LETTER FROM LAGOS

Editor's Note:
From March 30—April 20, Ray Parrott, Acting Director, Peace Corps/Nigeria was in Washington for consultation and later at a Conference of West African Peace Corps Representatives held in Monrovia, Liberia. The following article is his report to the Volunteers on his trip.

Peace Corps Headquarters was operating at top pace when I arrived. The Congressional Hearings were just about to commence and the finishing touches were being put on the Peace Corps' Three Volume Presentation. As some of you know, Peace Corps is asking for $108 million—enough to train and support 13,000 Volunteers in the field by the summer of 1964.

A big change will occur in the Headquarters operation during the next few months. During a warm Sunday afternoon while in Washington, I spent several hours with Sarge talking about next year. He hopes that returning Volunteers and staff alike will add additional professionalization to the program. He is only too aware that not all has been perfect or even satisfactory. However he did mention several times to Congressmen and Senators present at his home that experiments require changing techniques with mistakes along the way. Patience, spirit, endurance, persistence and faith are a few of the ingredients that will help. He is putting a lot of faith in the 100 PCVs who will be absorbed in staff openings this summer and fall.

Leaving Washington I flew to Boston, then to Exeter, New Hampshire by car to spend the day with Bill and Katharyn Saltonstell, recently appointed Director of Peace Corps/Nigeria. Bill plans to be out here around the middle of August and looks forward to his new assignment. While they have five children, only one, Debbie, age 14, will accompany them to Nigeria.

My conversations with them were rewarding and enthusiastic. Both he and his wife are avid outdoor people; he likes boating, she likes horses. They recognize there are a lot of differences between life in New Hampshire and life in Nigeria, but are convinced that they will find much to do here. Bill and Katharyn will close up and sell their Exeter House after graduation ceremonies at Phillips Exeter Academy in June, spend two weeks in Washington and two or three weeks with the new group of 250-300 Volunteers going into training in July at Columbia.

THE TILLEY LAMP
Editors....................Bob Cohen and Tom Hebert
Editorial Assistants............Ed Gruberg, Dave Wilcox
Regional Editors...............Dick Hughes, Al Bielefde
Editorial Advisors............Murray and Ginna Frank

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IN SEARCH OF COSMOPOLIS

We were in Lagos a few week-ends back hoping to run into the likeable Lost Volunteers from Togo and perhaps catch a good surf at Bar Beach. Neither panned out; disappointed, we concluded that the Peace Corps Psychologist was right: urban volunteers have a more difficult time of it than their friends in the country. With little else on our itinerary but the museum again, and the Caban Bamboo we wandered into the PC office, if it can be said that one “wanders” into the fifth floor after ten flights of now elevatorless stairs. It’s our homing instinct.

As usual we were greeted by the the black name-plates and the ever-friendly battleship-grey which uncompromisingly covers the walls and ceilings, and we suspect, the working-day. However cheered by these offices we might be, we always remark about the absence of a bullhorn.

While we were slipping around the place, looking at thumb-tacked memos and peering in boxes, we over-heard Acting Representative Ray Parrot on the phone: “Hello? Yes? Hello? This is Mr. Parrot of the—Parrot of the Peace Cor—pss.” We thought then: “Small compromises of principal, such as this, often lead to tragedy.” We may not be understood, but we are always in the “Corr”. Buoyed up by a personal sense of moral strength, we asked for some baseball bats and called it a day.

* The April Medical Klatch for the West was held in Ibadan with all the panoply and secrecy usually attendant on these events. The long lines of suppliants waiting to give their Dixie-Cup offerings to the men-in-white made one aware of the serious view this order of good-fellows takes, concerning lettuce. The second stage in this rigorous “ ordeal” was a square dance for those able and devoted. In the middle of our rehearsal Dr. Smith walked in. Looking at us severely, he inquired who among us frequented a certain well-known Lebanese restaurant in town. We habitudes hesitantly acknowledged this weakness. He nodded knowingly, then made reference to certain, completed clinical tests: we were sick for a week and a half on seven pills a day. At last report, our favorite table is not off-limits, yet, although our movements in the city are well-covered.

* Recently reading the gift copy of The Reader’s Digest to discover our patriotic terpitude, we were surprised and bothered to learn that in current US history text-books, such phrases as “Give me liberty or give me death,” and “I regret that I have but one life to give for my country”, are deliberately left out because they are too dated and quaint for the sophisticated sophomore of the 1960s. It is not often we find ourselves in accord with The Reader’s Digest.

Looking on from here, we find such clean phrases easier to understand than the current lingua franca of US civil and human freedom. Last month, a funny man from New York State, walking into a strange Southern land, was killed because he couldn’t understand the rule of their law. On a lonely road he took two shots in the neck. His placard with two holes spoke a terrible eloquence.

ICONOCLASM FROM THE TOP

Chuck Ahlgren’s “This Business of Images” in the last issue of the Tilley Lamp was a frank examination of a question that haunts us all. He hinted, rightly, that there is something compromising in letting the popular idea of the PCV go unchallenged. There are undoubtedly some who joined the Peace Corps because they accepted this idea and wanted to become part of it; they are the real victims. Nonetheless, every PCV could enjoy an easier conscience if the image and the reality were wedded. Are our faults such that an inflated version of our merits is necessary to compensate for them. Does the Peace Corps have so little to offer that heroics must be used to justify it. If we answer these questions negatively, then we must also assert that the current image is unnecessary. The crux of the issue is whether it is also pernicious. Ahlgren suggests it is, arguing mainly from a subjective point of view. I can agree, but I doubt if subjective feelings are a controlling factor.

There are two major influences on the Peace Corps image: the American public and Peace Corps/Washington. The former can hardly be called to account, nor can it be curbed. The latter has consciously participated in generating the image, and its responsibility should be viewed in light of its motives.

The Peace Corps hero is a very interesting animal. His heroism doesn’t derive from one mighty deed of valor, but rather from three states, or conditions, that demonstrate his heroic character.

Renunciation. The PCV gives up home, family, material comforts. He HAsts not a backward glance as he departs all this.

Adaptation. The PCV, on the heels of renunciation, takes up the way of life in his new country almost as if he were a national. He comes to terms with a new mode of existence, willingly learns a new language, studies new customs.

Altruism. The PCV postpones career plans and/or a salary. He leaves his job, girl, and graduate school. He asks only his maintenance, and is grateful for it.

Intrinsically, there is nothing heroic about the three, together or singly, and a PCV would be the first to so testify. But the American public, measuring itself against these extraordinary circumstances and being a practical-minded body, could only consider the volunteer either foolish or heroic. They opted for heroic, though doubts attended the decision. The American public is bound by its context and cannot apply the same knowledge to its judgment as those who are, pardon the expression, on the scene.

I’d suggest that the major reason Washington abetted the germination of this hero image was that it saw that the alternative was to find itself categorized as visionary and impractical. Ahlgren would have to concede that Washington had no choice but to do as it did. There was, moreover, in those first months, a determination to succeed that took honest pleasure in making any sign of success very public.

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For the benefit of terminating PCVs who plan to arrive in the States bearing gifts; Pete Law sends in the following information:

The Nigerian law concerning antiquities defines an antiquity as any object made before 1917, any object used in a traditional ceremony, or any object that might have been used in a traditional ceremony. In other words, all ritual art, even if contemporary, is subject to the law, which prevents any such object from being taken out of Nigeria.

To avoid last minute trouble with customs authorities (who may or may not be able to recognize antiquities from tourist art), it is wise to have anything you think might be an antiquity checked beforehand. Label each object with your name and address, then take them to the Antiquities Commission Representative in your area. The Representative will check over your things and issue a permit for each article. Allow a month for the whole procedure. Permits can be applied for from one of the following: 1) Chairman, Antiquities Commission, Principal’s Office, University College, Ibadan; 2) Director, Dept. of Antiquities, Jos; 3) Curator, Nigerian Museum, Lagos.

The Antiquities Department is said to have a rather liberal policy concerning ritual or traditional art; if sufficient examples of the object in question are already in possession of the museums, you are issued a permit. If the piece is rare or otherwise valuable, you are offered a fair price for it.

ZALESZCZYKI VARENNIKAS
(Nigerian Knish) by Ed Gruberg

Ingredients: 8 inch length of yam 2 cups flour
salt ½ cup water
pepper 2 eggs
butter 1 to 2 onions

Boil your yam for 15 to 20 minutes, mash it, add salt and pepper to taste. Dice one to two onions, fry in butter. Then mix onion and yam, adding an egg for consistency. Place mixture in fridge. If no fridge is available, put mixture in subterranean cavern.

Now mix your flour, water, and another egg. The result will be dough. Roll out the dough until it’s nice and thin. Then stamp out round forms in it with a drinking glass. Put cold yam mixture, about a heaping tablespoonful, on each circle of dough; then fold dough over and pinch to seal yam inside. Put your raw knishes in a pot of boiling salted water for ten minutes (or until your knishes begin to float). Then put your cooked knishes into a heavily greased pan; place in fridge (or cavern) until ready to serve. Before serving, heat in oven until hot.

Note: if funds are low, Zaleszczyki Varennikas may be served as main course. Also fine for your expected, unexpected, or unwanted guests.

Next issue: Chicken Soup and your Knadlich

Iconoclasm ... FROM PAGE TWO

The first Volunteers had stepped forward, and faced the jolt of new cultures, and were performing to a standard. Under the imperative to persuade the public (and Congress) that the Peace Corps was worthwhile, Washington had little time to balance carefully between over-enthusiasm and understatement. Of course, the question is, should this larger-than-life image of the PCV be reduced?

I agree with Ahlgren that it should be, and I think PCVs can help. But the major effort must be Washington’s. I don’t think it impractical to attempt it. In the first place, a realistic image would do the PCV more credit than the one he has. A realistic image is the one that prevails abroad—host countries know the Peace Corps by what it has actually done. Yet this hasn’t restrained approval and support on the part of these countries. The American public should be willing to adopt the same attitudes if it were presented with a picture of the PCV as an ordinary person doing an ordinary job under somewhat extraordinary conditions. But they would have to shed most of their misconceptions about other countries and their peoples. They would have to understand that ways of life in other nations, while not as involved with material advantages as the American, are equally acceptable and do not call upon the PCV to make any real “sacrifice.” Finally, they would have to appreciate honestly the validity and utility of the ideal of service.

Washington could simply adjust the emphasis of its publicity. It could restrain its impulse to dramatize. It might talk more of the typical PCV and less of the atypical. Above all, it could attempt to present life abroad as a matter of fact, rather than indulge in perpetuating the mystique of the exotic.

Ahlgren maintains that PCVs are the ones to reconstruct the image, but I can see some problems with this. When, after two years of dedication, the PCV returns and attempts to convince the homefolks of the reality, he is likely to draw the image larger than before. At any rate, the odds are uneven: a few thousand of us against millions with formed opinions back home. I certainly think we should fight our own battles for truth, but I’m afraid only Washington can hope to substantially modify the image.

THE CHILDREN

Mokola is mostly children.
First friends and all eyes and smiles.
Six will dance in my parlor
And then we will dance.
And when I am tired and would sleep,
We hide and seek.
And are they children!

—Hebert
QUELQUE CHOSE A FAIRE

The two new Peace Corps Volunteers had been in Funtua a little over a month, and had been teaching in the Secondary School, spreading their purloined pearls of wisdom as they would have it said, for fully as long. They had come to know the boys they felt, and the boys had become accustomed to them as well, their new accents, their casual manner of deportment, their dress, and their ever-present laughter. Now it was time, they decided, to put some of their new ideas to work, to make use of their American know-how, their Peace Corps Training. The future held a track and field meet for the boys of the Northern Provinces, so the two PCV’s of Funtua decided to apply their energy to the construction of a track. That area which would serve as the starting area of the hundred yard dash could be widened considerably, and this large cleared area could also be used for a basketball court. First the high grass would have to be burned to expose the earth.

Now, there is an old saying that tells one to keep matches out of the reach of children. Maybe it isn’t really an old saying; maybe I have just read it on match boxes or heard it on television. At any rate such an expression does exist, and under analysis it does not seem to be one of the many expressions made up by the little long-haired man from Philadelphia, the kite-flying old man who wore bifocals. But all such speculations aside, the expression seems of some worth no matter what its origin. And this is where our two smiling Peace Corps Volunteers made their mistake. When lighting fires to burn the grass off a field, it is quite necessary to have more boys watching the progress of the present fire than boys running around lighting new fires. As well, it must be made clear before the whole process begins that investing the authority in one boy to light fires does not by assimilation invest that same power in all forty of the boys present. Within five minutes, the boys had achieved a fire of crowd-drawing importance. It was sweeping across the grass near the compound backed by a steady brisk wind towards the football field. And it was a full hour later, an hour filled with much clearing of unburned grass before the fire to form stop trenches and the constant flaring of green tree branches, that the fire and compound grass were reduced to a large blackened lamp wick. Well, now at least the track and basketball areas were cleared.

In certain parts of the world there is a practice of using animal dung for fuel. Donkey droppings make a fine fuel. They burn slowly, produce a fair amount of heat, and at times burn without giving much smoke. Now if there is one thing that the compound and field of the Funtua Secondary School is blessed with, it is a great supply of sun-dried donkey droppings. The PCVs had checked all the little columns of smoke from the charred field, but somewhere they had missed something. All that jackie tackie...

About eleven o’clock that night, the two PCV’s, being by habit early to bed, were roused by a noise on the compound. It appeared to be a rather bright night until a look out the window disclosed that it was not the night which was so bright but the school compound. The football field was one large yard of flames with many boys dancing around it, ritualistically striking at the devil fire with small, ineffective tree branches. Oh, it was quite a sight to see. Dark figures in the night dancing around a burning football field locked in some new form of contact sport. A low sweeping fire being blown forward by a steady wind. Several useless bare patches being hoed before the flames only resulting in blistered hands for the hoers. An occasional tall shaft of fire, a tree whose limbs suddenly caught fire, or a flaming football goal post. And finally two embarrassed Peace Corps Volunteers running frantically about giving directions, sometimes cursing, but always smiling. But little could be done. The fire finally expired against the Gusau Road.

Yes, two Peace Corps Volunteers had a few bright ideas they wanted to impart to the boys. And now the two PCVs are in need of some bright ideas, or just some applied help. They are now looking for wood of the proper dimensions to build four new football goal posts, plus those two basketball backboards that were left lying on the ground until the area could be cleared and they could be erected. And then there are the sixty school desks, the complete set of books for sixty boys (English, Arabic, History, Geometry, Algebra, Arithmetic, Geography and Health Science), a teacher’s desk, the lamps, pencils, papers, rulers, and the two classrooms themselves that got caught in a freak backdraft. But forgive me if I exaggerate a little. Like that little old man in Philadelphia said, “Exaggeration is the backbone of historical writing.” Or was he talking of fictional writing? No matter. That little man in Philadelphia is now a studied friend of mine. I know him well. He also had something to do with the Philadelphia Fire Department.

James Lee
Provincial Secondary School
Funtua

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Two bouncing Peace Corps Pickin’ have arrived since we last went to press:

To Ray and Alice Vandersteen, Paul, born in Ibadan, and to Joyce and Julian Martin, a girl, Beth Alexandra Modupe.
HONOR ROLL

VOLUNTEERS TERMINATING AS OF JULY 31st

James Lancaster
Antony Famioso
Willy Mae Watson
Willis Berrier
Joseph Adams
Claree Burman
Stanley Burman
Lorena Blount
Roswell Blount
Catherine Crook
Robin Limpus
Elizabeth Alexander
Irving Destler
Richard Krazdorf
Frank Brockman
George Eaton
George Lewerenz
Suzie McKee
Scott Pearson
Sandra Pearson
Robert Scheppler
Vincenette Scheppler
Howard Swann
Elin Youngdahl
David Schickele
Alice Vandersteen
Raymond Vandersteen
Martin Gleason
Thomas Seiler
Judith McKay
Gary Knamiller
Roger Landrum
Jared Dornburg
Barry Eisenberg
John Kaechele
Randal Longcore
Helen Rupp
Stanley Field
Jane Melenev
Marqui Young
John Fanselow
Paul Newman
Angelo Randazzo

NIGERIA V

Never does the response carry as much
Beauty as the gesture rarely dared;
Candle lit from candle is not the touch
Of holy sacrament struck off and carried
In the rough spark and flame of initial contact.
(Slender tapers to light a hollow hall)
But if this fire should die in the cold fact
Which lacks all tinder, may reflection enlighten
Those unknown words we place upon the wall,
Connection at arm’s length suffice to brighten
New candles so carefully carried; and may we, white
As the words of chalk we write, in strife
Beyond the worlds of lustrous anthracite
Bate, wait for Daniel’s dream to give us life.

B. R. Marriott

Letter ... FROM PAGE ONE

Leaving Exeter I proceeded indirectly to Monrovia, Liberia where eleven West African Representatives gathered to compare notes. Sarge flew in to the conference and during that week received a Doctor of Civil Laws from the University of Liberia, conferred upon him by President Tubman. That same evening we all dined with the President at the Executive Mansion.

At the Conference we talked about the desirability of responding faster to Volunteers needs; more flexibility in operating in the field; more coordination among projects to permit the exchange of ideas and Volunteers for summer projects. More attention will be given the latter due to the vacation policy making Europe off-limits to all except terminating Volunteers.

Sarge went on to Ghana from Liberia and passed through here on April 25 to say that he knew he could not do justice to Nigeria in less than five days. He may try to get out here within the next few weeks.

The trip was tiring but worth the effort. Returning from Monrovia, I brought along John and Dorrie Dodge. He will be Field Officer in the Northern Region. Bob Baker will remain with us, but function more broadly in the area of in-service training and project development.

On May 1, William Kruse, his wife Ailene and two young daughters, arrived on post. He will act to begin with as administrative officer. As most of you know, Jake Todd was to go on home leave April 29, but was called urgently to Manila on a temporary tour of duty. He will be permanently assigned to the Philippines after his brief tour and home leave. His replacement is yet to be named.

As you can see, a lot can happen very rapidly in the Peace Corps. Your editorial board permitting, I will report to you occasionally in this manner.

PC ANTHOLOGY

PCV, Ross Burkhardt (Tunisia) and Eugene Orland (Phillippines), are planning to edit a Peace Corps Anthology of Poetry and Prose. The Anthology has been approved, through not financially supported by PC Washington. It is hoped that if the Anthology is successful in its collecting and is published (in about two to four years) that profits will be used for a fund for ex-PCVs. There are no royalties involved, nor salaries or individual profits. PCVs contributing to the book will be asked to sign over first publishing rights, with all subsequent rights reserved and owned by the Volunteer.

The response to this idea has been so favourable that Burkhardt and Orland have appointed "regional editors" throughout Volunteerland. Nigerian PCVs interested in submitting material for publication should write to Ross Burkhardt, Village d’Enfants, Zaghouan, Tunisia.
Linguistic Studies in Bornu

Starting with findings of earlier investigators, and by sifting his own findings, Paul Newman (Maiduguri) has established a linguistic genealogy extending back as far as 2500 years ago for the Tera language group, a cluster of languages now spoken in and around Bornu Province.

Newman faced a number of difficulties in researching this field: 1) Former investigators had used various spellings for the same sounds and different names for a single language; 2) Each tribe used its own set of names for itself and other tribes; 3) The tribes were unaware of their linguistic relationship to each other. After resolving these problems, Newman collected and compared vocabulary lists and grammatical material, then dated the languages using an accepted lexico-statistical method. The resultant genealogy showed that about 2500 year ago “Proto-Tera” split into two sections, east and west of the River Hawal. About 1700 years ago the Western Section further splintered, eventually giving rise to Tera, Pidimdi, and Jara; about 700 years later, the Eastern Section also subdivided, resulting eventually in Hona, Ga’anda—Bog.

The purpose of Newman’s study was “to establish a proper classification of the Tera Language Group by differentiating separate languages as opposed to dialects by determining their degree of relationship to one another.” He has discovered that there are fewer distinct languages than the previous research suggested; it now seems possible to classify all twelve Tera Group languages as dialects of six, or possibly only four, separate languages.

Newman plans to use his findings in presenting his thesis for a Ph.D. in linguistics.

GRADUATION, NSUKKA, 1963

COSMOPOLIS . . . FROM Page 2

* The other day in the Post Office we were alerted by the sound of an American voice. In a burst of rare enthusiasm for Americans, we approached the voice and said, “Are you an American?” It answered, “Yes, and I can tell by the hair on your chinny-chin chin, that you are a PCV.” All but falling apart, we tried a smile and said “Oh . . . How are you here?” It answered with deep feeling, “Not PCV, not AAI, not UN, not AID, but OYO, on your Own.” The voice turned and left. We then remembered that initials make the man. But that didn’t help. We knew he had felt superior.

* We have asked a number of people to write a sentimental piece about the departing Harvard and MSU groups. Naturally we have been given the opportunity. Willy Mae Watson was waiting in Lagos for her flight to NY. We talked. Excited about going home? No, too old for that, but the sister or two at the airport will be real good. Kids have got to understand a test before they can write it. What does it mean “Discuss”? What are the “main points”? Just stick to the main points and don’t add to them. Have them do a paper where they have to describe someone so you, without knowing the name, can tell who it is. They have good powers of observation. They’ll choose you, so look out! No, there’s only two of us Negro high-school inspectors in Norfolk. But we’re making out better and I’m not worried. We used to have joint summer clinics for all teachers. Good. Not now. The white teachers know you can’t split a school system down the middle or people. Yes, we have a lot of educating to do now.

We were going to see Willy Mae off at the Ikeja Airport the next morning, but we didn’t wake up in time. We hope Norfolk will.