. Too soon we were landing in Calcutta.

The first few hours in Calcutta were a blur. We were all too tired of traveling by this time. Keeping a clear head was difficult. We were taken by bus to the Grand Hotel, where we would stay the night. The crush of people, even in the hotel, was almost suffocating. Porters vied for carrying our baggage, since they depended on tips for most of their wages. Somehow one of my bags, including my camera, went missing. Fortunately it showed up again the next morning as we prepared to leave. The hotel, although grand and spacious, was old and had a musty smell. The humidity was very high,
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

since it was September and the monsoon season was in full swing. At the hotel we were not able to do anything for ourselves. At dinner there were two or three waiters for every table to pour water, open napkins, and remove plates. It was hard to eat with that many eyes watching ones every move. We did take a short walk outside. There were so many beggars it was impossible to help them all. There were dirty children, people without legs, and lepers in various stages of deformity. Dozens of dirty hands reached out and “baksheesh” (alms) echoed in our ears. I remember some of us took refuge in a bar as we passed just to get away from the clamor. In the morning when we left, there were bodies on the sidewalk, people that I presumed had died during the night. It was good to leave and get back on a flight to Kathmandu.

As we flew over the central mountain range, the Mahabharatas, into Kathmandu valley, we caught our first views of the pagoda-style temple roofs, a roof design Nepal claims to have created. The Himalayan mountains were visible everywhere. I thought I had arrived in Shangri-La. We had now completed a journey of about 12,000 miles.
Having arrived in Nepal, after a 2-3 day stay in Kathmandu, it seems that we all had village visits before we went on to Birgunj and Parwanipur for our in-country training. For my village visit I traveled to Janakpur by His Majesty’s wonderful Royal Nepal Airlines. This flight, and many yet to come, was on a DC-3 that was close to 25 years old and had been purchased cheaply by Nepal from some other country. These planes sloped up toward the front so, as you walked to your seat, you were literally climbing. They were unpressurized, and we could see light through a crack in the door. After we were seated on this particular flight, we had to get out again so the airport crew could repair a flat tire. Once in the air the plane barely skimmed over the central Mahabharata range in the middle of which Kathmandu is located. We joked about picking pumpkins from the fields as we flew over.
We landed in Janakpur and were met by Bill, a Nepal 16 volunteer. Tim Moody, also from Nepal 17, was with me on this visit. Since it was late, we stayed overnight at the experimental farm in Janakpur, then took a 6-7 mile trip by bus toward his village—a trip that took about 1½ hours. Finally we walked the last 6 miles around rice paddies and through rivers. This took another 3 hours. Once at the village I had my first experience with total lack of privacy, as we were always surrounded by curious people, especially children. This was also my first experience with the local diet. Tim and I were still religiously using iodine in our water for purification. Bill was long since passed that. The local bathroom was a grove of mango trees, and this was also my first experience using a water pot (lota) for cleaning up afterwards. We learned to eat with our right hand, as the left hand is used for toilet purposes. Food was mostly rice, lentils, and pumpkin greens with occasional goat meat. We bathed in a pond near the village. While in the village we looked at some rice fields, inspected some insect damage, and sprayed the vegetables for insects. The last of the monsoon rains hit before we left, making the trip back to Janakpur through raging rivers and muddy paths very interesting. We were stuck in Janakpur for two days waiting for a plane. It was September 22, and we were now overdue for reporting to in-country training near Birgunj. We were forced to fly to Kathmandu first and then back down to Birgunj. At this time there was no east-west road connecting cities on Nepal’s southern plain, a twenty-mile-wide extension of the Gangetic Plain called the taraai.
PART 4: IN-COUNTRY TRAINING

Allow me to describe the camp first. There was a central gathering place, a mess hall so to speak. There were several residences made of mud and cow dung smeared over bamboo lattice. I think each building had one or two windows and a doorway. Each building had four or five sets of bunk beds, and each bunk had a mattress. There was electricity only in the gathering area. On one side were showers made of bamboo mats tacked up around poles to serve as walls. We had no hot water, but the weather was warm, so it didn’t matter. On the other side were the latrines. These were holes in the ground with, once again, bamboo mats tacked up for walls. We had everything a body could need. The day consisted of showers, breakfast, language classes, occasional cultural lectures in the congregating area, lunch and more language classes. The classes were taught by locals with some teaching background. They were mostly fluent in English but used it only when necessary.

Soon after our arrival we were divided up into three language groups: Nepalese (the hill language and official national language), a dialect spoken...
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

in the western hills and plains around Nepalgunj, and Maithili (a dialect closer to Hindi and spoken on the southern plain along the Indian border). We had been trained in Nepalese in the U.S. Now I was told that I could handle a second language and was placed in the Maithili section. This must have been the reason I had my village visit in Janakpur, although I didn’t know it at the time. As it turned out this change was a blessing, since some of the best farmland and placements were in the Terai.

So what did we do in our leisure time? We talked, read (by kerosene lantern, of course), played cards, and wrote letters. Occasionally we would go into nearby Birgunj. We really had nothing to shop for, but there were restaurants to enjoy. On Halloween a group of guys carved out some pumpkins and lit them with candles. They marched around the grounds chanting with the intent of driving out any evil spirits that might be lurking. I found something else to do. There were no incidents as I recall, but this Hindu-dominated area really was, I am sure, crowded with demonic forces. By the grace of God no one was hurt.

As I read my first letter from in-country training, dated October 1, I realized that morale was not all that great. Most of us were sick that first week from changes in diet and water. We were not yet used to the cold showers, stinky toilets and the essential speed of the language training. We had four weeks to get familiar with a new language. Five volunteers out of our group of 65 had now left. On October 6th I wrote that one more volunteer had left and two others were in Kathmandu for health reasons. I could tell my mood was changing, however, as I wrote about the beautiful sunsets and the refreshing cool of the evening. I was also beginning to appreciate using local clothing.

The Charpi (toilets)
Ron Rude

Apparently half way through our in-country training we were given a short break. Some of us (our group included Bernie Gewirtz, Ed Branson, Mike Quinn, and me) decided to take a trip up the Tribhuwan Rajpath to Kathmandu. This road, constructed in the 1950s by the Indian government, started in Birgunj and curved through the Mahabharata range, reaching Kathmandu. My notes say we went out to the road near Birgunj about 10:30AM and caught a ride on a truck. Before the road started to climb the steepest parts of the mountains, the driver and other Nepalese passengers stopped at a roadside temple for a Tikaa (colored spot on the forehead) and a blessing of safety from the resident priest (Brahmin or holy man). We soon realized why. The road became very steep and crooked—scary but beautiful. The valleys were broad and green. We drove through patches of jungle. The steep hillside were carefully terraced and planted. Many of the houses, especially those constructed of red mud walls, were striking against the green background. All along the highway there were breathtaking drop-offs. After crossing the 8,000-foot mark, we stopped at a central point development called Daman, which had a hotel, restaurant, and observation tower. We stayed overnight there and ate and slept at the top of the observation tower. I don’t know if we had rooms for the night or not. By this time we were able to roll out our sleeping bags and sleep anywhere. The views of the high Himalayas were breathtaking, and as the sun rose we could pick out the highest peaks—Everest first and then Kanchenjunga. I remained huddled in my sleeping bag as we watched this spectacular sunrise unfold.

By noon of the second day we were on our way to Kathmandu in a different truck; the decline into Kathmandu was even steeper than the way up. My notes say Mike held his breath at every turn, and Bernie threw up. Ed was cracking jokes and having problems with dysentery. At one pit stop he had sat in burning nettles, and they were really bothering his bottom.

Upon arrival we realized that the locals referred to Kathmandu as “Nepal,” as though the rest of the country to the south was another nation. We were surprised, as we arrived, to have our passports checked. We enjoyed the food and good places to stay, but by now we also realized how expensive it was compared to the rest of the country. After a day in the city we caught a southbound truck and bounced back down the Rajpath to Birgunj and our training camp at Parwanipur. Very soon my training would be over, and I would be on my own. Would I be ready?
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

The showers
25. Roger Rutledge

The only gift is a portion of thyself.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Gifts”

On the evening of May 20, 2014, Roger passed away peacefully at home after a two-and-a-half-year battle with cancer, comforted by his wife, Lily. Roger was 67 years old.

Roger Rutledge was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on December 27, 1946. He was the second child of Jean and Joseph P. ("J.P.") Rutledge, Jr.

Roger grew up in Johnson City, Tennessee and then moved with his family to Northern Virginia and New Jersey. He attended college at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he majored in history and graduated with honors.
Roger Rutledge

After college, Roger joined the Peace Corps as a Rural Agriculture Extension Officer, and was stationed in Nepal, where he met his wife, Lily. She was a nurse in the Peace Corps; they met while traveling in the Himalayas. Roger and Lily were married in Kathmandu, Nepal in 1970.

After finishing his tour in the Peace Corps, Roger was appointed as an officer in the U.S. Foreign Service. He was stationed in Palermo, Italy as Vice Consul.

Upon returning to the United States, Roger attended law school in Washington, D.C., and graduated from American University Washington College of Law in 1977 with the degree of Juris Doctor Cum Laude.

Roger moved to Memphis, Tennessee and began practicing law with his father, J.P. Rutledge. They started the firm Rutledge and Rutledge Attorneys at Law, and over the years, practiced corporate law, litigation, international, family and estate law. Roger enjoyed the opportunity to help people through his law practice and became good friends with many of his clients and coworkers.

Roger was an accomplished musician, songwriter, guitarist, and singer. He played at several venues around Memphis. In the past, he jammed with a variety of musicians, including James Taylor, and was a part of the music scene. His favorite music included bluegrass, gospel, and country.

Accomplishing a lifetime dream, Roger received his private pilot’s license, and enjoyed flying his Sierra plane on many trips around the country. He was a member of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. Roger was president of R-Track Technologies, a company that manufactured and sold aircraft navigation equipment.

In 2012, Roger wrote and published A Revolution to Win: The Founders’ Solution to the Current Crisis, a book about democracy in America.

In past years, Roger served on the board of the United Methodist Neighborhood Centers as Chairman. He was a long-time member of Christ United Methodist Church and attended and taught lessons for the Seekers Sunday School class.

Roger made it a priority to help others, was generous, and always took the time to listen. He was a wonderful father and enjoyed spending time with
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

his family. He is survived by many friends who will miss his fun-loving spirit.

Roger was preceded in death by his father, Joseph P. Rutledge, Jr., and his mother, Jean M. Rutledge. He is survived by his wife, Lily Rutledge, his brother, Jay Rutledge, his sister, Julie Berg, and his daughters, Amelia Tapp and Sarah Rutledge.

I was the volunteer stationed closest to Roger in the Peace Corps (neighboring panchaayats in Palpa district), and thus got an unusual opportunity to observe Roger at work in a village with few natural or leadership resources. We exchanged visits often, and he entertained the villagers of both panchaayats with his song-writing, guitar playing and singing. I was also fortunate to be one of the first to meet his new girlfriend (at the time), Lily.

Since Roger couldn't make it (for medical reasons) to our last reunion at Dexter and Mary Kay's, Roger and I agreed to meet just to get back together after all these years. That was a little over a year and a half ago, at my mom's place in Auburn, Alabama. Roger and Lily drove down to Alabama (from Tennesee!), and we spent the entire day talking. Roger was excited about the upcoming publication of his book about how to fix the US congressional system. I was sincerely impressed by his eloquence, detailed knowledge of virtually everything from law to music, and overall fine storytelling skills, all of which I am sure many years of being a lawyer had helped to hone. Roger was also extremely chipper and confident about life, smiled and laughed a lot; but he looked very tired and wan. I could see the strain of the situation (incurable lymphatic cancer in the throat area that had metastasized) more on Lily's face than on Roger's. He was definitely hoping to come to our next reunion, and even to travel with one of the small groups of 17'ers who have started making trips back to their home villages in Nepal. But he didn't get to do either. I feel particularly sad for him about that.

In that light, one happy detail of my meeting with Roger in Alabama happened when I took him and Lily to lunch. Since he and Lily had driven all that way to see us, I felt that the least I could do was to invite them out to the Tandoor Kitchen, Auburn's only "Indian" restaurant.
After sitting down, we noticed a suspiciously Nepali-looking waiter approach our table to take our order. Roger and I looked at each other, nodded in silent agreement, turned to him and said, "Namaste! Tapailai kasto chha?", to the waiter’s general astonishment and delight. (I almost added “Gurung-ji,” because in Palpa we both had learned to distinguish Magars from Gurungs.) He did in fact turn out to be a Gurung from the Pokhara area. We had a nice conversation in Nepali and far too much food, because Mr. Gurung insisted on adding several off-menu Nepali dishes to our order for free.

Since Roger never actually got to live out his wish to return to Nepal in person—or even to enjoy Ed Branson’s wonderful bhoj at the last reunion—I am glad that he got the vicarious experience of a real Nepali meal.

I hope this helps to shed a little more light on the fellow-volunteer we have lost. I will miss Roger a lot, as will we all. He was truly a gifted and deeply good person. (Submitted by Peter Calkins)
26. True Ryndes

Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions.

-- Henri Nouwen

KÊ GARNÊ, BABU?

I. BEFORE

I grew up vigilant, living with a major drinker and his charming co-conspirator. At 12, I often felt like the only adult in the room, which was hard when you had no power and a secret to contain.

Later—perhaps no surprise—I started my own binge drinking in college. That I had fallen head over heels for a woman I'd nearly knocked over in the
student union, as well as the guy who'd rushed me for a fraternity, hadn't helped with that.

By the end of my third semester at Dickinson College, I was lost, close to flunking out. Somehow I managed to talk an art history professor into allowing me to take his senior honors seminar on German Expressionism. I don’t exactly recall what I was thinking, other than being intrigued by Kirchner’s green faces; it made no sense that the professor agreed, but he did. There were six of us in the seminar. The other five had intentions to pursue further studies in art history, while I simply became engulfed in the German painters’ responses to the cultural madness of that era. The semester restored my flagging academic confidence.

I only bring these items up to credit an internal gyroscope that kept me moving past my scripted boundaries and eventually out of central Pennsylvania. It also prompted me to consider the Peace Corps upon graduation.

At the time, I thought the Peace Corps was a time-out from the Vietnam War, from my home life, from exploring my sexual identity, from making a decision about a job. Seeking peace by working for it. Turns out it was less “press pause” and more like gyroscopic therapy. It was also the beginning of a practice I now recognize as Karma Yoga.

Like some of you, I had to look up Nepal on the map once I got my acceptance letter in my senior year.

It was not one of the three countries I listed as a preference, but my (perhaps false) recovered memory is that I’d checked a box asking if I was
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Now at 72, I own an assortment of Waking Up tales. They all seem fluid and evolutionary, with porous boundaries between chapters: Best Little Boy/Lost Little Boy, Dickinson, Nepal 17, communes, Zen, Quakers, the Hawthorne Dominicans, hospice, MPH, Jim, painting, leukemia and now Châteaux de Sucre, a book I’m attempting to write in French. A few of these tales are presented below.

I’ve told some of my Nepal stories to myself and others so often they’ve become legitimized by repetition; but as I recently finished the box of letters I had written to my parents during those years, I was struck by how much I had misremembered or forgotten. With that in mind, all I can say is, “I think this is what happened.” …

July, 1968. I flew to San Francisco a week before training started in Davis, staying in a $6.50/night room at the Virginia Hotel in the Tenderloin, above a club. For two nights, a group called the Supremes was playing down below. I never saw them, but it was as if they were in my room.

According to my letters, my fraternity brother came to San Francisco to say good-bye. Three days, two nights. We went to Golden Gate Park and then the Haight to buy love beads. I have no memory of his visiting. The only thing I remember is the quiet mastery of the Japanese tea garden in the park. Somewhere I have those beads.

Davis

Growing up in central Pennsylvania, I spent a fair amount of time around farms and gardens. Though I never formally studied agriculture, I knew how plants worked, and I actually enjoyed the practical curriculum at UC Davis.

Midway through training, we met with a staff counselor to review our progress, test scores and the staff perspectives on our adaptability. All was good, except I was told the staff didn’t know who I was, that I “blended too well into the scenery.” He suggested I grow a beard or a mustache to stand out, and perhaps “work at being more dynamic.” It occurs to me now that what they were recognizing/not recognizing was my fairly intense effort to not stand out, to conform to some idea of myself that would not be
challenged. It is said that if you keep a part of yourself secret, it becomes the most important part. It’s one of the saddest consequences of the closet.

A related tale, from the Esalen-style sensitivity training session outside of Cactus Corners, stands out. We were sitting in a circle on the floor and told to each take turns, one at a time, and go around the circle, communicating nonverbally with our peers. When it was my turn, I was startled by one person’s response, an instructor I think, or an RPCV. I smiled at him, he glowered. My greeting to him, he said afterwards, was no different than the face I had given everybody else.

“You’re plastic, man. It was like I was looking at a f--king yearbook picture. Get real.”

Thud

The smile had always worked. The smile was the family smile, a public smile that masked anxiety about who was going to come through the front door at night. And it covered secrets. “Everything’s normal at our house, yes it is. Nothing to hide here. It’s all good.” I didn’t know what to replace it with. I was pretty certain that my version of getting real with another guy was not what he had in mind.

It took me years to understand that the guy’s troubling feedback was right. I just didn’t know how to integrate it. It took me years to feel compassion for that fake-smiling kid going around the circle. Looking back at my letters from Davis, and then Nepal, I realize it was he who was writing them, a gay kid who felt half as good about himself as he imagined others feeling, so he was trying twice as hard, fabricating and participating in little lies, that gyroscope still spinning in his pocket, trying its best to right him.

While I have random memories of that time—biking into Davis for our agricultural classes; irrigating our tomato patches; our first “yo Topi mahango chha” 22; the camp crow that tried to steal stuff, like my new wire-rimmed glasses; another volunteer’s wonderment about seeds becoming plants—that sensitivity session may have been one of the most important lessons in training. It was the first crack in a tightly constructed shell.

22 “This Nepalese cap is (too) expensive!” The first sentence any Peace Corps volunteer headed to Nepal must learn.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

I ran into its cousin years later in MC Richard’s book, *Centering*. Paraphrasing: If you think you've had a hard time being good, wait until you try being whole.

We attend a panel discussion by “modern revolutionaries” from Berkeley. A guy from the Black Panthers says “y'all are escaping from your national responsibility. Stay home and re-educate your own neighborhoods!”

Then it seemed training was suddenly over, and we were landing in Tokyo for a few hours. Later, we watched harbor boats from our hotel restaurant in Hong Kong. In Bangkok the following day, we were walked to our gate by a group of clapping, chanting, dancing Sikhs as we boarded for Calcutta. This was cooler than I expected.

**Calcutta**

I remember getting off the plane and walking across the steaming tarmac into the terminal, exhausted but vibrating, our first introduction to our new order/disorder paradigm. Its atmosphere was supercharged. Immediately inside, I caught the eye of an Indian guy my age who quickly walked up to me and grabbed my hand as we gathered in a group. Oh yeah, I'd heard about this, so I fought to not withdraw it. After introducing himself as a guide, the first words out of his mouth, honest to God, were “By any chance do you know anyone from Dickinson College?” Head snap. Then the humidity, the poverty, the overpopulation, the horns and the mosquitoes kicked in.

The next morning I was sobered to hear that some of us were already deciding to return home. I wondered what they had expected.

**II. DURING**

After flying over flat plains for an hour and a quarter, it was a bit staggering to see the army of mountains encircling the Kathmandu Valley. The palette below had completely changed from sun-bleached shades of Gangetic brown. Now it was a wild array of shadowed and brilliant greens—yellow, deep blue, olive. Terra-cotta and white houses outside the city were scattered more like those in Pennsylvania than India. Rice paddies everywhere reflected the sky as we descended.
Disembarking, the air smelled of cooking fires and incense and, in some places, waste.

In the days that followed, we discovered the Peace Restaurant, the gaanjaa saadhus chanting “Naaraayan Naaraayan Hari Hari” in the open temples at night, red-cheeked Tibetans, Swayambhunath temple, Bhaktapur town and Durbar Square. In the old bazaar, I saw my first world travelers (“WT's”), lost to their appetites.

September, 1968

Tom Gorsuch and I made our first village visit. It was the end of the monsoon season. We took a lorry out of Kathmandu, got off and followed PCV Larry Jones up the mountain through the rain and the mud. Larry forged ahead, while we climbed and slid uphill. After a while there were black things hanging from our legs that you couldn’t just flick off. Our Kelty packs were heavy, as new as we were. Eventually we left the forested area but kept climbing, threading our way along a tiny path with scrub on either side. To our left, the scrub descended into a deep ravine. Larry told us that his villagers didn’t kill water buffalo for food, but if one fell off the path, ke garne? There might be meat.

We made it to his house by dark, soaked to the bone. Shortly there was a fire, dry clothes. daal, bhaat, tarkaari and the lesson on how to remove leeches. Lots of laughing and introduction to raksi, followed by a few taruñi stories. I had been a bit terrified by the path beside the drop in the rain in the dark, but was exhilarated at the same time. Tom, it seemed, was pretty much rolling with it. His humor was grounding whenever I saw him over the next two years.

Parwanipur, October 10, 1968

“Up every morning at 6:15, in class at 6:30. Language training continues until 5:30, but we have time afterwards to play volleyball or write. We wash our clothes under a hand pump, beating them with stones. At night a Nepali chokidaar walks around the camp to ward off evil spirits, snakes and thieves, occasionally belting a long volley of, I think, Nepali. Seemed to be

---

23 Pretty young girl

24 Night watchman
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

working until one night a bhut\textsuperscript{25} sneaked into the cabins where the women were sleeping.

One of the Nepali instructors dreamt someone was pulling the sheet off her. Waking up, she said she saw a saadhu standing at the foot of her bed. She screamed, waking the others up, but noticed the saadhu had vanished into a corner. She and another woman tried to light a match. The matches didn’t work for the one, so the woman who saw the saadhu tried. She couldn’t get hers to light, but swore a blue match flame was lit for a second in the corner of the room where the saadhu had gone. The woman left the cabin and wouldn’t go back in, so all the women changed cabins with some guys the next day. She insisted they keep the lights on and a guy stay in the quarters with them. She slept with a khukri under her pillow. ‘Sleeping pills,’ it was rumored.”

We hoped.

October 25, 1968

I traveled to Kathmandu from Parwanipur. 11 hours, 10 rupees, sitting on top of boxes of fireworks above the cab of flatbed Mercedes truck. Below in the truck bed, a chain reaction of car-sickness would occur among other passengers, as new ones climbed on board, despite the orange peels pressed to their noses. Finally I have to go under some canvas tarps because the truck was having to stop too long at checkpoints.

In Kathmandu, an old yellow-turbaned Kashmiri approaches three of us and points to me.

“Stick with this boy, he’s very good for you.”

Then he tells me three girls will want to marry me, one of whom is 20 and whose name starts with L. (accurate), and I will only marry once, in 1971 (Well, I met my husband Jim in 1971). We’d been on our way to the Tibetan Refugee Center, but he convinces us to head to the zoo. We comply. Once there, he reads our palms. He tells me the day, month and year of my birth accurately. My lucky number is 8, he says, and I will die at 93. He gave me a red stone to set in a ring for good luck.

\textsuperscript{25}Ghost
John Scholz

This recount reminds me to pull the stone out of our safety deposit box.

Heading back south, some of us were able to spend a few days checking out living quarters in our villages. When D.B. Gurung, our district manager, took me eight miles east of Hetauda, there was no place to stay other than a cramped grain storage room above a tea shop. It was a quarter mile from the center of the village, where a more permanent home would later be built.

No one remembered ordering a Peace Corps Volunteer. Gurung-ji used the words shaanti swayamsewak 26, but it seemed to make little sense to them. Most not only didn’t know what it was or how they could use one, they couldn’t figure out why I wanted to be there for two years. “Who is expected to feed him?” Good question, I thought.

"Amerikan muji 27! Amerikan muji!"

Me, waving and smiling at the kids running beside me. “Hey kids. How’s it going?”

I had been taking a short cut to the main village where I was soon to live. Bal Ram, a Chhetri landowner who would later become my good friend, chased them away.

“Raamro chhaina,” he said, pointing to his crotch, then making hand signals. Something-something about China and Mao. I squinted, not understanding the crotch point.

Months later I learned from a visiting Nepali, whose English was far better than my Nepali, that muji meant something along the lines of dick or f--k. We settled on “prick.” He told me about half the village was aligned with the Maoists. For a few months he became a welcome part of my life. He’d come to my room and we’d have tea and coconut crackers, talk about his time in the UK; he would then beat me at chess. One day he didn’t show up, gone as abruptly as he arrived. No goodbye. "Pokhara," Bal Ram said, when I asked about him. Months later I asked about him. Maryō 28. Poisoned. And that was all I heard.

26 Peace (Corps) Volunteer

27 Rude term for a man’s nether region.

28 He died.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Wherever I went in the days after I moved to my post, I was the center of attention, just like Sandy Hoodenpyle, Bill Hanson and some other RPCVs told us would happen. Kids continued to gather around me laughing at my Nepali. A group of older boys shooed away the kids and vied to hold my hand, asking questions in schoolboy English about the cost of my shirt, my watch, and my home in the States.

They pretty much agreed I knew raamro\textsuperscript{29} and raamro chhaina\textsuperscript{30} but were slow to realize I was not speaking English to them. As far as I could tell, I had learned the Oxford version of Nepali and ended up in Mississippi. My clothes and watch were raamro, they said, the hair on my arms was na raamro….raato baandar jastai chha\textsuperscript{31}! Hysterics. It took a while for us to communicate with one another (“your tongue is lazy, Daar’), but as I learned the village politics and they realized I was not leaving AND held the key to chicken production, we drew closer.

Early on, I learned I had to laugh at myself the way they laughed at me. Yes, my skin and hair looked like a red monkey’s, hahaha, and my eyes were like a cat’s or the fog, hahaha. And I would intentionally tell them they were going to really like the eggs that the dogs from America would lay……but their fathers began to take me seriously when they watched my splendid wheat demonstration and later, when Radio Kathmandu began to broadcast news of the Americans’ plan to land on the moon, and even later when their jungle chickens began to breed with the Rhode Island Reds that survived. But by then it was time to leave.

February 15, 1969

“We’ll never know the repercussions of our living here.” On them, on us.

“Evenings at my house could very well be called the Children’s Hour, even though an occasional person over 20 will drift in and watch me cook. And, of course, there are the frequent faces at the window, either silent and unresponsive or bursting into fits of giggles at being questioned.

\textsuperscript{29} Good.

\textsuperscript{30} Not good, really bad.

\textsuperscript{31} (You look) just like a red monkey!
There is a small group of about ten kids, ranging from 2 to 17, that head straight to my place after they eat their own evening meal. We sing and joke…and laugh, mostly at me. There always is some kind of leftover to munch on, sweet potatoes, cabbage, biscuits. I’d like to think they come to spend time with me, but I think it is more like watching television together for them and I’m the program. We all enjoy it nonetheless. When I was up at Bruce’s home in the mountains, I noticed that the two little boys who follow him like puppies everywhere had their shorts made exactly like his black and red bathing suit. When we went swimming, he looked like a big duck with his brood straggling along in line behind him.”

June, 1969

“The monsoon has begun to stretch its fingers into my area, and the Nepal I am living in is certainly different than last month. Daily deluges have turned the dust to taffy, and at times I have to wade through water up to my waist on my rounds through the panchaayat. The countryside seems to be over-reacting to the past three very hot, very dry months. It is exuberant and sensually gross. The crops and subtropical plants are not just growing; that’s too mild a term. Their growth seems passionate, like cumulus clouds of roiling green, bursting, wild, gutsy. The people in my village also seem to be replenished by the water, though maybe I am just getting to know them better. There is a constant stream of people and mud in my house. Some days I sing with them at the top of my lungs in the fields, learning the insult songs.”
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

June, 1969

“Bal Ram, a guy in his mid-30s who is probably my closest friend in the village, woke me up one rainy afternoon and just wanted to talk. He is fairly wealthy and does little, if any, field work. It was like talking to a man in the States, except for the thatched roof and mud floors. His sons are nice kids, but very much like the children of middle-class families everywhere. Their dad has worked hard as a landowner to achieve a standard of living which they enjoy. They are not only unused to physical work, they dislike studying. Bal Ram had come to the conclusion that he could only give them so much, that they must make their own lives if they were to be good men. Their wives will be of their choice, an almost unheard-of break from tradition here, and I am wondering where they are going to find women with such lenient parents. He had made these decisions against his own feelings of devotion to them, since he was able to provide for their welfare.

It was a quiet talk, with the rain falling softly outside. He spent a lot of time looking at his hands. He left when the sun broke.”

The chiyaa pasal next to my house was eventually papered in my Sears and Roebuck catalogue, with the lingerie section in the shadows toward the back, but I’d occasionally visit the Maoist tea shop, across the main road.
running through the village. It was papered in gorgeous photographs from a Chinese propaganda magazine. Happy village farmers in green fields and terraces, waving red flags.

Bal Ram, his pal the *pradhaan panch*, and my landlord were the three top guys in the village. They mostly conducted business from the tea shop on the Sears side of the road, but traveled back and forth between the two tea shops, doing business, hiring workers. I somehow knew I was less welcome at the Maoist shop, but went there anyway. One day, one of its regulars challenged Bal Ram about me.

“He’s a spy. CIA.”

“No, he does *krishi bikaash* ³².”

“Why would an American come to Nepal to do *krishi bikaash*?”

Bal Ram and I had not talked about my motives for being there, so he turned to me and asked why I came to their little village, especially when their kids really wanted to get out of the village and go to America, or at least Kathmandu.

I offered some explanation about wanting to learn about people in another country before I got married and helping them grow more food. I tied it to making the gods happy, because it was true enough and I thought it might work.

“*Dharma* points,” said Bal Ram. “Before he gets married. He’s collecting points that help him advance on the wheel.”

To which the Maoist regular wobbled his head. “*La.*”

And that was that.

When I’d push myself to leave the comfort of the village to talk with more distant farmers about demonstration plots, the folks back at the tea shops seemed to know about it by dusk. I became aware that a small group of *Chhetris* ³³ kept (what I think were) protective eyes on the anglaise.

³² Agricultural development

³³ The second highest, formerly warrior and kingly caste, in the Hindu caste system.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Memory fragments

1. *BinDis*, *chilims*, hookahs, *paan*...

2. Honking as sonar in Calcutta traffic...

3. Hookworm, ringworm, roundworm, giardia, amoebiasis...

4. Listening to “*Those were the days my friend, we thought they’d never end...*” for the first time, at the brand new and nearly empty Soaltee Hotel in Kathmandu on New Year’s Eve. At the time, I wondered if these were those days.

5. My birthday party, 50 people at night in lamplight on the edge of the jungle, learning to do the twist...

6. Parents sending their kids over to have water buffalo meat, which I’d grind and sometimes turn into spaghetti sauce...

7. Sunset *raksi* with the guys a few nights later. They bring me scrambled goat’s blood, which is gray and curdled...

8. The “Nepali two-step,” a trekking gait for steadily moving up and down on narrow mountain paths, very rhythmic, no rush...

9. The Indian glass bangle stalls in the market...

10. The long narrow log you’d have to cross to get to Bruce’s house. Freezing water below.

11. The Taj Mahal during a full moon.

12. Walking east through a wild and scarcely populated area with one of my village *daais*, to have a *khukri* made, I get into an argument with a flat-earther. “*Hāmrō sansāra suntalā jastō chha*” 34 just makes him laugh...

13. Whatever happened to the 1600 fruit trees that were to be delivered?...

---

34 Our planet (is round/)looks just like an orange.
14. White radish *achaar* (!), made by one of my village *didis*...

**July 20, 1969**

Americans land on the moon. *Puja* bells rang all the previous night, as news came in from Radio Kathmandu. The next day a young wide-eyed pal, Keshab, asks if the Americans are to be worshipped because they are with Chandra, the moon avatar of Visnu....

We have great exposure to international career workers: the infinitely kind Bloodworths (USAID) arrive in Hetauda and invite us to a real Thanksgiving feast that includes ice cubes. Pieter and Anneke Hallewas (UN Forestry) bring richness to our lives, model world citizens. She offers Indonesian rice table and IV vitamins....

Bruce, Gil, Regina and I fall asleep on the train across northern India, heading to the Darjeeling connection. We wake up in an empty train, distant from a station. No one around...

The women in the village were constantly working dawn to dark, regardless of rank. The men hung out in the tea shop if they were wealthy, like Bal Ram and my landlord. My landlord liked to puff and preen. But at night, because we lived so close to one another, it became clear who was boss.

My 13-year-old cook and first-class language teacher definitely didn’t want help in the kitchen. He said, in Nepali: “Why’d you hire me if you’re going to haul your own water and peel the potatoes? It’s embarrassing....”

Traveling from Hetauda to Benares, the most exotic place in the world, at the end of my tour, in a brand new vehicle called an RV, sponsored by National Geographic...

I had a number of “daaais” watching over me. One, Thul-Daai, the oldest and poorest, would come by and we’d talk into the evening. When I returned from Christmas in Kathmandu, he said “The children’s laughter was gone from your house, and the night seems very dark.” He made me promise my last meal would be with his family, so they’d know I’d be armed for the trip home. He gave me a tablecloth he’d embroidered after plowing the fields....

Bal Ram owns the property my house is on. He and my landlord, the guy that built the house, have a big fight while I’m gone, so the landlord tears down my house. When I return, villagers watch quietly from the tea shop as
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

I approach the pad and set my Kelty pack down, wondering what the hell happened, trying to be cool...

Darwin’s chickens

First thing, everybody wanted to raise chickens. I of course remembered Sandy Hoodenpyle stressing, “Never, never start out with chickens. They’ll die and ruin your credibility.” I told the farmers they were a risky venture, not a good start, not adapted to the climate, many died.... But somebody’s brother-cousin had a neighbor whose father raised them successfully so let’s do it.

“No really, let’s start with wheat.”

“Let’s do both.”

So we did both. We brought in 400 chicks from Parwanipur Farms, and almost immediately they started dying, which of course caused the farmers’ wives, the real credibility judges, to shake their heads. Idiot American and his stupid chickens.

I had just moved into my (first) new house. The ground floor was for cooking and storage. I lived on the second floor. As the Rhode Island Reds began to get sick, we’d bring them into my ground floor. I instructed the farmers on culling. Two weeks into it, I had to leave for a few days. When I returned, all the chickens were in my house.

Darwin in action: For the next two years the survivors were always flying through the door and eventually laying eggs in the thatched roof. The Nepalis said they didn’t like the larger eggs, which were not as flavorful as those of the orange-yolked jungle chickens, although I’d often hear one of my landlord’s servants rustling through the thatch in search of them. Neither, they said, was the meat as tasty. But before I left, the Reds were mating with the jungle chickens, and as we know that’s how progress happened.

Corn/Rice/Wheat

The farmers I came in contact with were not very interested in corn, because it attracted bands of monkeys. I had to walk an hour to get any. Unfortunately, most of the improved varieties of rice that I introduced were
a bust, or maybe they were just a bust that year because of weather. They were very vulnerable to insect pests, and the farmers were very unschooled about the Indian pesticides they were using. They had old sprayers and would spray their crops as well as the insides of their homes. My biggest contribution may have been to warn/educate them about better techniques than those they were using.

*Hatiya, 1969. After moving through a number of temporary shelters, I finally acquired my own house, in time to raise chickens.*
Wheat was a different matter. They had been planting it, but no one had been getting bountiful yields. They’d till the soil once, broadcast the seed and hope for rain. The farmers I spoke with were actually open to new methods for planting wheat, but didn’t want to make a big investment their first year. A landowner who said he’d work with me backed out at the last minute, but suggested I work with one of his poor relatives. The advantage of his plot was that it was adjacent to a major traffic bandh. Plowing twice, planting in lines, fertilizing and irrigating, we increased his production by a ridiculous amount. I returned the following year expecting he’d want to collaborate again. He declined, citing unintended consequences. Other villagers now knew he had a bit more money. One son wanted a bike, and one wanted to travel to Kathmandu all the time, and his wife wanted nicer clothes. So we didn’t work together, but a few months later I noticed he and a few others had followed some of the improved techniques and the fields looked good.

Lore

The Ayurvedic hot/cold food system: Hot foods include tomatoes, ginger, onions, mustard, pepper and ghee. Coconut, sweet fruits and cauliflower are cold. A buDhi didi \(^{35}\) says “Never eat tomatoes on a hot rock! You’ll get sick.”...

Thul-Daai told me to keep my door barred and shutters closed at night so I would not be carried off by one of the jangli creatures who live close-by. Like humans, but have long hair growing everywhere...

Never whistle at night. It brings bhuts. But if you walk through the jungle, or go down at the jungle edge by the rice paddies, keep singing to the gods or a Daakini \(^{36}\) will try to seduce you. She will be very beautiful, but if she turns around, you will see she has a hole in her back and her feet are pointed backwards...

Untested remedy for scorpion bites: find a baby chick and blow on its anus, then stick it on the bite. May take a few chicks to suck the poison out. You

---

\(^{35}\) Elderly older sister, term used to address friendly senior women in the village context.

\(^{36}\) Female deity or yogi.
will only be sick for 12 hours instead of 24. If you then circle the bite with a gold ring, it will reduce the sickness to six hours...

Walking through the jungle with Thul-Daai, he casually points out a plant that is good medicine to stop a cold. I imagine the discovery of the century.

“You take a few leaves and mash them in the palm of your hand. Then you put that on top of your head and your cold will go away.”

Fed up with my chronic diarrhea, I take another local remedy made with juice from pounded tree bark and water buffalo milk. It immediately stopped the diarrhea, but I had constipation, fever and dizziness for two days....

“Don’t put two kerosene lamps in the same spot or the gods will be mad.”

“Which ones?”

“All of them.”

February, 1969, Kathmandu

At a Nepal 17 conference, we were swapping war stories. The “manual” had said to be prepared to be the center of attention and amusement, and we all had versions of this. One PCV had driven his bicycle off a bridge into five feet of water, while villagers looked on laughing hysterically. A similar incident involved Sue Malick’s mother a bit later when she visited my village with Sue and Jeff. The folks in my village, Hatiya, had been excitedly waiting for the *anglais* 37 to arrive. Vehicles and *anglais* rarely passed through it. As their jeep finally came to a stop, the adults and children grew big-eyed and silent, moving toward it as the dust settled. Until Mrs. McBride fell out of the jeep. Then people were clapping hands over their mouths, doubled over laughing. A sense of formality slowly prevailed as we helped her up, greeted her and introduced her to the village chiefs. Thinking she might want to collect herself, I suggested we move her small group up to my room in the second floor of my (second) house. I was sharing it with a family. The second floor was accessed by crude stairs on the outside. As she neared the top, she grabbed a pole to pull herself up. It was, unfortunately, holding open the trap door at the top of the ladder. The door consequently fell on her

37 French for English people, used for all people of European descent.
head knocking her backwards down the stairs and into the dirt. I thought some of my Nepali friends would never recover. She was a major trooper, particularly when a scorpion then walked across the floor in front of her as we sat down to eat in my room. This was all before our elephants were charged by a rhino at the King’s Wild Animal Preserve.

Another volunteer was given the royal treatment upon his arrival. The pradhaan panch presented him with a horse, which was wonderful until the horse ate his wheat demonstration.

Another’s demonstration plot was demolished by a pest that did not react to stones: a rhino.

A few unfortunately had ended up in villages with languages that have no names or prepared materials.

“First glass of raksi is terrible, the second glass is tasteless, the third glass you don’t remember.”

I had just left Bill Wallin, Bruce Shiffler and Howard Neal in the shade at the Rapti Hotel in Hetauda, discussing the foods we most missed. I was heading east out of town, along a narrow dirt road, hauling home a week’s worth of provisions. I should have left before sunrise because I was carrying water buffalo meat for the increasing number of mouths in my village, and it was already hot, with about 2.5 hours to go.

Before reaching the potter’s shed where the road intersected with the paddy bandh that took me to the other side of the broad valley, a farmer came up beside me a little out of breath. We exchanged questions that served as now familiar greetings.

“Namaste, Sahib. Walking on the road?”

“Yes, Daajyu Sahib. Thhik chaa?”

“Thhik chha, Bhaai. It’s nighttime in America right now?”

“Yes, my family is sleeping now.”

“Are you married?”
“No, Daai. How many chhoraa chhori do you have?”

“We had 7 children, but 3 died. (Pause) Are your gods the same as ours?”

What?

The ensuing conversation was one of the most memorable in my first year, invoking and muddling images of deities, elephants, doves and spirits. Much abbreviated, it went something like this:

“Are your gods the same as ours?”

“Not the same, but the same I think. Different names. It’s like this bag. You call it a jholaa and we call it a ‘bag’ but it serves the same function.”

The answer satisfied him, which after all was consistent with Hindu tradition:

"There is only one God, though humanity calls It by many names." Rig Veda 1: 146.64.

"By whatever name you call me I will answer and by whatever form you offer me worship I will accept it." Tripura Rahasya.

As I turned right onto the aali that directed me back to Hatiya, I watched him walk on down the road, not looking back.

III. AFTER

Nepal offered my first village, but not my first jungle. It had offered periods of frank isolation, but was not the place where I first learned about it. I had had lots of practice before that, though I didn’t see the connection at the time. In retrospect I understand how my family ironically made it possible to survive the isolation of Nepal and how Nepal was a building block to surviving as a gay guy in, at the time, an unwelcoming world. This became

38 Sons and daughters

39 Shoulder bag

40 Narrow path
especially important in the eighties, when so many acquaintances and friends died from AIDS.

Going to Nepal was probably the most courageous thing most of us had done at that point in our lives. It certainly was for me. I had stayed there the first year to meet my own expectations. If others did it, so could I. When I stayed the second year, it was because I really wanted to; because I had built something uniquely my own, not because I was avoiding something, or because I felt I should. It was more about exploring and getting stronger, despite the parasites and weight loss. I had become more resilient.

Hospice

When I returned home from Nepal, I had two experiences within the first few months that were clear stepping stones to my future work in hospice.

The night I arrived from Nepal, my parents threw a “Welcome Home, Bob!” party, including many neighbors I did not know. Toward the end of the evening, I asked my step-dad if he had heard anything from Lynda, the woman I had fallen in love with in college. He drunkenly confessed that her mother had sent me a letter describing the circumstances of her death the year before. They had opened it and decided not to forward the news, believing I had no form of support. I raged.

I left a few days later, in order to find a place to live in the Amherst area while working on an interdepartmental master’s degree program at UMass. I settled on a room in a commune in North Hadley. Several communes occupied neighboring farmhouses at that time. While mine was filled with graduate students, another, called the Bee Hive, was filled with dropouts who tricked out their buses, made macramé and candles, and smoked a lot of weed. I became fast friends with one Bee Hive couple in particular, Paul and Geri, who were six months into their first pregnancy. They introduced me to organic cooking, the practice of zazen and the Northampton Zen Center. A month after Geri delivered her daughter Anandamaya, she witnessed Paul being tossed over their VW, hit by a car from behind while he was fixing their flat tire. Following his death I dropped out of my program and spent most of my time with Geri and “Nanda.” We were both reeling.

Grief was in the background, but in the immediate foreground was the Selective Service. I had returned to the States with a draft number of 98,
now pissed that Peace Corps was not considered alternate service. Friends at the Quaker meeting I was attending in Northampton helped me cobble together my argument for conscientious objector status. Shortly after Paul died, I received notification that the request had been approved and I had to either find service that met their guidelines or face an assignment.

In 1971, Geri, 6-month-old Nanda and I moved from Amherst to Westport Point, Massachusetts. Nearby, the Rose Hawthorne Dominicans, Servants of Relief for Victims of Incurable Cancer, had a facility for impoverished people dying from that disease. Had I not just experienced the loss of two important people in my life, I doubt that I would have applied for a job with the nuns, but it was the impetus I identified at the time. Working with them fulfilled the requirements of the Selective Service Board, so I met with their mother superior and was immediately offered the job as an orderly, gardener and handyman, aided no doubt by my resemblance to Prayer Card Jesus.

I worked with the sisters for four years, mentored by a top-notch tomboy nurse, Sister M. Denice. In 1972, a group of people from New Haven visited us. Inspired by the emerging hospice movement in Britain, they were exploring models of care for terminal cancer patients. Two years after their visit, they opened the first hospice in America. The nuns were certain they wouldn’t succeed because they didn’t have a spiritual base, but I was intrigued.

Part of the way through my time with the Sisters, I had entered nursing school. A year after graduation I moved to Minnesota with Jim, where I was to become one of the pioneers of the North American hospice movement at one of the country’s first, Hospice St. Paul.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

I had not come out as gay when I started working with the Sisters, but it turned out there was nothing like listening to death-bed regrets regarding risks not taken, or love not professed to help me understand the importance of authenticity. Jung would probably say that something inside me needed to die in order for something else to be born, so in working with the dying I was seeking a catalyst for that process. The regrets and reflections of many patients contributed to my coming out, to my getting better than good, to finally getting whole. But it was having survived two years in Nepal that afforded me the self-esteem to do so unapologetically. Or in the words of Dolly Parton, “Figure out who you are and do it on purpose.”

True

You all knew me as Bob Ryndes. In 1976, when I was 30, my biological father, Bob, Sr., reached out, hoping to meet me. He had last seen me when I was 18 months old, right before he abandoned my mom and me. When he learned from our initial correspondence that I was gay and had been living with Jim for the prior five years, he threatened to inform my employer, my mom and step-dad, if I “didn’t change my ways.” I didn’t, of course, so he delivered on his threats. Almost immediately I started looking for a new name.

Those of you who have met Jim will no doubt agree that he, like your spouses, is a saint.

Art

After 35 years in hospice and palliative care, I retired in 2007. It has been a great pleasure to return to art, studying with a number of accomplished artists. For, as Hippocrates put it: “Life is short, Art is long.”

Finally

Though we were magnificent and energetic, we now know we are not immortal. Some might say “Thank God.” More than that, however, I’ve learned that finding out who I honestly was meant spending a lot of time not being that person, especially in front of a number of you. On one hand, I wish it had not been that way, and on another, it all worked out. We’re all handed something important with which to wrestle.
But I have to confess a certain amount of grief now, looking back at my time in Nepal. Once I left my village, I left my Nepali friends behind, in part because of self-absorption, and partly because of cluelessness. My dear 13-year-old helper, Purushottam, would now be 63, if he is still alive. I left him, Bal Ram, Thul-Daai, Keshab and a host of others behind without any further word. I have only met up with them in my dreams.

I return to Google Earth every now and then to see what is discoverable about the location I served. The area around Hetauda has become unrecognizable since I was there 50 years ago, a.k.a. last Thursday. I can't spot my village, but in working on this project I have been able to revisit it. And you.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

27. John Scholz

If you want inner peace find it in solitude, not speed; and if you would find yourself, look to the land from which you came and to which you go.

— Steward L. Udall, “The Quiet Crisis”

Nepal???

Where is Nepal? I had applied to Peace Corps for Chile, Bolivia or Peru not too long before, finally confronting the reality that the draft was not allowing me to continue on to grad school in European Studies/International Relations. I guess Peace Corps learned from my application that I liked countries with mountains. Turned out that Peace Corps Nepal only delayed my academic career, but it certainly shifted my focus from Europe to South Asia, and from important worldly affairs to more mundane questions about policy and government impacts on people’s lives. I ended up later choosing Berkeley for graduate school, mainly because Leo Rose, the most prominent (only?) American authority on Nepalese politics, was there. But more on this later.

Lessons of life learned in Nepal?? Well, there’s that mechanism for coping with the sinking feeling when Mr. Pande of the Agricultural Development
Bank gave me a puzzled, sorrowful look as he drove off into the sunset after dropping me off in Letang. There’s the ability to shut down for hours at a time instead of exploding when RNAC cancelled my ticket again. The simple joys of opening the big trunk for a new book and a shot of scotch, chilled with hail from a passing storm. The first life lesson about not cooking lentils in a pressure cooker. The relief of not dying after that first bout of bacillary dysentery. The delight of setting off into the Nepal hills without a map, where the next tea shop is always just “ek kosh” away. The incredible hospitality of poor villagers in remote places. The unbearable frustration of being dependent on farming for existence. Perhaps even the peacefulness of meditation, although for me this lesson never seemed to translate to life in America.

The most fun?? I spent several wonderful months trekking all over the eastern hills from Darjeeling to Kathmandu with Tika, my young cook. I had finished working with the training programs for the next agricultural groups, so I was no longer an official Peace Corps ambassador, and I could do and say what I wanted. I had reached the magical 26th birthday (celebrated unhappily in Delhi with a charming female scion of the Sikkimese royal family, but that is another story) so had no cares. (Well, actually I later found that I did get drafted, but the local office had sent the notice by regular mail to Nepal. When it arrived several months after I was 26, Peace Corps was very helpful in getting the notice rescinded).
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

The biggest effect of Peace Corps came shortly after this long trek, when I met my future wife, Claudia, in the PC training office. She was working temporarily until secretaries came with a new group. She was not particularly happy to type up my messy training program notes, but we began actually talking at the Marine’s TGIF party one Friday, and we’ve been together ever since. We got married in Kathmandu a few years later, complete with a *bhoj* at the Peace Restaurant (the roast suckling street pig presented with apple in mouth was not the best memory, though the meat was delicious). We honeymooned at BP Shrestha’s Dhulikhel hotel, followed by a trek from Bandipur to the Annapurna Sanctuary. Adventure, not luxury, at least not until we returned later for my dissertation research.

Grad school was supposed to help me figure out what had been going on in that village I spent those 2+ years in, and to understand why the nice people of Nepal were so poor while America was so rich. The answer seemed pretty clear in Nepal. Remember that government program to give out development loans to progressive farmers that was announced in our first year? Everything I read in the *Regmi Digest* about the national policy seemed perfect for the few farmers I worked with, all of modest means who had difficulty paying for the new seeds, fertilizer and (gulp) pesticides. When the guidelines were discussed by our Biratnagar Ag officer, however, they added the fiscally responsible requirement that the *pradhaan panch* had to co-sign all loans. Of course, he wanted the loans to go to his buddies, who I am sure were planning to resell the subsidized fertilizers across the border. No loans for my farmers. No wonder this country is screwed up...

It wasn’t long after I got to Berkeley that Professor Wildavsky enlightened me that the US wasn’t so different. He documented the same kinds of dysfunctional changes in Federal job stimulation policies in Oakland, California, where money intended to increase employment was used by local elites to subsidize a sports arena and highway exchange that would have been built anyway and provided almost no new jobs. So idiotic policies probably weren’t the main cause of poverty (although they didn’t help either), but they were pretty interesting to study. The economic development classes at Berkeley tended to blame poverty on backward authoritarian policies and the traditional thinking of conservative peasants. These traditional peasants didn’t seem anything like the farmers I had known, of course, so that approach didn’t seem promising either.
After several years of unenlightening “development studies” at Berkeley, I was antsy to get back to Nepal, this time to study their land reform program that seemed promising but very ambiguous while we were in Nepal. Break up the rich estates that local and absentee elites had grabbed during the slow, messy transition from the Ranas to the King’s absolute power. Get the land into the hands of the more progressive owner-farmers more interested in boosting production. So a nice study grant gave us two more great years in Nepal to figure out what was going wrong.

Wow, our own rented *pakka* house in Baneswor Heights (corruption hill) in Kathmandu; Balan, the fabulous cook we “inherited” from Jeff and Sue Malick; a 90cc Honda road bike. Another delightful time of life. Some great adventures, like when Claudia flew down from Kathmandu to visit me during field work in Jhapa. She surprised me with some then-unavailable treats from the Commissary, while I surprised her with a borrowed elephant from one of the rich landowners I had talked with—and off we went on an unforgettable picnic. Lots of little memories from field research as well with my research assistant. Our collusion with the rebellious sons of the rich Rajbansi landowner (a village with one big house surrounded by many, many little ones. No need to ask about the power structure here...). We met them in a little shed well after dark to share the forbidden treats not allowed by their strict father. We were very surprised when the expected *raksi* never appeared, and in its place were four forbidden hard boiled eggs that they were so proud to share with us in sin!

The last field research memory convinced me that it was time to stop. We left one of the more contested areas in Jhapa, talking first with the Limbu Gurkhas (who cleared and cultivated the former forests) in the *chiyaa pasal* on their side of the *panchaayat*. Very nice, very cordial, except for the *khukris* they each carried and their excited claims that the land around them was theirs. Then we drove past the Brahmin-Chhetri tea shop on the other side of town, where the WWII rifles and pistols were not at all hidden, and the discussion was about when to go harvest the crops on “their” land. They waived the deeds supposedly showing that they owned the land claimed by the Limbus. The police were with them, but no one seemed ready to lead the charge against the other tea shop. Nor did we want to be around when it happened. I learned a lot about land reform that day!

In Jhapa, at least, land reform was mainly about who would end up with real titles to the forest lands that were being destroyed all around. Also
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

about which set of hill people could take more lands from the rich tribal leaders, and whether madhesi wealth could outmaneuver pahaaDi political contacts for contested lands. My initial hero was one Land Reform Officer who very effectively confiscated land and favored the actual tenant farmers, at least for the first year he was in Jhapa. He really had the big landowners shaking, and knew it. So the second year, before he was transferred, he cashed out, leaving a trail of stories of cash transferred in beer bottles, water gaagros, and outhouses, arranged through a large cast of characters. That was a big lesson for me in one kind of administrative strategy in Nepal... It really helped cloud the picture of what was going on in the land reform program.

So after a decade living in and studying Nepal, I made a (foolishly) surprising discovery. My dissertation, articles, and book with Leo Rose on Nepal (Nepal: Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom) didn’t give me much leverage for getting a university job in political science. So I kept my focus on policies, but needed a few years of retooling in American regulatory and environmental policy before starting my academic career.

I’ve returned to Nepal thrice since then. I went with Leo Rose and Fred Gaige to observe the first national election in the 1990s. I covered the eastern hills, and everywhere I went the leftists won in a landslide—it was only then I found that my quaint Letang was a leftist hotbed when I was there. (So much for observing the obvious...) As a Fulbright professor at Tribhuvan in the late 1990s, I actually managed to teach two full days of statistics in a semester ridden by student strikes. (No problem, PC prepared me well to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities.) My last pleasure trip took me to Langtang Himal the year before the earthquake completely buried the town. The Himalayas are as incredible as ever, although they seem to be getting much harder to climb. And returning by bus to the far eastern hills during Dashain was an unforgettable spectacle of red saris and dusty crowds, with me and the women riding inside, while the Nepali men rode on the roof. But the most amazing sights were the breathtaking changes in the towns and villages!

I remembered how sad I was during my dissertation research in 1975 to see the destruction of the incredible belt of forests I used to walk in for three hours to get to the Rajmarga for a dusty jeep ride to the agricultural office in
Beautiful teak logs were being burned along the roadsides just to get rid of the trees shading the new fields. When I last visited “my” village of Letang during the last trip, busses ran every half hour along that now-paved road to Letang, past rich fields and a few patches of forest land. Some express busses kept going past Letang to towns in the hills that used to be almost all forest. Letang itself was completely transformed: free wifi in the three hotels, cable TV in many houses, running water in most (no sewer lines, though). There was a national agricultural bank training facility, a private junior college, and most surprising, ten Christian churches! (Why ten???, I never found out.)

I couldn’t recognize my old house, although it turned out to still be the most disreputable house on the block. My old friend and neighbor still lived next door in a nice pakka, new concrete-column house with large windows, running water, and modern toilets. The guy my age that I spent much time with, who had never been to Dharan or Biratnagar while I lived next door: now he was the proud father of a doctor son working in Glasgow and a nurse daughter who had worked in the Philippines and who has been to Europe several times!!! I spent a great Dashaain with his family. Biggest moment of nostalgia, he claimed that a small cotton mattress airing on his roof was the same mattress I’d given him 45 years earlier when I left the village! I also met my former cook/nokar Tika, who worked for me for two years and walked the eastern hills with me for several months after I had finished. Still poor, with bad stomach problems, but still telling a fascinating whirlwind of stories I could somewhat comprehend.

So I never really figured out why that village had been so poor, and now I’m also puzzled about how dramatically life has improved there. I had visited my childhood town outside Chicago for a 50th reunion just before going to Nepal, and it had scarcely changed in that same time period. Perhaps it was the stimulus of unintended humor I injected into village life??? I was also amazed at how beautiful Letang looked, with the lush green foothills and picturesque rice fields. Did I forget how beautiful it was, or has that changed too??? What a stroke of good fortune it was to spend some years immersed in a fascinating way of life that is no longer, and is rapidly disappearing from this world.
28. John Tegenfeldt

My life is my message. -- Mahatma Gandhi

**When**

I received my letter to join the Peace Corps in Nepal I was so excited and felt so fortunate. It had been my first choice for various reasons. Going back to Asia where I had grown up. Being in “Gurkha Land” and the Himalayas. And more importantly not being in India! I had just turned 21 at the time, so the idea of getting a two-year deferral also was an added blessing at that point.

I had grown up in Northern Burma, Myitkyina by name, (Chuck is one of the few that I know who has visited there), where my parents served as missionaries for 20-plus years. So growing up, as the only American kid within 500 miles, I was bilingual (Burmese), and my friends were Burmese, Kachins, Karens, Chinese, Indians, and, yes, some Gurkhas, some of whom were eventually re-settled in the *taraai*, where they were called “Burmalis.” Interestingly enough, they were located less than five miles from Khajura (where I lived), and I could go over and still speak some Burmese with them!

The closest International School when I was growing up was either in Northern India (Mussoorie), or Southern India (Kodaikanal). So at the age of eight, I was packed up with my two older sisters and took the five-day trip to
Kodaikanal, by plane, Indian rail, and bus to start fourth grade. At the time, every five years we as a family would have “home leave” for a year, and we always spent those in western Washington, where we had relatives. Those experiences, as well as my college experience, always reinforced for me that even though my Kodaikanal classmates had similar experiences growing up, virtually no one else that I would ever meet could relate to what had been in my mind a “normal” upbringing! But despite the travel and exposure to all sorts of different people and cultures, it was a cloistered upbringing, as I grew up in my early years on a “compound” in Burma, and the International School was almost all American kids who were 95% WASPs.

A big part of my wanting to return to Asia was to bridge that gap in my learning and understanding, and I felt to do that I needed to live a village life, and be involved at a hands-on level in some kind of development work. Not having a skill, I couldn’t be a “stumpy,” so agriculture became my calling! And what better place to start this new venture than Cactus Corners in Davis, California. By the way, although it has totally changed, that area in Davis is still called Cactus Corners.

Training in Davis was fun and presented some interesting challenges. Meeting the Nepalese instructors, learning some about the Hindu and Muslim culture we were going to be immersed in, tending to our rice and vegetable gardens, and maneuvering through the various shrinks who seemed to be omnipresent taught me various skills that would come in handy during the next two years. I never really believed in what they called “self-selection,” so I kept my guard up to a degree. The only negative for me during that time—and it continued through Parwanipur—was the loss that I would feel when one of the other PCVs for whatever reason left to go back home. The bonding that occurred when you lived 24/7 with people who were going through intense personal experiences cannot be underestimated, and I would feel that loss when they left.

Leaving Davis meant that this was all now real and happening. Arriving in Hong Kong and then Dum Dum Airport at Calcutta were familiar places where I had spent other visits, so that was not strange. I still remember Buerge’s reaction in Calcutta when he saw a man spit red betel juice onto the sidewalk: he totally recoiled, as he assumed that the man had a bad case of TB and was spitting up blood, which he made sure he avoided! Kathmandu was an exotic and beautiful reprieve compared to the human cauldron of Calcutta.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

The village visit was a little alarming for me. The PCV I visited in a Tharu village seemed to me to have gone a little jangli. His health was not good; he was using various local potions for everything; and he seemed to have no focus on what he was doing or why. He also did not seem to have any close contacts with any other PCVs. I vowed that I would not let that happen to me, and again I was fortunate to be in a good foursome: Gilji, Jack, Dexter (Newton III, no less) and myself. Dexter told us that his father, a fourth generation Bostonian, had always warned him never to go west of the Hudson River, as you never know what you will find out there. His father was a wise man!!

By the time we arrived in Parwanipur, we knew that we would be studying another language, Hindi, because someone thought that the dehaati dialect that we would be faced with was a mixture of Hindi and Nepali (not). More significantly we were being sent out to the Gobi Desert of Nepal, the western district of Banke, to perform our Johnny Appleseed miracles. I was envious of those staying in the mountains or Chitwan, as that was the Nepal I thought I had been sent to.

Any initial concerns of where I would live, eat, work, etc. resolved themselves relatively quickly. Jack and I had neighboring panchaayats, Dexter was 45 minutes away, and Gil was on the east side of Nepalgunj about a 45-minute bike ride. I soon found a local respected Muslim farmer who was interested in the new wheat and had a nice field close to water, so all looked like it was meant to be. It was clear that water/irrigation was going to be a limiting factor, and so by the time we went back to Kathmandu both Jack and Gil were looking for new assignments. I took over much of Jack’s panchaayat and by that time Dexter was getting busy with his villages.

The next 21 months were some of the slowest and at times most frustrating moments in my then young life, but also some of the most interesting. Watching the full moon and telling them at that moment there was an American astronaut walking on it—“boppity bop, Sahib!” Participating in their various festivals and bhofs. I was initially not afflicted with as many of the illnesses that most of you experienced, in fact at our first 6-month get-together in Kathmandu, I think I was one of two who had put on weight.
The work did not progress as fast as I thought or wanted it to, as local attitudes often got in the way. When I would take farmers over to see my demonstration projects, they would be very impressed and would then say, “I bet in your country everybody does krishi bikaash....in our country we don’t!” But even in that, there were many lifelong lessons learned. Also I started to better understand the very real structural issues that were getting in the way of development, most of which needed a political and value-based change in attitudes. And that made me realize that even though I had spent only 7 of my first 21 years of life in the States, my values and political priorities were far more American. Did I then have a right to try to impose those values on Nepal? They needed to come up with their own approaches and solutions and struggle with that as a society.

I was starting to conclude that my future was more back in the States rather than internationally, whereas when I joined the Peace Corps I thought I would probably go into economic development internationally. The last few months in Nepal were something of a blur: saying goodbye; being shocked that my lottery number for the draft was 23, and what was I now going to do; getting up to the base camp of Everest with Dexter, Jack and Chuck; and finally travelling home in four weeks rather than the one year I had planned on, as my I-A notice did find me in Kathmandu!

I eventually was able to get a 4-F medical deferment, but re-entry to the States was more difficult than I had anticipated. I missed the friendship that Dexter and I had forged together as we supported each other through those two years. I missed the villagers always being curious about what I had been up to that day and how I was. And again in my life, being back home was strange as very few could relate to what I had been through and didn’t either care to know or didn’t know how to find out.

The next few years saw me going into the field of health care management, starting with the graduate program at the University of Minnesota. Part of that program was a ten-month administrative residency, which I did in Vancouver, Canada. It was 1974. Jimmy Carter was talking National Health Insurance, and I thought getting some experience with that system would put me in good stead coming back to the States. That never happened: each time I was ready to leave, an interesting opportunity presented itself to me in Vancouver, including being the CEO of BC’s Children’s Hospital for 17 years. Through that we developed some partnerships in Guangzhou and Shanghai and an opportunity then to work in Beijing for two years.
I can't imagine my life without having been in the Peace Corps. It is one of the building blocks that made me who I am and gave me the confidence to do and to be, and steered me in a career direction that had much meaning for me.

Editor’s note: Shortly after submitting this chapter, our warmly loved and respected friend John Tegenfeldt passed away from a heart attack on February 25, 2019. The following is a tribute that his close friend Dexter Newton has written to honor his memory.

The sudden deaths of those who have been close to us are always shocking, but this one hits me particularly hard, not only because John was my best friend during two intense and wonderful years when we shared virtually every meaningful experience, but also because I had always thought of him as one of the healthiest people I knew, partly because as a son of Burma and India he seemed impervious to the diseases the rest of us got, but also because he was so stunningly and consistently sane. When John met my mother a couple of years after we had returned to the States, she said, "Thank you for taking care of Dexter over there." John laughed and assured her that the arrangement was entirely mutual, and I like to think it was, but I relied on him as naturally as I have ever relied on anyone, and he never disappointed.

Our very best friends sustain us even in their physical absence. We carry them with us and summon them when we need to remind ourselves that our lives are a blessing. John was one of my very best friends. He still is. He always will be.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report
Now I see the secret of making the best person: it is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.

-- Walt Whitman

Training (Broadly Defined)

Imperfectly socialized and with a vigorous inner life, I have always been slow to catch up with my fellows. I got a driver’s license, for instance, only just before leaving for Peace Corps work in Nepal. And I became amorous only in my mid-20s, after I reached Madison (I sure was enthusiastic thereafter, though). And by the time I became a hippie, there were no others left.

So it was characteristic that when we reached Peace Corps in-country training at the Parwanipur agricultural research station, I had never been stoned. All these other guys had been going out to the fields in Davis, to hang around the pump and act suspicious, and I’d barely noticed.

One night, towards the end of training, I was sitting with my friend Tom Suby (see more on him in the following section) on a rice terrace, listening to the frogs and guffing in a contented way. Tom pulled out a briar pipe and his sack of gaanjaa, filled it up, and lit. He took a toke and held it out to
me. Ah, no thanks, I said; nothing seems to happen when I smoke dope. He looked at me in bemused surprise: “Buck, you hold tight for a moment; we can fix that—you just haven’t been around the right people.”

He returned in a moment, repacked his pipe, and fired up. “Try this,” he said from the top of his lungs. “This will definitely get you off: it’s hash and tobacco; inhale smooth and deep.”

I did, and after a moment I realized Tom did indeed know his stuff: my selfness had blipped out. I was cocooned in the very, very loud music of frogs, and my consciousness was looking out through layer upon layer of sensation and perception. I was falling backwards, watching reality slide around me.

Buck, I thought, you are in the grip of a Dangerous Drug. You may never get out of these cages within cages. Yet I found I was not afraid. I realized that I would still exist, still be there, whatever happened, and that so long as I was, then all was ok. I could even handle total insanity.

This was a very refreshing discovery. And I noticed the frogs again, and then glided forward through all the layers of my mind again, and was once more out front in reality. This, I thought, is interesting, though pretty extreme. I wonder if I’ll be able to swing up the rafter into my bunk.

I could. But I was somewhat stoned for three days....

Nepali Sensitivity to Others

Towards the end of our term in Nepal, a friend and I walked over the ridge beside Dharan and sat on a terrace beside a footpath. As we gazed over the valley, we spoke of how much we loved this land. How much better we would do were we recommencing our stay! Love, nostalgia, the desire to have given service more worthy of Nepal’s welcome; we talked for hours.

Then Bob looked over the ridge and saw a woman duck down. “Buck, let’s vacate the trail.”

We did, and a long line of Nepalis walked by, calling greetings. They had been waiting hidden for hours, lest they disturb us in our high-hearted conversation.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Ganja and Competence

After finishing my own stint as a volunteer, I was invited to be the director of a training program for new volunteers in Parwanipur. When it was all over, Larry J. and I stayed behind to close up. Larry was excellent company. He spoke impeccable Nepali. He’d been in charge of the language instruction, and had dealt with the Nepali language teachers, as well as handling all the negotiations with the catering staff and the guards.

The camp consisted of a number of wattle-and-daub thatched huts for sleeping and instruction, built in a mango grove on the grounds of an agricultural research station. The grove was a former Muslim graveyard, and we would stub our toes on old pottery when playing volleyball.

The huts and other permanent fixtures could safely stay, but all the furniture and files and other loose stuff had to be taken back to Kathmandu. Larry had arranged for a big truck, and a gang of guys to help us pack it up, and a crew to drive the truck to Kathmandu. They were to come on a Monday, about four days after everyone else had left.

We spent those days packing everything up, and also lazing about, talking and admiring the post-monsoon skyscapes, and sleeping next to a fire under Orion’s Sword. I had been very busy for months, and could finally read a book for pleasure. The only one available was a western by Luke Short. As I finished each page, I laid it on the fire.

When Monday came, we were all ready. We waited for the truck, but it never came. Finally about 3, we gave up on it, and Larry got out his hookah, and stuffed it with hash and tobacco. We got royally stoned, and passed an evening of great jollity and brilliance.

The next day we got up bright and early, but, again, no truck. We were stoned by 3. Wednesday was the same.

On Thursday, we gave up on the truck by noon, and toked up. We had just finished the hookah, and were settling back by the fire, when the truck rolled through the gate, loaded with grinning Nepalis, obviously eager and happy to work.
Buck Trawicky

We looked at each other in dismay. I had once spent a summer as a furniture mover, and I knew that this truck was too small. Larry knew it, too. That’s not the one I ordered, he said; My God, what do we do?

There was no alternative: we had to fit everything into a truck too small. And we had to do it while ripped to the gills. This was a very interesting problem. It immediately engrossed us.

I waved the truck to a central spot and leaped up on the tailgate. I announced myself the Loader. Larry was in charge of designating the stuff to be brought in sequence. The crew divided themselves into teams. There was an immense collection of stuff to load, mainly office equipment. There were desks, chairs, filing cabinets, lamps, cartons of papers, and much else.

That job was a triumph of loading: in four hours, I packed that stuff so tight there was no air left in the spaces. Every spot was used. It filled the truck, and when tarped and lashed down with a diamond hitch, it was never going to shift. When we finished, and had sent the truck off, Larry and I felt like heroes. We had done the impossible, and we had done it stoned.

The next day, we drove up to Kathmandu. When we reached the Peace Corps office, the truck had beaten us by about three hours, but it was still there, surrounded by people trying to unload it. My, but they were frustrated. It was like a puzzle, trying to unload that truck: nothing could simply be lifted out; everything had to be examined to see what small space-filling items had to be removed before the main object could be freed. Each desk drawer was filled; the fridge was filled; chairs were twined around each other. The Kathmandu guys also wished we had gotten a larger truck, but they were nonetheless very impressed. Fortunately, by the time we arrived, the puzzle’s code had been solved, and we were not needed. We could sit with beers and admire the deconstruction of our masterpiece.

In our private judgment, all praise was due to gaanjaa.

Peace Corps Nepal: Nepal/17 – “Never Again”

During that time as a training director, I was vouchsafed the official Kathmandu opinion of our group, Nepal/17 (Agricultural Extension). Which was that we were Superb, but They would Never Do This Again.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Before we came in (so goes the story), the Peace Corps people back in Washington had fallen in love with Nepal (as had the rest of the world). And PC/DC decided to give PC/Kathmandu a present: first pick of PC applicants. So, PC/Kathmandu got to pick. And they picked Us. Of everyone in the PC universe of applicants.

Now, we think PC (in Nepal/17) picked the best companions in the world, and we did indeed do good work, and we’ve gone on to continue to do good work, and be moderately impeccable persons. But, Boy Oh Boy! They thought us a handful. And decided that they’d Never Do This Again—from now on they’d live with the picks of PC/DC—and spurn such gifts!

The Ghost of Kabul

Peace Corps work in Nepal had been a lovely experience, one strong enough to color all the rest of my life. And it definitely helped me make richer travel plans.

First, it’s appealing to be light and untethered when travelling. Secondly, the wild parts of South Asia are entrancing. So I seriously thought of walking to Europe. It’s about 8,000 miles to England. Hmm, I thought, 30 miles a day, with lots of stops. At least half a year, assuming you’ll take the train or a lift sometimes. A year if you do 20 miles a day.
Then I thought: Ah! Let’s do this right. A horse; yes, yes. Ride a horse across Asia to Constantinople. Ride into town with a quiver at our right knee, in good shape, and looking for a merry honky-tonk.

Afghanistan is famous for horses. Afghan polo (buzkashi), perhaps the ur-form of the ritual, is played with the sand-stuffed carcass of a long-haired sheep. For the past forty years, riders have been forbidden to use knives on opponents; whips and fists only, and only as a sideline. Moreover, the game is now played with only two teams on the field. So it’s grown a bit tamer, but is still nothing that American sports prepares one for.

The players of this game are excellent horsemen, and their country raises superb horses. The horses are like the Afghanis themselves. They are passionate and explosive, and full of horsey nimbleness. The land is dusty, and many get shallow-winded. They are capable of great loyalty and attentive love. Afghanis prefer to ride stallions; geldings were used only by the Royal Afghan Army. It is dangerous to ride a mare: you could easily get your back broken if an amorous stallion galloped up.

So, I thought: Go to Afghanistan, get a horse, and ride to Europe. But research showed that there was an awful desert in the way. Western Afghanistan and eastern Iran are very dry. One could walk it; but horses could not carry enough water to live between springs.

All right, I thought, I’ll ride within Afghanistan. Just a piece of Asia will be fine. I was also eager to set out, for I was off to Afghanistan to learn the language, get a horse, and roam in the back lands. All this I did, for four months.

So on May 20 of 1971 I left Nepal for Afghanistan. My desire was to move across Asia to Europe, at a slow pace, on forgotten back roads, with descriptions of walking the length of India as a mendicant monk. All those villages, each a world. That’s the kind of travel I wanted.

My best Nepali friend, Ajaya Rayamaji, sent me off with a necklace of flowers. I rode down the cork-screwy highway to the Indian border on the top of a truck, still entranced and delighted by this very rural, jangli country, already sad to go.

And after a time I came to Kabul. Afghanistan was exhilarating. My Asia had been Nepal and northern India (which suffers in the comparison). Both are
feminine countries. Afghanistan seemed a very masculine place. A young man with thick wrists, that was Afghanistan.

My first sight of Afghanistan was at the Khyber Pass. The bus stopped at the top, and we all got out. Perched on the skyline, squatting in the Asian rest, were four or five Afghanis, each with a rifle leaning against the shoulder.

Wow, I thought, open firearms. In Nepal and India these are tightly controlled. It was impressive to see the citizenry armed.

Our visas were stamped for three months, and we were warned that if we overstayed our visa, we’d be fined. (Fined! Other places put you in jail; you just paid a fee to stay longer in Afghanistan. What a deal.)

At the bank I tendered some $50 bills for afghanis. The teller said that since I had cash instead of travel–er’s checks, he recommended that I go to the money bazaar; they gave a somewhat better rate than the banks, if you had dollar bills (Ye gods! What he’s calling “the money market” other countries call the Black Market, and it’s a crime to deal with it.) In Afghanistan, the afghani is worth what the world would pay. The value of it dropped seasonally, during pilgrimage time. When Muslims went on the Hajj to Mecca, they wanted an international currency, and paid top afghani for dollars (smart pilgrims bought well in advance). For the rest of the year, the afghani was fairly stable.

I visited this bazaar, and changed my money. Then I wandered through the rest of it, looking at the carpets, brass work, cloth. There was a whole section devoted to firearms. You could buy pistols or rifles. You could buy Afghani rifles (they started making their own, generations ago, as soon as they got a few samples). You could not buy automatic weapons, though, and no mortars. I was very impressed. The US certainly doesn’t tolerate such potentiality. India never would. Yet in Afghanistan it was taken for granted that every adult male could be armed.

You could not, however, export horses, dogs, or a chaddar (the Muslim body veil for women). The chaddar clause reflected religious modesty, I think. The prohibition about horses and dogs reflected the peoples’ needs. Many, many Afghans used horses and dogs, and they could never outbid rich Germans or Japanese or Americans. The best stock would flow out of the country if export were permitted. So if you bought a horse in Afghanistan, you had to
leave him there. You had to sell to a used horse dealer, or to another rider. The same with dogs.

There was also a limit on how many square meters of carpet you could export; the reasoning was the same. A very sane government. (Then those trivial Marxist whippersnappers overthrew the monarchy, and all went to hell.)

I found a cheap room, and installed my own padlock. Then I visited the Peace Corps office, and recruited a language instructor to teach me Farsi, using Peace Corps training materials. I settled down to three hours of instruction each morning, and began using the language right away in the bazaars and tea shops. (Peace Corps had taught me how to learn a language, and I was ardent about becoming competent in Farsi.)

Next I had to find a horse, and learn to ride him and care for him. I found an AID guy, a veterinarian from Texas, who offered to check out any horse I thought of buying, lest I get a lemon.

And in a tea shop I met a seller. This fellow was a hippie who’d been in Afghanistan for many months, and rented a whole house. About six people lived there. The house was of two stories, had a garden with its own well, and a high wall around everything. This guy, Mel, had all kinds of animals: a horse, a dog, cats, a parrot. And they were all getting sick and dying. He thought he was hexed. He was certain that he and his wife and daughter needed to leave Afghanistan for a while. (I did buy the horse, and stabled him elsewhere.)

I came to know these people fairly well in the next month; I would often come by to visit, and stay for hours. Gradually, I learned why he felt hexed: he was certain his house was haunted by a malign spirit.

One evening, I was present for a sample. We were downstairs smoking and suddenly there was the sound of footsteps on the floor above: bare feet on a squeaky floor. Mel was outraged, and he shouted “Get the hell out of my bedroom!” I ran upstairs to the hallway, and stood outside his room. It was dark upstairs, and the hair bristled on the back of my head. I calmed myself, and thought benign and curious intentions. I opened the door and walked in, but found nothing. It was just a bedroom.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

That night, Mel told me how this all began. Several months before, he and his wife and friends had dropped acid. In the course of the trip, they decided to try to get up on the roof to admire the night sky. They looked upstairs, and found a hatchway into the attic and through to the roof. The roof was not especially steep, but it was of metal and very dewy and slippery, so they didn’t linger. But as they were preparing to return, they noticed a cubical masonry structure in the attic. “My God,” said one of the Italians, “Someone’s buried up here; there’s his tomb.” Very sobered, even frightened, they all hastily descended; they didn’t even replace the hatch covers.

Much later they went to bed, and to sleep. About four in the morning Mel’s wife shook him awake. She had heard something, and was worried about their daughter. The little girl was not in her bed. They looked up the hatchway, and saw her standing on the roof in the moonlight. Mel swarmed up and caught her tight, thoroughly scared she might slip and fall.

They asked her why she had gone up there. The girl said that the Goat Boy had come to her bed, and invited her up onto the roof. The Goat Boy was a young boy they had known in Morocco, who very nimbly climbed down cliffs for birds’ eggs to give their daughter. She thought he was wonderful.

Mel and his wife were quite shaken. They replaced the hatch covers, and vowed to have nothing more to do with the attic or its tomb. But since that night, small and mounting disasters had plagued their house. They felt infested and oppressed. Those footsteps overhead in the bedroom were the last straw. They were leaving town the next day.

They offered me the house for free while they were gone if I’d be the caretaker and water the garden. I accepted immediately; I liked the house, and I had never lived with a ghost before.

The next day they set off for India, three hippies in sandals, with all their goods in a hand apiece. I waved them off and returned to the house. And the very first thing I did was to go up into the attic; I had to see this tomb.

It wasn’t a tomb. It was a concrete water cistern a meter square. Only an architectural illiterate on acid would think this a tomb. Shaking my head, I returned downstairs, and resumed my life. I was never troubled by any ghostly high-jinks whatever.
The house had definitely been haunted, but by a ghost specific to those hippies: they had created it themselves.

“Welcome” Home

Wearying at last of hot countries where one cannot drink the water, I left Afghanistan after four months with my saddle over my shoulder. I flew to Greece, where I had been before (and with great appreciation), and then took a train to Austria. The rest of Europe I crossed with my thumb, visiting old haunts. (And Oh!, there are some very slow ways to hitchhike: trying it with a wolf as companion is one such, and having a saddle on your shoulder is another. The cars slow down, gawk, and speed off.)

In Britain I visited a friend, and spent a happy week buying many, many books, about 150 of them, a delicious luxury. And what a pleasure it was to be able to speak English with anyone I met. Then I packed up my saddle and the books in a tea chest and sent it home, and set off for the Highlands, to trek about on pilgrimage, visiting the best single-malt whisky distilleries.

Now, I love the Highlands, and had long anticipated coming back to them. Yet I was in Scotland for less than a week when I realized one morning that it was time to go home. I had left Afghanistan before I had to, surfeited with Asia; I had left Europe because I wanted to hear my own language; and now I had to leave Britain, only because it was not my country. I had no choice, even though I still had plenty of money in my belt, and no real home to return to: my parents now lived in Alabama.

So I hitched to Luxembourg, and lived in a beautiful beech forest across from the airport for three days, as I waited on standby for a cheap Icelandic airplane home. I flew to New York, visited my college for a day or two, and then bused to D.C., my home area, where my brother lived. Lovely. I was indeed home, and I liked it. I stayed with Peter for about a week, visiting my high school, sampling book stores, meeting friends, strolling through my old neighborhood, guffing with Pete each day. Then it was time to go to my parents’ house in Alabama, and stay for some months. So Peter took me to the Greyhound bus station, gave me a hug, and drove away. I sat there in contentment, with a book to read, coffee at hand, and my pack under foot. My thoughts were on the pleasure of being with my parents again, and the many interesting courses I could next take with my life.

Within half an hour I was arrested.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

This was 1970, a grim (though exuberant) time for us all. There was much paranoia and illegitimacy in the government, and much harshness towards citizens. I had been away since the police riot at the '68 Democratic Convention; each week the Peace Corps office in Kathmandu sent us the *New York Times*’ “Week in Review,” and we would read of the US with bemusement and fresh surprise.

After all this time, the US was another foreign country, though one where I was a citizen, and could take responsibility for its governance. But I already realized that I should apply the same general rules of conduct here as anywhere else: be courteous, attentive, and unthreatening; know the local customs, and don't be too strange. I thought I was following these rules, but I erred.

True, I wore shoes, smoked nothing stronger than Camels, had hair of reasonable length, and was clean, un-bearded and neatly dressed (though the clothes were foreign). But I was still in error.

I loved my pack. It was the tightest, smallest pack of gear you can imagine. It was an Army musette bag, with Nepali tumpline straps for my shoulders. Attached to it were a very light down sleeping bag, a folding umbrella, an Army poncho, and an Army canteen and cup. Within were extra clothes, a sack of vital oddments, and rations. On top was strapped an *oDhne* (a Nepali cloak-blanket), rolled around a *khukri*, with the *khukri*’s handle free for the grasping. I had everything I needed, and nothing more.

Let me tell you about *khukris*. In Nepal there are two universal tools, which all men and women use. One is the *kodaalo*, a superbly-balanced hoe; it is used for many, many farming jobs. The other is the *khukri*, a chopping knife, like a machete. Like the *kodaalo*, it is very well-evolved. A good *khukri* has a heavy blade about 12 or 14 inches long, with a handle of water-buffalo horn. The best *khukris* are made of Land Rover springs, and they should cut a coin in half with one slice. The blade is curved, with the edge on the inside curve, and the weight towards the front. It chops with great ease and grace. It is excellent for cutting bamboo and small trees, and perfect for butchering. It is also ideal for decapitation, and looks it. Gurkha soldiers carry the *khukri* and with it have terrified the Germans in two world wars. Like everyone else in Nepal’s countryside, I had become accustomed
to carrying a *khukri* wherever I went, and found it constantly useful. It was part of my basic baggage.

So, there I sat, miles off in my mind, when an armed Greyhound Terminal guard broke into my reverie, to ask if this was my pack. I said, “Certainly.” He stooped over, put two fingers on the handle of the *khukri*, pulled out four inches of the blade, pushed it back in the sheath, straightened up, and said that I was under arrest for public possession of a deadly weapon, and I must accompany him. I said, “Surely, and should I carry the pack, or would he rather do it?” His partner approached, and picked it up.

They bracketed me, and we walked to an employees-only doorway and through it into a room with some tables and chairs where waited two D.C. cops. One told me that they were arresting me for possession of a deadly weapon, and told me to put my hands behind my back. I was handcuffed. Then my rights were read to me, and the guards left. The policemen reported in to their precinct. They were not abusive, and the cuffs were not too tight.

One picked up my pack (with a grunt: like the truck I had packed in Parwanipur, it was more solid than it looked), put it on the table, opened it, and began to remove things. They unrolled and looked at the oDhne, and then folded it. One picked up the *khukri* in its scabbard, and grasped the handle. “Be careful!” I said. “There’s a way to hold the scabbard, or you can cut your fingers. The *khukri* is curved, and sharpened on the inside; and the scabbard there is just thin leather. If you wrap your hand about the scabbard, and pull wrong on the handle, you can cut your fingers right off. You must hold the scabbard lightly in your palm, and pull out the *khukri* in a curve, pressing on your palm.” I turned to show my hands, and mimicked the motion. He copied me, and pulled out the *khukri*.

This was a good, plain and sharp *khukri*. When seen for the first time, with policeman’s eyes, it was a very deadly-looking thing.

Search him, reminded the one cop to his partner. He patted down my pockets, and pulled out my Swiss army knife. Jesus, another one, he said. He emptied my pockets: matches, smokes, pen and pencil, pocket notebook, passport and ready cash, a map, a silk scarf, water purification tablets, braided nylon cord, a sharpening stone, a comb, small vice-grips, a whistle, a flashlight, a tin of Essential Balm, and another paperback.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

They seemed done. I called their attention to a sheath knife on my belt, under my Nehru jacket. This was a nice knife, Canadian, with a stout blade and pretty lines. Not too large (but five inches of blade, nonetheless), with a very pleasing feel in the hand and in use, and not a weapon—just a well-conceived tool. But it was most definitely a knife, and over the four-inch limit. The cop who’d missed it was exasperated with himself.

Well, I thought, we’d best do this all at once. “Sirs,” I said, “there is one final knife, in my pack. If you pull out the denim sack and open it, you’ll find a whittling knife next to the monocular, half-way down.” This was a Case pocket knife, about three-and-a-half-inches long, with three blades. (Case knives are my favorite; I learned this from my father.) This knife had a long blade, a fine blade, and a straight hollow-ground blade. The steel was superb: readily sharpened keen, with a durable temper, high-carbon. It was well-shaped and felt good in the hand. To hold it was to want to carve.

“ID,” said one. “You’ve got it there,” I said. “It’s all in the passport.” For ID I had the passport, my Peace Crops/Nepal card, my international driving license, and my Eagle Scout card. They riffled through the passport, seeing where I’d been and how long returned, and then opened the Nepal card. This had my photo, and a text in English and Nepali, saying I was a PC Volunteer, and giving my blood type and a Kathmandu address for emergencies.

“You’re in the Peace Corps?” asked one. “I’m just coming home from it,” I said, “about two weeks ago.” “Where is Nepal?” “It’s between India and Tibet; Mount Everest is there.” “What’s in your pack? Do you have any drugs?” “Just legal ones,” I said, “what a traveler would carry.” “Where are they?” “In the rolled-up towel.” So they opened the towel, one I’d cut down to size, and found my body stuff: some soap in a tobacco pouch, a folding razor, a short toothbrush, a film canister of salt, a metal signal mirror, some band-aids and gauze bandages, adhesive tape, iodine, a suture kit, and drugs. These were aspirin, toothache wax, and a canister with a mixed assortment of tablets, which could be anything. The labels from the original prescriptions were there: drugs for dysentery, systemic infection, great pain, and malaria. The police looked at them noncommitally, and proceeded to empty everything out of the pack, and to open the bundles. The table was covered; you’d never believe all that came out of a musette bag.
Buck Trawicky

I had a small sack of gems, semi-precious stones I’d bought in New Delhi for about $90. “Are these hot?” one asked. “No, no,” I said, “they’re not even that valuable. The receipt is in my passport. You could sell them here for perhaps $300.”

Throughout all of this, I had been very calm, answering everything courteously and clearly, and giving information and explanation when it would clarify things. I was attending to the police officers’ questions, and answering openly, not a bit hostile. Not even nervous.

I thought it quite possible that I’d be jailed. The impression I’d formed from several years of news was that street-level violations of the law were being punished strictly. And I realized I was definitely in violation of the law of most cities, twice over. So, I thought, Buck, you may definitely see prison. This will be very interesting, and not at all what you’d intended to do next. It will probably have few redeeming features. Forced sodomy and bad food. Yuck.

I did not feel at all afraid, nor was I at all defiant. I felt calm and open. I was having a conversation with these men, the kind you have in any daily interaction with an official: self-respect, courtesy, and attention; clarity, brevity, and amiability.

The partners were very professional. They used no more emotion than they needed, they were quite unexcited, they knew what to do, and they had no need of my subservience. This was just another task in the shift, and I was obviously not giving them any trouble.

But their curiosity was piqued. They asked more and more questions, as my answers became fuller. What had I been doing in Nepal? What did Peace Corps do? What was Nepal like? How had I gotten to the bus station, and where was I going? Was this all my baggage? Where did I sleep at night?

They took me out to the squad car. They tried to put my stuff back together, but it wouldn’t all fit, so some was carried loose; it all went in their trunk. They put me in the back seat, behind the mesh, and drove off. When they called in, they were told of a burglary report, and detoured to the scene. Both went in, and were gone for about half an hour. Then we drove to the station, while we talked about this and that.
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

At the station we all went into the sergeants’ room, and they told the policemen there about the incident, and showed my gear and papers. A general conversation ensued, about Nepal, and Peace Corps, and travel. And, in detail, about why I would carry so many blades.

I explained how useful they all were, and how natural it seemed to have them: the khukri for fires, and shelter, and anything else of wood; for cutting hay for your horse, for scooping out a cat-hold latrine, for hammering tent pegs, for butchering, and for comfort in mean-animal country. (And if it came to it, for violence, but when does such a thing ever happen?)

And the sheath knife for food, the Swiss Army knife for tools, and the Case knife for a really good blade. It all seemed very reasonable. Indeed, I could not imagine these guys getting along without such things themselves.

They assured me, with tolerant amusement, that this was not common equipment among American city dwellers. And I saw their point: upon reflection, this could seem a bit extreme.

A half-dozen of them retired to the other end of the room, and talked. They reached a decision, and returned. The cuffs were taken off, and an older guy, whom all deferred to, said that they would not book me, so I would have no arrest on my record. And they’d give me a ride back to the bus station, lest I get mugged on the way. But if I was going to Alabama, I should definitely carry the khukri rolled up out of sight in the oDhne: those Alabama cops were tough.

My Life and Family Today

After Peace Corps, Western Asia, Europe, and my parents’ home in Alabama, I came to Madison, Wisconsin, by pure good fortune. A Peace Corps friend invited me, citing its benign defects: cold and snowy winters (we have all 6 seasons!), mosquitoes to rival Alaska’s, neither mountains nor oceans—Madison would never be plagued by tourists. On the other hand, it had a superb university, the local and state governments were sane (not at present true anymore for our State, alas!), with much citizen involvement, excellent libraries, and a city built on an isthmus between lakes, with lovely houses and good food co-ops. I came, in January ’72, to give it a try, and ten minutes out of the Greyhound bus, my mustache froze. I thought, This is the place for me! As has proved out: Madison is the sweetest of cities.
Buck Trawicky

Since moving to Madison, I've made my living as a self-employed wright and as an independent scholar. As a wright, mainly doing domestic housing restoration; as an independent scholar, once in the history of technology, but now mainly in the areas of calendar making and Indian Effigy Mounds (surveying, mapping, and analyzing).

Madison has a very active, and ample, group of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. I think RPCVs, as well as Jesuits, archaeologists, anthropologists, carpenters, and Eagle Scouts (and my immediate neighbors), are among the best company in the world. I am very grateful. I go to Mass often, and say so.

Sharon Lewandowski (at left in the photo below), my sweetie (a technical term), is the best choice and good fortune of my whole life. It is a great gift that Sharon loves me.

She would dispute this, but she is a Joan of Arc woman, of a modest sort. She served with Witness for Peace in Nicaragua, during the Reagan/Contra war against the people there. And she fosters peace in her work, which is for the State of Wisconsin: she assists local Domestic Abuse programs statewide.

The folk she works with love her, and give her awards, and beg her never to retire. She works very long hours, without complaint—“Buck: I’m a professional!”
She served in Peace Corps/Philippines, doing nutrition work, then worked with refugees in Thailand, then came back to Madison (she’s a Milwaukee girl). She’s eight years younger than I am. I think her beautiful, and superb company, and a good example. (Influenced by her, whenever someone disses State employees, I do not throttle them, I merely reprove them.) Definitely, company for one’s spaceship.

Hannah (at right in the photo), our adopted daughter from Texas, is half Korean, the dear of our hearts, and a pure gift of intentional good choice. Dudley, our Chocolate Lab (second only to Willy Wonka’s), is my dear brother (Giorgio, Hannah’s Chihuahua, was acquired because she wanted a dorm-sized dog; but he’s also quite lovable, and very good for her state of mind). We love it that Hannah lives with us while she’s a history teacher in a local middle school. Animals, children, and women in distress trust me, which warms my heart. (So do my clients.)
She graduated from UW, Stevens Point, with a degree in education, and teaches history in middle school; she picked this deliberately, remembering how full of travail this period was for her and her fellows.

Her students love her (parents pass on remarks to Sharon), and those students who have to be extracted for other appointments beg, “Not during Ms. Lewandowski’s class, please!” And she jumps out of bed rubbing her hands, glad to go to work. We love her to pieces. No spaceship would be complete without her.

And to end where I began, I have kept contact with Tom Suby. He settled in Bisbee AZ, which is the closest we come to Darjeeling, and nearby are the Dragoon Mountains, which are very Tolkien-ish. And he and his family esteem me, and welcome my visits. Tom and I did a marvelous road tour of New England a few years ago. A dear to my heart.
30. Bill Wallin

*First trek in September 1968 with Bruce Shiffler to 17k feet through the Trisuli Watershed and Gosain Kunde*

*With 3-year traveling partner Mary Ellen Lundberg (center) in Montmartre district, Paris*

*I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars.*

-- Walt Whitman, *Leaves of grass*

**Prologue**

I originally applied for the Peace Corps on a whim as I passed the table of recruiters stationed in the student union of the University of Minnesota. I had always wanted to explore high mountains, so I wrote down my preference for Nepal or Ecuador. Five months later, Uncle Sam invited me for a physical exam; I was nervous. Ten days after that, I experienced the happy result of my Peace Corps application: an invitation to Peace Corps Nepal.

Volunteering to Nepal seemed like the best alternative to the options of going into the Army, pretending at the physical exam that I was gay or crazy, or emigrating to Canada. So, armed with a degree in philosophy; a year of graduate school in behavioral psychology; and two years of LSD,
marijuana smoking, and DMT under my psychological belt; I heeded the call to spread the word of *krishi bikaash*—the new agriculture—to the farmers of Nepal, who had been farming for only 10,000 years.

**Training**

Cactus Corners and staff provided intensely interesting and challenging training on both the intellectual and practical levels for our unknown life ahead. One of the psychologists during my mid-training evaluation suggested that it might be better if I deselected myself from training, since he thought I might not be up to the challenge. I demurred.

After leaving Davis, we enjoyed a raucously playful flight over the Pacific, since there were over 80 of us on that Boeing 707. Coming into downtown Calcutta we enjoyed our first shock of the subcontinent, witnessing all of life, birth, reproduction, survival and death on the sidewalks of Calcutta. We were able to enjoy the luxurious maze of the Great Eastern Hotel, including four servants surrounding the small table where we four ate our supper and breakfast.

Once in Nepal, Howard Neal and I were lucky enough to go on our village visits to Padam Pokhari west-southwest of the bazaar town of Hetauda. We stayed with Greg Moss, who had grown up in Cicero, Illinois, claiming he dealt cards for a semi-retired *mafioso*. Naturally, he ended up working with the corrupt politically powerful *pradhaan panch*.

As a result of his deft negotiations, the head villager of Borle Tadi, where I was to live, agreed to build me a house, thus giving himself an excuse to cut down *saal* trees, a practice that was strictly prohibited in the hills being newly cleared south of the Rapti River.

**The Prohibition movement**

A few weeks after our village visit, as we were completing the remainder of our in-country training at Parwanipur, the scandal broke that one of the volunteers who elected to terminate very early was caught by customs in the US trying to import a kilo of hashish in his Peace Corps trunk.

Then another volunteer who was terminating early had been convinced by a volunteer who was staying to carry a film canister for developing in the US that unbeknownst to him had been filled with hashish. Our Peace Corps
director staff had to chase him down via international flights and managed to dispose of the contraband somewhere near Frankfurt Germany.

We had our first great lecture on the dangers of marijuana for the continued existence of Peace Corps in Nepal. If we smoked marijuana, our cooks would spread the word around the village, and we would not be able to keep it a secret. We were exhorted to burn all of our collective marijuana and hashish in a big bonfire in the Parwanipur central courtyard. Before I threw in my share, I decided to eat a chunk of hashish and try a peanut butter, marijuana and jam sandwich for my evening meal. The next day as we were going to Kathmandu for a break in our training, I was able to enjoy vivid hallucinations sitting above the cab of the truck, enjoying my first ride up the Rajpath.

Five lessons from village life

I learned quickly that our agricultural development projects could only be conducted with the relatively rich farmers. They were the ones who had enough land to take a chance on growing new varieties of seed and using new agricultural techniques. So lesson number one was that money makes money.

Lesson number two: cultural change proceeds glacially. Mexico has its already laid-back concept of mañana, in the morning or tomorrow; but Nepal goes one step further with bholi parsi, tomorrow or even the next day. To be able to live in Nepal, one has to learn to accept the ever-present unexpected, since that is what Nepal delivers in spades. I further learned from my Tamang villagers that they gave great importance to the value of leisure. They did not emulate the American role model, where one needed to accumulate a certain amount of funds before one could have fun. No, they just thought, “Let’s have fun now!” and they spent considerable time sitting around shooting the sh-t, i.e., gaph garnu--ing. This means that Nepali customs are very hard on high achievers. I had the impression that the volunteers who during training had been predicted to be the super-achievers in the field were often amongst the first ones to leave Nepal early because of the cultural challenges. A Peace Corps staff member told me that on average one volunteer left on a psychiatric evacuation every year.
Lesson number three: **local conservative wisdom is most often the best.** I noticed that the farmers would politely listen to me and then proceed to plant their crops the way they normally would. I began to see myself as a walking TV set, a living but irrelevant advertisement, introducing the Nepalese to the strange behaviors and accoutrements of people in the West.41 They were already relatively satisfied—or at least accepting of their lot in life—and generally seemed much happier and friendlier than the people I had encountered in the United States. My suspicion began to grow that *krishi bikaash* and development in general were hollow promises. I halted my blind-faith commitment to the improvement of the lot of the Nepalese people, at least from the American point of view.

Lesson number four: **cross-cultural communication is an art.** During my first year in Nepal, I continued to have the same level of social anxiety that I had carried with me from America, and now it was exacerbated by the obligation to talk day in and day out with the Nepalese about their farming, families, food, and my background in the United States. I was already struggling to learn how to speak Nepali, and often the Tamang family would revert to speaking in Tamang. I remember visiting a villager with the head man; I was served an omelette made with two eggs, three whole chilies and a chunk of salt. I stopped breathing after taking my first bite. My nose and eyes were running copiously. The villager asked me why I was crying. As I gasped for breath, I told them that my eyes must be sad for some reason. They laughed. I thought nervously during the first year that I was continually growing crazier. By the end of the first year, I accepted that I *was* crazy, and from then on I was able to relax and enjoy myself and the company of the Nepalese.

Lesson number five: **Nepalese culture is contagious.** By this time I had developed a great fondness for the food that was available in the bazaars. The Nepalese also impressed me with their daily *pujaas*, making all of life a sacred celebration. I emerged from my experience in Nepal, after the troubled obsessive compulsiveness of my teens and early twenties, feeling a greater presence and confidence in myself. Nepal had transformed me!

41 For example, one amazed villager blurted out, “Look he eats corn like the monkeys do”: *Baandar jastai chha!!* Editor’s note: See similar comment about True Ryndes in Chapter 26.
The challenge to commit

Sometime during the middle of 1969, I was confronted in the Kathmandu Peace Corps office by our then director, Mike Furst, and Prakash Mani Dikshit, my regional officer, that my commitment to agricultural development was lacking. I vowed, convincingly enough, to renew my commitment to spreading new seeds requiring the use of fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides to help American agricultural conglomerations to hook South Asia onto their bandwagon, correction, to help the Nepalese advance into the 20th century.

I did enjoy our monthly visits with the district agricultural chief, D. B. Gurung, who loved playing the electric guitar and was enamored of the Beatles songs ‘Strawberry Fields Forever” and “Penny Lane.” During my stay in the Peace Corps, I went on many treks, formal and informal, including weekly visits for mail and Peace Corps volunteer schmoozing to Hetauda, monthly trips up the Rajpath to Kathmandu for food and R&R, and numerous visits to India and Sri Lanka. We had great dinners with the USAID family, real Southern cooking and shots of bourbon. William Bloodworth, USAID agricultural representative, Larry Jones of Nepal 11, and I had large bourbons after we had crossed the Rapti River causeway flooded over by a large rainfall in the hills above us, which had lifted the Jeep Mr. Bloodworth was driving about a foot or two downriver, but fortunately still on the causeway. We were joyous as we drove, raising shots of victory.

After attending our termination conference in Kathmandu in July, 1970, while many volunteers went for the airplane exits to return to the US, I returned instead to the village to continue my erstwhile job as a cultural development advertising agent. I had very little time for the job; there were so many diversions with the Nepalese themselves, volunteers from other countries and in-country Peace Corps volunteers that no one from the Peace Corps office noticed that I was still there. When I went back to Kathmandu in the late fall of 1970, I told the Peace Corps director that I would like to re-up for one year. He told me I had to make a month-long home visit before completing my next year of commitment. They were at least sending notification to the Secret Service of my travel to the US. I just added another
month and a half to expand my learning onto the original one-month home visit. Thus I was able to have my only round the world airline adventure, which lasted about ten weeks.

My transition from the village to Western civilization occurred in two days of travel, when I found myself crying for no known reason on the streets of Copenhagen. I then visited Paul Madnick, who his parents claimed was trying to break the record for the time needed to adjust to American culture after living in Nepal.

When I arrived for home leave in Minneapolis a few days before Christmas 1970, I hugged my mother, only to have her hand me a card from the Secret Service. They had told her that they wanted to talk to me while I was in town. I put it off until the day before I was scheduled to leave for Denver, the first stop on my return trip to Nepal.

When I got to the office the agent asked me what I was doing in Nepal. I told him I was teaching Nepalese farmers how to farm. He then leaned back in his chair, pulling from the drawer a xerox copy of an aerogram I had sent to a friend in early 1969. He tossed it to me.

“Did you write this aerogram?” he asked, doing his best impersonation of Broderick Crawford.

“I might have,” I hedged, “How did you get it?”

He said it was mis-delivered. (I had sent it to Mr. Schupman; I guess it was mis-delivered when they got the S's mixed up.) I had written that the hashish and marijuana were so strong in Nepal that life in Nepal even without drugs was like being on an LSD trip, wherein the 12th century and the 20th century were side-by-side street occurrences on nearly a daily basis.

But the Secret Service officer was interested in a section underlined in red which said, “Too bad Nixon lived to be president, now Agnew has to go before Nixon can die, because Agnew as president would be a curse worse than death.” He said they wanted to find out what sort of a person I was.

I told him that I had been a coward since the eighth grade, that I owned no guns and had only shot a .22 rifle once in my life. They asked me what kind of a typewriter I had. Presumably if they had found any flying typewriters trying to harm our chief executives, they would be able to find the culprit. I
like to consider myself one of Nixon's first “plumbees.” 42 Nonplussed, they let me go.

I finally left Nepal in the spring of 1973 to return to my tenth-year high school reunion. Before I left Kathmandu, I had been involved in the preparation of a birthday party for the wife of our former Peace Corps director, Shirley Furst. I made up a batch of notoriously loaded brownies at a USAID house, melting a $.25 ball of hash in two pounds of butter and used the filtered butter for the brownies. Warnings about the brownies were either unheard or unheeded, as some attendees awoke the next day in unusual settings.

Medical studies

During my final half-year in Nepal, I was turned on to studying Buddhist Vipassana meditation with a great teacher, Goenka. Buddhist meditation has continued to transform me to this day, and will continue to do so into the future. I took many courses throughout India during that year and a half, as well as enjoying a number of treks in Nepal with other retired volunteers.

After these meditation courses I decided to change my life's goal from continuing as a non-contributing world traveler to studying in either medical or nursing school. That way, I would be able to live overseas and continue to study meditation as well as work. I returned to America, took pre-med courses, completed my training in medicine, and worked for three years in the National Health Service in a small town in southwestern New Mexico. We were 50 miles from the nearest hospital, and I was the only doctor on call 24/7, unless I left town. If I failed to answer my telephone, the police would come out to my house to tell me that there were patients at the clinic who needed to be sutured up or checked for broken bones because of an alcoholic altercation.

42 Not “plumbers”: those were the bad guys who broke into Watergate. I was a plumbee: the one being plumbed.
The Third World in America

When in 1968 I had left America to go to Nepal, there were very few homeless people evident on the streets in the US. By the time I had finished medical school, there were increasing numbers of homeless people in major cities. Apparently, cultural transmission was not unidirectional: the state of Homelessness had been adopted by us, probably in large part by ex-Vietnam vets with severe PTSD who were self-medicating to be able to live with the ever-present nightmares of war administered and received. That the VA trivialized their trauma by coldly declaring they only had to woman/man it up a bit only made the situation worse.

After I completed my residency in family practice medicine, I worked for Alameda County in their long-term hospital, emergency room, urgent care, jails, and psychiatric wards. I eventually worked in the county clinics, taking care for the most part of refugees. They had fled the Vietnam War and similarly deadly conditions in Cambodia and Laos, only to end up in the gunfire areas of East Oakland! Many suffered from PTSD. Later I set up a clinic to take care of undocumented immigrants under great psychological stress from trying to support their suffering families in an unwelcoming country. I was lucky to treat many Nepali immigrants in that clinic during
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

the later years of my medical practice.

Epilogue

I made two subsequent visits to my village, Borle Tadi, in 1980 and 1992. I noticed that most of the villagers were increasingly better dressed, wearing flip-flops or shoes where they had previously gone barefoot, and wearing sweaters and stocking caps during my winter visits. However, by 1992 the pristine views of the majestic 8,000-foot hills had been lost to the dust of the local cement factory now operating in the industrial district of Hetauda. By this time all of the fields of vegetables, potatoes and rice in Kathmandu Valley had also been sacrificed to scattered houses, and the snowy
mountaintops of the Himalayas were no more to be seen because of the smog.

It was the end of an era. With the threatening signs of impending environmental degradation and the loss of forest cover leading to eventual bare red laterite soils, the future of Nepal did not look rosy.
31. Chris *Walsh*

*I've found that luck is quite predictable. If you want more luck, take more chances. Be more active. Show up more often.*

-- Brian Tracy, author

The overwhelming feeling is that of my good fortune: so lucky to have been in Nepal; very fortunate to have been there when we were; lucky to be a member of this group. If Buck’s ‘origin myth’ is true, then Bruce Morgan did an excellent job. I don’t know how I made the cut, but am ever grateful that I did. To have shared this experience with this remarkable group of people certainly added to the experience. Many times the humor, friendship and intelligence of others in this group helped me to appreciate everything so much more and oftentimes allowed me to simply keep on truckin’.

Who gets to live among a people whose way of life is so different than one’s own? In a physical environment that is so different? Who gets to travel so far back in time? I was lucky but also, I think, too young to fully take advantage of that incredible opportunity. To the degree that I did, it was still an unbelievable experience and certainly had a profound effect on my life in so many ways.

Perhaps most importantly my experience informed my teaching at the high
Chris Walsh

school and middle school levels for thirty years. I hope it also enhanced my students’ learning. I take some comfort in knowing that in some cases it did. While I didn’t affect the lives of the villagers with whom I lived to any real degree, maybe I accomplished a little of the Peace Corps’ third goal.

I liked very much the last paragraph of Mike Rechlin’s blurb. I think it wasn’t only skills that we all learned in Peace Corps Nepal, but a weird sense of self-confidence. Probably it was that which allowed me to think I could build the house we now live in forty years ago with only a smattering of woodworking and carpentry skills. Crazy. I don’t know if I would have tackled it without having had the experience of the two years in the village in Nepal, riding third-class Indian rail, trekking, etc.

As a result of life in the village, I have a deep and continuing appreciation for indoor plumbing. Water coming out of a faucet still makes me feel lucky......and wealthy.

After fifty years I am finally coming to understand the profound wisdom of *bholi parsi*.

My wife, Lois, and I had hoped to make it to the reunion and are very disappointed that we will not be there. Now we are trying to grow much of our food year round. We have a large garden and an equally large high tunnel, which allows us to extend the summer season and to grow throughout the winter. So here I am back in the village cycle of days and seasons revolving around the growing of food. We have a well going in and a roof being replaced, all in the next couple of weeks. Unfortunately now is when it can all be done. We are looking forward to the next reunion.

We hope everyone has a wonderful time. Thanks to all who put so much work into the reunion. See you all next time. Stay well.
And is not peace, in the last analysis, basically a matter of human rights—the right to live out our lives without fear of devastation—the right to breathe air as nature provided it—the right of future generations to a healthy existence?

-- John F. Kennedy

Everything changed for me when I went to Nepal.

Why did I go in the first place? As an opponent of the Vietnam War I certainly did not want to be subject to the draft, but I had been accepted to a doctoral program at Chapel Hill that would have given me a deferral, so it was not purely the deferral that attracted me to the Peace Corps. In fact, I was part of a joint VISTA/Peace Corps program through which I had served VISTA in eastern Kentucky between my junior and senior years of college as a precursor to getting an invitation from the Peace Corps for after my graduation. When the Peace Corps offered me a slot in the Morocco program, I was all set to accept until a Cornell graduate student, named Mac Odell, who I believe was in Nepal 1, began indoctrinating me about the wonder of Nepal and how it was the most special experience you could imagine. So I called the Peace Corps, hoping they wouldn’t think I was
treating them like a travel agency, and asked to be considered for Nepal instead of Morocco. They agreed and of course the rest, as they say, is history.

The arrogance of taking a kid from Queens (me) into an agricultural community to instill a green revolution still amazes me. Truth is that the demonstration plots in wheat (not so much in rice or corn) were a success and probably did play a small role in accelerating the inevitable transformation of the winter crop in my village. But in all likelihood, that that would have occurred in any event. Also, the work itself really involved only a few weeks of the year during the planting and harvesting. So free time factored into my life more than it had ever before or in fact than it ever would thereafter. That was a mixed blessing: on the one hand I immersed myself in the Peace Corps book locker; on the other hand were it not for frequent forays to our Peace Corps communal hang-out in Birgunj, I might have gone stark raving mad.

My impact, if any, was on cultural norms in my village and in serving the Peace Corps’ third mission, i.e., taking the experience back home to the US. In connection with the cultural norms, I decided early on that I would associate and eat with any of the villagers that offered me hospitality. And so when a Muslim family asked me to eat bhaat with them, I became labelled untouchable. I remember a fellow volunteer, Steve Eckerd, visiting my village and refusing to eat with me in the village, because he adopted a different approach, i.e., to be a Brahmin, and if word got back to his village that he ate with me, it could jeopardize that status. Villagers would ask me to repay them for the pollution of their water buckets because I was standing on the well when they were using the buckets. I of course refused any such thing, noting—can you believe this—that the King had outlawed the caste system!

But I don’t wish to give the impression that life in my village was a struggle. That would not be true. I recall many hours spent with a wonderful young Tharu villager named Satnarayan. He was the person I was with when my very high draft lottery number came in and I needed to celebrate. What a discussion that was! I don’t know how much he understood of the whole matter, but he seemed truly interested and very patient as I tried my best to explain it. I also remember villagers looking over my shoulder when I scrolled through New Yorker magazines that would come in batches to the
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

village. They focused on the ads, wondering whether all we did in America was use perfume and drink whiskey!!

When I left Nepal, I enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Wisconsin, and the following year the atrocities in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) erupted. Although I had never been in East Pakistan, I had travelled to Calcutta (in West Bengal) of course, and immediately grasped the level of brutality chiefly against the Hindu population. It was not an abstract thing for me, because of my having lived in Nepal. The similarity of village life in the two countries and my being able to imagine with clarity the details of the humanitarian crisis influenced me to write op-ed pieces, which in turn were noted by a group of American research scientists and academics who had banded together to create a lobby organization in the US to confront the Kissinger/Nixon policy that supported Pakistan—the perpetrator of the struggle—with military and economic aid.

I dropped out of graduate school, scrambled to Washington, and became co-head, with a Bengali counterpart, of the Bangladesh Information Center, a lobby group supporting an amendment to ban US economic or military aid to Pakistan. The effort was successful, with the passing of the Saxbe-Church Amendment to the Foreign Aid bill, which Nixon had no choice but to sign into law. That effort from almost fifty years ago was recognized by the current Bangladesh government. Six years ago, the Bangladesh Prime Minister and President, in a ceremony in Dhaka, granted me their Friends of Liberation War Honor. My efforts during that period of my life are those I am most proud of today, and it would not have been possible without having the experience I did in Nepal.

I learned from living in Nepal that we humans are enormously adaptable and that we can survive and function under many challenging circumstances. One of my most frightening experiences was when I came down with an ailment that prevented me from breathing, but only at night. I honestly fought for every breath, staying up the entire night, but in the morning, I was my normal self. For the first day, I thought it was something strange that was a one-time thing, only to find that it reoccurred the next night. The villagers were convinced I was going to die, asking what the custom was in America for dead bodies (do you cremate or bury?). I dragged myself to Kathmandu and the extraordinary Dr. Mast got me a bed at the
Tribhuwan Hospital tuberculosis ward (not a happy place, I should add). He brilliantly diagnosed me as having tropical eosinophilia (a parasite that comes out only at night), and treated me with some sort of rare but effective medicine that killed the bug. I sometimes wonder what my fate would have been had Jeff not been a field doctor in Vietnam where he had observed this illness before.

From a more commercial perspective, I should say that my experience in Nepal played a decisive role in my being offered a position with Chase Manhattan Bank. At the time the bank was expanding its international franchise and was having a hard time attracting young American talent to serve in some of their more exotic posts. When they interviewed me and I said that I would have no problem working in such places (Calcutta in particular was one place that was mentioned), I could see the faces of those interviewing me lighting up!

As a final note, when I left Nepal I was convinced that once the word spread throughout the villages in Nepal and India of the great disparity of wealth between their countries and ours, there would be a rebellion that would tear the world apart. Fortunately, this fear has not materialized, at least not yet. In my mind this is due to the flood of investment from the west in India (and China) that has uplifted economic prospects in those countries and integrated them into the fabric of a world economy.

And so at least from that perspective, the great lesson of the Peace Corps—that indeed we live in a global village—holds considerable hope as we envision a better world for the future.

---

43 Editor’s note: Eosinophilia is in all likelihood the same disease for which Dr. Mast also treated Dan Karr (chapter 13). Peter Calkins, probably among several others, also contracted eosinophilia; in his case, he was treated by Dr. Roy Coats at Shanta Bhawan Hospital in Kathmandu.
Glossary of Nepali Terms

Technical editor’s note: The Nepali (and Hindi and Sanskrit) alphabet, Devanagri, has many more consonant sounds than does English. Many consonants have an aspirated and unaspirated form; these are indicated in the system of transliteration used in this glossary (and commonly elsewhere) by adding an “h” to the consonant to indicate the aspirated form. In addition, the alphabet contains a total of four “t” sounds and four “d” sounds. These are indicated with lower- and upper-case letters and with the same “h” when aspirated. An “a” indicates a sound more or less like a schwa (a neutral, unaccented vowel), whereas “aa” indicates a longer “ah” sound. Other vowels also have longer and shorter versions, but these are hard to hear in practice, so no effort is made here to distinguish them. In this glossary and in the text, “n” indicates a nasal sound.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nepali term</th>
<th>English equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>achar</td>
<td>Chutney, relish, condiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aushadhi</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baandar jastai chha</td>
<td>He looks or acts just like a monkey!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badmaas</td>
<td>Naughty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baksheesh</td>
<td>Handout to a beggar or servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bandh</td>
<td>Dike around rice field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bikaash</td>
<td>Development, &quot;improved&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhai Puja</td>
<td>Hindu holiday in which brothers are honored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhaat</td>
<td>Cooked rice; used colloquially to mean a meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhaaujuju</td>
<td>Older brother’s wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhaTmaas</td>
<td>Soybean(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhoj</td>
<td>Feast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bholi parsi</td>
<td>Tomorrow or the next day, i.e., the indefinite future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Boppity bop” (actually: baap re baap)</td>
<td>Expression of amazement or frustration; from Hindi for “Father, Oh Father.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhut</td>
<td>Ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>binDi</td>
<td>Local cheap, strong cigarette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bighaa</td>
<td>Local land area measurement equal to 1.67 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bayam</td>
<td>An old-fashioned commercial glass jar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charpi</td>
<td>Latrine, outhouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chhoraa chhori</td>
<td>Sons and daughters, i.e., children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chilim</td>
<td>Small pottery pipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiyaa pasal</td>
<td>Tea shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chokidaar</td>
<td>Night watchman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daajyu/daai</td>
<td>Older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daal</td>
<td>Lentils specifically or more generally any of several grain legumes planted and or cooked as a gravy-like accompaniment to cooked rice or another grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DADO</td>
<td>District Agricultural Development Officer (title of the officer in His Majesty’s Government to whom Nepali and PCV JTAs reported)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daakini</td>
<td>A particular kind of female deity or yogi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dashaaain</td>
<td>Major Hindu holiday in early fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dehaati</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhera</td>
<td>A rented room, often in the district center by the volunteers in the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dharma</td>
<td>Divine law and duty, esp. in the Hindu religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>didi</td>
<td>Older sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dokaan</td>
<td>Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dui barshaa</td>
<td>Two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ek</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ek kosh</td>
<td>The distance covered in one hour by a porter with a load; on average about two miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaagro</td>
<td>Pottery water container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaaun</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gandhi bug</td>
<td>Smelly insect that infests rice crop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaanjaa saadhu</td>
<td>A wandering mendicant who regularly smokes marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaph</td>
<td>Chitchat, idle conversation to pass the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haaT/haTiyaa</td>
<td>Periodic local market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holi</td>
<td>Hindu holiday in spring during which people douse each other in colored water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jillaa</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jholaa</td>
<td>A Nepalese style cloth handbag used by both sexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTA</td>
<td>Junior Technical Assistant (title of most PCVs in Nepal 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jangali</td>
<td>Wild, as if he/she/it had never left the jungle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jai Nepal!</td>
<td>Victory to Nepal! or Long live Nepal!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>juTho</td>
<td>Ritually impure for Hindus, typically describing food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kalindar</td>
<td>Type of junior bus employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaanchi</td>
<td>Youngest sister/daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ke garne?</td>
<td>What to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khasi ko maasu</td>
<td>Goat meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khet</td>
<td>Rice field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khorsaani</td>
<td>Chili pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>krishi bikaash</td>
<td>Agricultural development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khukri</td>
<td>Curved knife, used especially by Nepali Gurkha soldiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kosh</td>
<td>A distance of about 2 miles, defined as the distance walked by a hill porter carrying a load in one hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo(ho)Taa</td>
<td>Small water pot, often used for washing after defecation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lu haawaa</td>
<td>An unpleasantly warm wind that gusts through the taraai in the hot season; “lu” is a serious illness, and the wind is sometimes called “lu haawaa” because it is seen as bringing on that illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lungi</td>
<td>Lightweight sarong-like garment worn by men and women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maasu</td>
<td>Meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madhesi</td>
<td>Ethnic group(s) living originally in the plains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maryo</td>
<td>He or she died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masalaa</td>
<td>Spice(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>momo</td>
<td>Tibetan dumpling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muji</td>
<td>anus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namaste</td>
<td>Formal Nepali greeting, often said with palms together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naraamro</td>
<td>Not good, often meaning really bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nokar</td>
<td>Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oDhne</td>
<td>A Nepalese cloak-blanket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pahaaDi</td>
<td>Person originally living in the hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pakka</td>
<td>Of very good quality; solid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
paan A mixture of betel leaves, areca nut, tobacco, lime, sweetened coconut, spices, mint and paan masala that produces a red, spittable liquid when chewed

panchaayat Lowest level civil jurisdiction

pasal Shop

ping Nepali Ferris wheel, found especially in the Eastern hills

piro Piquant, spicy hot

pradhaan panch Highest official in a panchaayat; “mayor”

prasaad Gifts of food and/or other items offered to the god of a Hindu temple and often consumed later by the worshipper

pujaa A Hindu religious ceremony

raamro chhaina It isn’t good

raangaa Water buffalo

raato Red

raksi Nepali hard liquor

saal Robusta shorea, a tropical hardwood

sahib Sir; honorific used when addressing senior officials and foreigners

“saano pariwaar, sukhi pariwaar” Nepal family planning motto: “A small family is a happy family.”

seto White

shaanti swayamsewak Peace (Corps) Volunteer

Tapain laai kasto chha? How are you?

taraai Plains belt in southern Nepal

tarkaari Vegetable, generally or more specifically as a component of a meal; in the latter case it could include animal protein

taruni Young, unmarried woman

tat tvam asi (Sanskrit) That you are, or you’re it: in other words, your inner being is at one with/the same as the Great Universal Spirit

thukpa Type of Tibetan soup

Thuli Oldest sister/daughter or female
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

*Tiko (Tikaa in the plural)*
A sectarian or auspicious mark placed on the forehead. Often red. Often placed by a respected elder, e.g., during Dashaain

*yo Topi mahango chha*
“This Nepali cap is expensive”: the first sentence learned by volunteers headed to Peace Corps Nepal

*zamindaar*
Feudal landlord
## Index of terms and topics

### A

- adviser ................................................................................................................. 87, 90
- agriculture ........................................................................................................... 24, 36, 46, 48, 52, 67, 79, 90, 119, 132, 135
- Ahimsa ................................................................................................................ 69
- AIDS ..................................................................................................................... 125, 189
- Antholt ............................................................................................................... 24
- Anthony .............................................................................................................. 13, 16
- Arun ................................................................................................................... 31, 138, 139

### B

- Bank ................................................................................................................... 78, 238
- Banke ................................................................................................................ viii, x, 201
- Banmara .......................................................................................................... xi, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93
- bazaar ............................................................................................................... xi, 14, 31, 117, 129, 134, 174, 211
- Bazaar ............................................................................................................... 59, 89
- Ben ..................................................................................................................... 115
- Berkeley .......................................................................................................... 67, 68, 173, 193, 195, 196
- Bernie .............................................................................................................. 53, 59, 88, 89, 149, 152, 153, 155, 162
- Bertera .......................................................................................................... 23, 43
- bhauai pujaa ................................................................................................... 52
- bhau .................................................................................................................. 168, 195, 201
- Bhojpur .......................................................................................................... xi, 52, 53, 55, 56, 59
- Bhojpuri .......................................................................................................... 68
- bholi parsi ...................................................................................................... 225, 234, 239
- bhuut ................................................................................................................. 175
- Bicycle .............................................................................................................. 148
- Bill ................................................................................................................... 88, 142, 159
- Bill Borsa ...................................................................................................... 122
- Biratnagar ...................................................................................................... 31, 54, 56, 137, 195, 198
- Birgunj .......................................................................................................... 68, 92, 100, 102, 153, 158, 159, 161, 162, 236
- Bob ................................................................................................................ 23, 53, 59, 68, 87, 88, 155
- Brahmin .......................................................................................................... ii, 29, 58, 80, 88, 132, 196, 236
- Buck ............................................................................................................... 51, 89, 205
- Buddhist ......................................................................................................... 23
- Buerge ........................................................................................................... 27, 33, 76, 102, 115, 136
- burho didi .................................................................................................... 185
- Burma ............................................................................................................. 199, 200

### C

- Cactus Corners .............................................................................................. 36, 42, 146, 147, 149, 151, 152
- Calcutta ......................................................................................................... 14, 76, 91, 119, 120, 128, 152, 156, 173, 181, 200, 237, 238
- Calkins ......................................................................................................... 35, 53, 168
- Canada ......................................................................................................... 35, 41, 52, 102, 142
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

Cancer .......................................................... 69
career .......................................................... 25, 35, 37, 48, 51, 69, 79, 93, 100, 103, 104, 105, 117, 136, 193, 197
Chhetri .......................................................... ii, 176, 196
Chhetris .......................................................... 42, 58, 180
China ............................................................ 23, 47, 48, 49, 143, 238
Chitwan .......................................................... 24, 42, 143, 201
chiyaa pasal ...................................................... 88, 179, 196
chokidar .......................................................... 174
Chris ............................................................. 24, 69, 77, 83, 99, 135
Clarke ............................................................ 69
College .......................................................... 166
corn ............................................................. 69, 91, 100, 103, 133, 183, 236
cow ............................................................... 56, 160
Crawford ......................................................... 233

daal ............................................................... 43, 59, 60
daal bhaat ......................................................... 43
dakini ............................................................. 185
Daman ............................................................. 29
Dan ................................................................. 75, 85, 99, 102
Darjeeling ........................................................ 30, 32, 79, 91, 123, 129, 130, 182, 194, 222
Dashaain ........................................................ 52, 54, 197, 198
dave ............................................................... 76, 102, 115
David ............................................................. 136, 235
Davis .............................................................. 14, 23, 91, 102, 113, 128, 146, 148, 151, 200, 205
deferment ......................................................... 14, 75, 102, 202
Delhi .............................................................. 91, 123, 194, 218
demonstration .................................................. 24, 43, 58, 72, 90, 134, 177, 180, 187, 202, 236
dera ............................................................... 59, 122
Dexter ............................................................ 131, 167
Dhankuta ........................................................ 59, 92, 138
Dharan ........................................................... 52, 59, 73, 89, 120, 138, 198, 206
Dharma .......................................................... 180
Dhorpatan ....................................................... 16, 17
Director .......................................................... 78, 100, 104, 105, 108, 109
doctor ............................................................. 53, 238
Don ............................................................... 24
Donahue ......................................................... 38, 45, 135
draft ............................................................... 24, 35, 42, 83, 92, 102, 105, 114, 132, 193, 235, 236
dysentery ........................................................ 31, 43, 56, 68, 72, 73, 162, 194, 217

E

education ........................................................ 25, 46, 117
Ender ............................................................. 38, 51, 89, 92
Reference materials

Estes ........................................................................................................................................... 69, 77
Everest ........................................................................................................................................ 15, 19, 30, 31, 59, 63, 162, 202, 217

F

foreign service ................................................................................................................................. 47, 48, 49
Forest ........................................................................................................................................... 136
Forestry ........................................................................................................................................ 142
fortunate ..................................................................................................................................... 19, 24, 48, 76, 83, 122, 167, 199, 201, 233
Future .......................................................................................................................................... 143

G

ganja ........................................................................................................................................... 138, 174, 205, 208
Gary .......................................................................................................................................... 38, 51, 69, 89, 92, 110
gay ............................................................................................................................................. 172, 188, 191
gewirtz ....................................................................................................................................... 53, 59, 88, 89, 155, 162
giardia ......................................................................................................................................... 43, 69
Gil ............................................................................................................................................... 38, 45, 110, 135
Goa ........................................................................................................................................... 91, 123
gobar .......................................................................................................................................... 54
Godfrey ....................................................................................................................................... 67
Gorkha ......................................................................................................................................... 14
grain ........................................................................................................................................... 24, 71, 90, 136, 176
Gray ............................................................................................................................................ 89
Green Revolution ....................................................................................................................... 68, 90, 96
Greg ........................................................................................................................................... 54, 77, 80, 83, 99, 102
Gurkha ...................................................................................................................................... 89, 199, 215, 241
Gurung ...................................................................................................................................... 89, 168, 176

H

haTiyaa ....................................................................................................................................... 57, 60
Health ......................................................................................................................................... 25, 83
Hetauda ...................................................................................................................................... x, 176, 182, 187, 192
Hill ............................................................................................................................................ 80, 101, 103, 104, 105, 107, 165, 235
Hindi .......................................................................................................................................... 48, 91, 134, 161
Hindu ......................................................................................................................................... 23, 133, 161, 237
Holi ........................................................................................................................................... 120, 240
Hong Kong ............................................................................................................................... 47, 53, 76, 119, 128, 152, 155, 156, 173, 200
Hoodenpyle ........................................................................................................................... iii, 177, 183
horse ......................................................................................................................................... 89, 210, 211, 212, 219
Howard .................................................................................................................................... 43

I

Ilam ........................................................................................................................................... viii, xi, 14, 15, 30, 56, 63
India ........................................................................................................................................ 23, 24, 46, 48, 52, 69, 87, 88, 91, 101, 102, 114, 142, 145, 238
Indian ....................................................................................................................................... 25, 46, 68, 79, 91, 161, 162, 167

246
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

J

Janakpur ............................................................................................................. xi, 102, 155, 158, 159, 161
Jeff .................................................................................................................... 79, 120, 196, 238
Jerry .................................................................................................................. 77, 80, 83, 99, 102
Jhapa ............................................................................................................... xi, 114, 116, 196
Jhoolas ............................................................................................................. 188
John .................................................................................................................. 39, 87, 88, 89, 102, 132, 135, 193, 235
Johnson .......................................................................................................... 41, 45, 101, 165
jungly ............................................................................................................. 185, 201
juTho .............................................................................................................. 29, 133

K

Kachmarik ........................................................................................................ x, xi, 132, 135
kalindar ......................................................................................................... 58
karma .............................................................................................................. 122, 127
Karma .......................................................................................................... 114, 170
Karr ............................................................................................................... 75
Kathmandu 43, 46, 47, 48, 54, 55, 56, 77, 78, 84, 92, 120, 142, 153, 157, 158, 159, 161, 162, 166, 194, 195, 196, 208, 237
ke garne ....................................................................................................... 174
Kelty .............................................................................................................. 128, 138
Kennedy ....................................................................................................... 87, 102, 103, 105, 108, 235
Kent .............................................................................................................. 24, 41, 42, 136
khets ............................................................................................................. 42
khorsaani ..................................................................................................... 43, 61
khukri .......................................................................................................... 215
krishi bikaash .............................................................................................. 54, 133, 180, 202, 224, 226, 241

L

Lake ............................................................................................................. 53, 59, 87, 151
Language ..................................................................................................... 91, 147
Larry Jay ................................................................................................... 207
Larry Jones .................................................................................................. 174
lottery ......................................................................................................... 16, 83, 114, 202, 236
luck ............................................................................................................ 24, 52, 53, 55, 87, 91, 92, 114, 127, 133, 134, 175, 233
Luck............................................................................................................. 56
lucky .......................................................................................................... 20, 52, 54, 59, 114, 120, 131, 134, 135, 175, 224, 230, 233, 234
Lucky ........................................................................................................ 42, 114, 132, 233
Ludlam ....................................................................................................... 77, 99
Lumbini ...................................................................................................... 84
luu hawa .................................................................................................. 122
Reference materials

M

maasu .......................................................................................................................... 43, 241
Madheshi ....................................................................................................................... 68
Mahabharat ................................................................................................................... 158, 162
Maithili ......................................................................................................................... 61, 77, 161
Malick ............................................................................................................................ 119, 155, 196
married ............................................................................................................................ 43, 47, 53, 79, 103, 166, 195
Mary Kay .................................................................................................................... 69, 134, 135, 167
Mast ............................................................................................................................... 79, 237
Maynard ........................................................................................................................ 77
medical .............................................................................................................................. 79, 83, 117, 167
medicine ......................................................................................................................... 69, 75, 79, 91, 238
Merv ............................................................................................................................... 137
Mike ................................................................................................................................... 141, 162
Mike Payne .................................................................................................................... 17
military ............................................................................................................................. 113, 237
Morgan ............................................................................................................................ 129, 233
mountain ........................................................................................................................ 46, 157
Muslim ............................................................................................................................. 69, 124, 200, 201, 207, 211, 236

N

Namche ............................................................................................................................ 59
Narayani .......................................................................................................................... 24, 43
Naxalbari ......................................................................................................................... 30, 115, 116
Nepalgunj ....................................................................................................................... 132, 134, 161, 201
Newton ........................................................................................................................... 131
Nixon ............................................................................................................................... 41, 45, 237
nokar ............................................................................................................................... 198
NROTC ........................................................................................................................... 68

P

pahaaDi ............................................................................................................................ 197
pakka ................................................................................................................................. 196, 198
Palpa ............................................................................................................................... 36, 167, 168
panchaayat ...................................................................................................................... x, xi, 25, 27, 52, 57, 78, 79, 134, 178, 196, 201, 242
Parwanipur ..................................................................................................................... 120
Paul .................................................................................................................................... 49, 113
PC ..................................................................................................................................... 69, 87, 89, 91, 92, 93, 195, 197, 209
Peace Restaurant .......................................................................................................... 31, 77, 174, 195
Peter ................................................................................................................................. 35, 53, 69, 119, 168
pig ..................................................................................................................................... 58, 195
piro ..................................................................................................................................... 60
Pokhara ........................................................................................................................... 36, 54, 92, 128, 142, 168
Memories and Meaning: A 50th Anniversary Report

pradhaan panch................................................................. 180
Pradhaan Panch................................................................. 68, 195

Q

Quaker................................................................. 92, 190
Queens ................................................................. 87, 90, 92, 236

R

radio ................................................................. 57, 116, 155
raksi ................................................................. 43, 143, 174, 181, 187, 196
Rapti ................................................................. 134, 187
rats ................................................................. 99, 102, 134
Rechlin ............................................................... x, 141, 234
Regina ................................................................. 69, 110, 113, 119, 120
religion ............................................................. 40, 46, 75
restaurant .......................................................... 53, 59, 162, 167
retired ............................................................... 42, 48, 54, 55, 89, 100, 103, 104, 106, 110
retirement .......................................................... 51, 104
return ................................................................. 39, 43, 52, 68, 69, 78, 84, 88, 104, 106, 148, 168
Rhode Island Reds ................................................... 177
rice ..... 14, 24, 29, 42, 47, 59, 60, 68, 72, 91, 100, 103, 114, 116, 131, 134, 146, 147, 148, 159, 182, 183, 185, 198, 200, 205, 236, 239, 240
Roger ................................................................. 36, 165, 166, 167, 168
Rogers ............................................................... 115
Ron ................................................................. 110, 145, 152
Ross ................................................................. 13
Rude ................................................................. 145
Rutledge ............................................................. 36, 165, 166, 167
Ryndes ............................................................... 169

S

saddhu............................................................. 175
saddhus .......................................................... 174
San Francisco ............................................................ ii, 28, 48, 67, 76, 146, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 171
Sarlafi ................................................................. 77, 102
Satyagrahi ............................................................. 69
Schiffler .............................................................. 129
Scholz ............................................................... 89, 193
shaanti swayamsevak .................................................. 176
sick ............................................................... 136, 143, 152, 161
Stan ................................................................. 89
State Department .................................................... 47, 48
STOL ................................................................. 17, 59

249
Reference materials

Suby.................................................................................................................. x, 36, 69, 205, 222
Sue.................................................................................................................. xi, 69, 110, 113, 119, 128, 129, 155, 186, 196

T

taraai.................................................................................................................. ii, viii, vi, x, xi, 14, 22, 36, 52, 54, 60, 68, 77, 79, 90, 199, 241
tarkaari.............................................................................................................. 60
taruni...................................................................................................................... 174
Tegenfeldt .......................................................................................................... 88, 132, 135
Terry................................................................................................................... 24
Tharu................................................................................................................... 24, 42, 60, 201, 236
Tibet.................................................................................................................. 23, 143
Tom.................................................................................................................... 36, 65, 150
training............................................................................................................. 23, 24, 45, 47, 54, 76, 79, 88, 91, 93, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 109, 113, 119, 147, 149, 152, 153, 158, 159, 161, 162, 194, 195, 198
Trawicky.............................................................................................................. 89, 205
True................................................................................................................... 36, 169

U

University........................................................................................................... 39, 83, 87, 92, 101, 145, 165, 166, 237
urban................................................................................................................... 48, 91, 92

V

vegetable........................................................................................................... 38, 133, 146, 200
Vietnam............................................................................................................. 40, 45, 52, 101, 116, 235, 238
Vietnamese....................................................................................................... 35, 116

W

Wallin.................................................................................................................... x, 88, 187, 223
Walsh.................................................................................................................. 69, 233
Washington..................................................................................................... 36, 38, 45, 47, 100, 103, 104, 105, 166, 209, 237
Weisbrod........................................................................................................... 69, 235
wheat.................................................................................................................. 14, 24, 36, 71, 72, 79, 91, 100, 103, 116, 134, 146, 177, 183, 185, 187, 201, 236
wife..................................................................................................................... 40, 47, 48, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60, 79, 89, 93, 99, 100, 103, 116, 142, 165, 166, 167, 195
Windamere......................................................................................................... 32, 129
Wisconsin.......................................................................................................... 87, 101, 145, 146, 150, 152, 153, 219, 220, 237

Z

zamindaar.......................................................................................................... 56, 133