Wanted: PCVs for Gov’t Jobs

This Business of Images

by Charles Ahlgren

My family, like Robert Frost’s horse on a snowy evening, thought it all a bit odd. But, if I really wanted to crown my ivy-walled years with a stint in the Peace Corps, that was my business.

Now it’s everyone’s. There are more eyes on the PCV than ever bedecked the mythical Argus, and the image-makers bounce him around like a super-charged pinball. And most of what has been said so far is nonsense.

In the beginning were the naughty words. Peace-Corpsmen were immature kids, adventurers, beatniks who looked at a decent job as a rut, freeloaders on the American heart and bankbook, or rebels looking for a cause. But no one really wanted to believe that Yankee youths had become druggist cowboys on the New Frontier. The guitar players from Peoria were good enough kids, the agent granted, but dreamers. Their naiveté would never change the world. Discredited as the home of the starry-eyed idealist, the Peace Corps went ahead anyway.

Then came the hero image. We were no longer boys, even men, but dedicated, practical revolutionaries (remember the daring and adventure of our forebears?), and vital instruments of diplomacy. Self-sacrificing? Why, we threw out futures to the wind, and (in Calcutta) even carried our baggage from a train.

Actually, the hero image did not supplant the beat image; it swallowed it. Screwballs became rugged individuals, rebels became social reformers, and romantic visionaries, refreshing idealists.

The volunteer is none of these things, and more. His own self-image, and the portraits someone else is painting, bear no family resemblance.

This is obvious to everyone, but no one has publicly said it. There are several reasons for this.

First, does it need to be said? It may harm the “organization.” But won’t these mawkish superlatives, brandished by romanticizing well-wishers, do harm? Already each new article on the nobility of Peace Corps “ism” makes an intelligent man shrug, “All that again?!” There is no point in glorification; it only repels the thinker and attracts the Illusionaries in Wonderland.

Turn to page 2
In Search of Cosmopolis

We were in Lagos a few weeks back to watch the 707 from New York lay down the new volunteers and incidentally cadge a few meals at the Federal Palace Hotel. The big jet was a beautiful, chartered-$30,000,000 spectacle of hope as it overflew us and then turned for an elegant landing. Jake Todd and the regional reps had lovely winces and smiles on their faces as their responsibilities suddenly multiplied by geometric equation. Busses brought the new ones to the terminal. A few hearty welcomers tried a friendly wave. We watched silently, caught up in our own thoughts. We were also watching Jim Crawley pacing to and fro among his groom’s men and friends, separated from his fiancée by many welcoming addresses and a hedge, artfully laced with barb-wire. We secretly hoped that Jim would break down and leap it. We even told him he couldn’t see it. He agreed.

That night, having wangled a dinner invitation and a white shirt we set out with the volunteers and tried to answer questions. Only later did we feel foolish. Defeated by the sight of ourselves as PC experts, we headed for the bar and kept quiet.

We returned to Ibadan with them, or rather we found a niche in the baggage bus; clutching someone’s guitar, we sang a song, and then fell asleep, unworried by our sense of security. A week later, as the Western Volunteers disbanded to their posts, we observed one fellow, interestingly enough, entering his bus, protectively holding a ten-pound can of butter and nothing else. We smiled back.

* * *

Sometimes we get a trifle discouraged in Ibadan, as our friends from the country wax eloquent on the pleasures of the rural life. Now we all feel better: Our electricity and water — now is cut off every day from 12 noon to 3 p.m. on Mokola Hill. This has given us more confidence.

* * *

Taking dinner with the Lyle Conrads and a “friend” at the West End Cafe a few weeks back, we were surprised to learn that his man, with whom we probably confide some observations about PC/Nigeria, was a PC/W psychiatrist. When ever anything like that happens to us, we spend the next day and a half trying to remember what we said. It is a type of weakness we have.

* * *

We were invited to a garden tea-party at the Secretariat the other day to greet Soapy Williams. The break in the round of sitting and sardines came when six State Department guides, aids or whatever, appeared at the main gate. Each was brother to the other, even down to the color of tie, type of brief-case, and the way they stood, casing the place; we think looking for intrigue. We thought the dainty caviar above suspicion.

Images ... from page 1

When the bubble of novelty around the Peace Corps bursts, as it must when the heroes come marching home, what will be the result? People will wonder why Pygmalion looks more like Pinnochio, and his nose has grown so long. A little rah-rah may have been fine in the brick and mortar stage, but is it necessary, or good, now?

A second reason for not shouting, “Down with the old image”, is that we’ve grown accustomed to its face. But if the function of criticism (in this case, organizational self-criticism) is renounced, nothing is accomplished in any endeavor. Rather than abdicate the critic’s role, the volunteer might well begin to take pot-shots at this misleading backslapping, in the interest of progress and truth.

What is the truth in this business of images? Here is the rub in criticizing an image, for to begin with: “It is between the image and the reality, the reality must be described. But while we can not say, “Will the Real Volunteer please step forward”, if one of us pushes his own choice into the limelight, he falls into the same pit with the image-makers (the villains of this piece).

But I might as well risk saying something. If the Volunteer does not submit his own image, someone else will ... the professional researcher, perhaps, who is already brewing a blend of the choicest psychological and sociological studies, of mechanistic, scientific, and symbolistic theses.

This then is my purpose, and at the end of my question is, how do we conceive of ourselves? It is a question which by nature, I feel, must be answered individually. The collective solution of a label, which every image is, is bound to be rejected by each of us as an individual. As volunteers, however, we might agree on what we are not.

Image-makers, here take note! You were wrong, but closer to the truth than now, when you lumped us with the Beat Generation. Like the Beats, we reflect something of our age’s discontent. The Beat’s manifesto, Ginsberg’s “Howl” begins with: “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness.”
Now some of us have had a similar vision of man’s suffering state, but we are not merely howling in rebellion. Like Huck Finn, the original Beat, we want to “light out for the territory”, but not just because we “ain’t never been there yet”. We may sometimes agree with the Beats’ “I don’t know”, but not his “I don’t care, and it doesn’t matter.”

Please, don’t make us heroes. Being a Beat wasn’t an bad as that, for the Beat at least has a vision of human distress. And where there is no vision, the people perish.

The hero is merely someone’s pipedream. The Hero-Volunteer is represented, then, as a sort of psychological umbilical cord between the nation and the National Purpose. Now my Real Volunteer neither transcends the human state, like the hero, nor abandons it, like the Beat. He simply lives in the human condition, and tries to fulfill it and himself by his workaday actions. He has an image only inasmuch as he reflects the whole of his generation, beat and unbeaten, lost and found, angry and silent, conforming and rebelling, cowardly as well as heroic. Any other image of me I resent.

In short, images be damned. Yet, if they must be, just give us one of a man, working and searching.

Turn to page 6
Lagos After Dark

(Editor's note: For the wandering PCV who creep out of the bush into the big city, here's a Tilley Lamp Extra, Lagos-based Kathy Zastrow's review of night-life in the Federal Capital.)

Let's say you're getting tired of the conversation and air-conditioning in the Ikoyi rest-house. Hop into the nearest taxi or walk to the Keffi bus station just a few blocks away and head for downtown. Arm yourself with a pocketful of pounds and a coat and tie. These are necessities for all the clubs downtown, the European variety. The first one you'll pass on the way is Domo Club, in the Domo Hotel on Campbell Street. The Domo's lively in decor, but a little stuffy. The small dance floor, though, is often less crowded than the other clubs. Also on the way to downtown is Blue Velvet, where you can often get hamburgers (without mustard). This is the most relaxed of the air-conditioned clubs, and the bartender will be happy to put on whatever records you ask for, cha-cha-cha, twist, and now The Madison.

Keep going a little further on Broad Street, and across from John Holt you'll find Bagatelle, the most popular spot on a Lagos Saturday night. By 11:30 even all the bar-stools are occupied; the crowds begin to congregate in back of the bar, stealing seats as soon someone gets up to dance. Bagatelle and Maxim's, on Martin's Street, are the two biggest clubs. Most Americans prefer Bagatelle; more American music is heard there, while Maxim's caters to the long-term Britisher who's determined to have a good time, even if it kills him. The women who show up at Maxim's usually get dressed up, so be prepared to be stared at if you dare to come in flats and a high-collared dress. The other big club, and the only one with a band, is Luna Rosa, on Balogun Street. It also boasts a burlesque show (in the European, not American, sense) and a one-pound cover charge, if you come for the 11:30 show. The current attraction is a belly-dancer, straight from the Middle East. The band is Greek, and very good, though they play endlessly.

Once you cross the bridge to the Mainland, you're ready to attack the African clubs, cheaper and livelier than the swank spots downtown. Cool-Cats Inn, in Ejigbo Metta, is one of the clubs, though for entertainment, no distance is too far. Cool-Cats is fast becoming known by the Europeans, though high-life there is still . . . well, like high-life should be. Papingo, just down the street from Cool-Cats, is yet relatively undiscovered by Europeans. Victor Olayi's band is usually there; during the dancing they'll prance around the floor, waiting for you to put money on their foreheads. The most popular of the highlife spots is Kakadu; you'll be able to find it without directions. Even in the middle of the week, Kakadu can be crowded. The Kakadu band, Arinze's, is undoubtedly the best in Lagos, not only for highlife, but for the twist, cha-cha-cha, and even an occasional waltz. If you want to travel still farther, you can go to one of several Yaba hotels: the Ambassador, where there's a piano and sometimes a pianist. Or the Lido, in Surulere, where you might see Jagna Nano and Lincle Taiwo. After watching the girls there, you don't doubt that Ekwensi set his novel in and around the Lido. Cabin Bamboo, still farther out, is on the road to Ikeja.

If on your night out, you want dinner too, Bagatelle has the best steaks in West Africa, with the possible exception of La Casa de Carne in Fernando Po. Or try Mogambo, also on the airport road. At Kakadu and some of the other African clubs, you can buy pepper chicken; the waiter will swear it has no pepper in it. Good luck. For a late evening snack, pick up a hamburger at Blue Velvet or macaroni and cheese at Luna Rossa. If you want a more detailed view of Lagos After Dark, invest 6d on Lagos This Week, a compendium of movies, clubs, restaurants, and gossip.

'Books for Africa'

(reprinted from the PC Ethiopian Newsletter)

In a recent press conference held in Somalia during his African trip, Sargent Shriver said, “The biggest single obstacle standing in the way of Peace Corps teachers is . . . a lack of textbooks.” Shriver said that this could be corrected through the assistance of American educational institutions and civic groups.

In response to the need for materials, Shriver has launched the “Books for Africa” drive. He has personally begun to contact publishers, school systems, and foundations, to ask for contributions.

Meanwhile, a source of books exists in the “Books for Africa” organization in Cambridge, Mass. BFA’s Mrs. David Henry recently announced that sources of textbooks and reference books are now available. PCVs planning school libraries should write to Mrs. Henry at Books For Africa, 346 Huron Avenue, Cambridge 38, Mass. achusetts. In your letter you should furnish the following information: a description of your school (elementary, secondary, government, etc.) with a picture if possible; headmaster's name; the mailing address of the school; the types of books needed; number and age span of students; the type of exam for which the school prepares students; and the faculty sponsor to be contacted by BFA. Mrs. Henry will in turn contact an interested educational institution which will attempt to collect and send books to your school. For more information on this program write to Tom Grange, PCV, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, or to Mrs. Henry in Cambridge.

* * *

Born: To David and Marie Pibel, Port Harcourt PCVs: a girl-child, Ann Marie, on January 20th. For both David and Marie, their first. All are well.

* * *

Lost and Found:
1. Two pairs of glasses, one found in the East, the other in the West.
2. Four pairs of shoes and miscellaneous clothing, left at the In-Service Training Program in Enugu.
3. Well-worn and dearly beloved brown corduroy shirt, last seen heading out of Ibadan after orientation at GTTC.
Letters to the Tilley Lamp

February 19, 1963

Dear Peace Corps/Nigeria—particularly I, III, and IV:

In the interests of research ("A Study of the Volunteer in Nigeria"—being done under contract with the Peace Corps) and self-indulgence, I have spent seven satisfying weeks in Nigeria. (Satisfying on both counts.) From the Hills of Maiduguri to the Shores of Badagry. (Sorry, Buguma, Ughelli, and a few other much closer; time started to run out.)

The cooperation, interest, and sincere friendliness that I met far exceeded my faulty expectations, and changed what might have been merely a job into a significant experience. The days flew by, and my chief regret is that in some instances I had to do the same. To summarize: big country; big volunteers.

And now a message from the sponsor: Those who still have research material outstanding are gently reminded to arrange to get it in soon. The mailing address is P.O. Box 145, Lagos. The non-mailing address is via the nearest staff member. (My real work begins when the material is in.)

Many thanks to all of you, including staff and wives. Fare well and safe journey.

Sincerely,

STAN LICHTENSTEIN
Inst. for International Services
(American Institute for Research)

P.S. I hope to have findings that I can report to you in the next month or two or three.

* * *

To the Editors:

Please cancel our unsolicited subscription to the Tilley Lamp. The quality of your paper defies use, practical or intellectual. It burns too fast to be of any value as kindling, and its much too slick and unabsorbant to be effective as toilet paper. Until you can make your paper good for something, don’t waste your three-penny stamp.

- Unsigned -

* * *

Bauchi
Northern Region

To the Editors:

So now I’ve done my bit, where’s the non-denominational Christmas card?

Yours disgruntled,
- Al Bielefeld -

* * *

Maru, via Gujau

Tom,

Love the "Tilley Lamp"! Having a ball at Maru... but too busy right now to send any literary masterpieces.

Soon...

The Shebars

MOKOLA HILL, IBADAN

I climbed this hill
With all my official goods
And a whistling knife.

The road is not good;
In the sun, it can be
A long walk. It narrows
A great deal,
Near the top.

If it is night
When you come,
You will be uneasy:
One often is,
Here.

We will look out upon this city,
Ibadan, and talk of the great
Cities of the world,
While only Ibadan moves about
In the black.

This is a purchased view: drink deep.
We are new, not lasting and
Even words that might entreat
This town uncover itself
Shrink beyond
Our niggardly reach.

This is no Alexandria,
No City of Angels, or Light:
As yet, an electric pattern
Laid out on a black night.

While I’m up here don’t tell me
Of any lost hound, bay horse or
Turtle dove: I cannot help much.
I cannot see
Beyond Eleiyele.

- Hebert -

* * *

Margo Leining, (UCLA I) was ordered back to the States for medical reasons and, on doctor’s orders, will not be returning to Nigeria. Margo sends best wishes and regards to all PCVs in Nigeria. His present and permanent address is: Route 1, Box 24-T, Dickinson, Texas.

* * *

Volunteers planning to continue their studies on their return to the States, will find two useful handbooks in the Regional offices. One is a catalogue of all scholarship loans, fellowships and research grants currently available. The second is a recent Directory of American Colleges at Universities.
Promotion — A Parlor-Game

by Al Bielefeld

Directions:
The object of this game is to proceed from Training Center to AID appointment. Each "representative" is issued with 15 WEO (Working Effectively Overseas) cards. The player, or "representative", finishing at "AID Appointment" with the most cards is declared the winner. Moves are decided on a throw of the dice. Cards are drawn from or lost to "African Desk, Washington" after each move, according to the instruction associated with the square upon which a given player lands.

Playing Board:
1. Volunteer selected out in training for chronic enuresis. Lose 5 WEO cards.
2. Volunteers become unruly and rowdy at Ambassadors welcoming party in Lagos. Lose 2 WEO cards and apologize to the Ambassador.
7. PCV girls elope with USIS man. Ladder breaks. Lose 5 WEO cards.
9. Musically inclined PCV sentenced to two years for cattle rustling. Lose 5 WEO cards.
11. You are distantly related to John Kennedy and have decided to run for governor of Illinois. Return directly to training center. Do not stop at Embassy. Do not collect travel allotment. Go directly to training center.
12. PCV drowned in Lake Chad while water-skiing. Lose 5 WEO cards.
13. PCV reported drowned in Lake Chad turns up with honorable discharge (and two decorations) from Katangese Army. She is allowed extra leave allowance. Collect 4 WEO cards.
15. Local European club requests PCV's resignation because of consistently erratic and discomforting performance at dart board.
16. Peace Corps boy marries Peace Corps girl. Both are fifteen. Draw 2 WEO cards and write to Padric Kennedy to see if they can get a scholarship to a good high school.
17. PCV discharged from Peace Corps for writing nasty and insinuating articles for PCV publications. Lose 5 WEO cards.
18. All PCV's receive a free copy of Burke's Peering. Draw 2 WEO cards.
19. Disgruntled and underpaid cook-steward is revealed to be undercover agent for CIA. Lose 4 WEO cards.
20. Fishing trawler carrying 30 Chevrolet Carryalls for Peace Corps, Nigeria, founders off Northeast Coast of Finland. Draw 2 WEO cards and explain to the somewhat suspicious Finnish and Russian Embassies.
22. Ellender plans another West African visit. Lose 2 WEO cards.
23. PCV builds sidecar for Lambretta from discarded Cow and Gate powdered milk cans. Draw 3 WEO cards.
24. PCV presents Diner's Club Membership Card at Catering Rest House. Lose 1 WEO card.

A BALLAD

I'll sing a song for six pence
And a glass full of rye,
Or a beer.
Will you hear,
My song?
It won't be long
Of course, of course—my song.
A small adjustment here and there,
Colored thread to mend each tear,
Wear a smile, carry your beer,
Write home often; you'll get your share.
Are there any other questions?
The plane is late. An extra plate?
Don't worry, five are limbo.
Who's standing, vacant stare, arms akimbo?
Let's have some fun;
No, no . . . don't run.
I say, have you heard the latest? The date's been changed.
Go to hell!

How de do; more booze for you?
Confusion, diffusion, profusion, illusion,
No lights? The damn generator's gone—
And Benedict . . . no more ham?
One jab with a smile, guitars after while.
Just raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear that you haven't and won't . . .
Yea, you can smoke if you like. Hey, you get a bike, Lucky kid!

The days roll along, for some with a song . . .
For others with groans of delusion.
Illusion is shattered, the new clothes tattered,
As if it mattered . . .

—Dotty Hassfeld—

The Peace Corps Office in Enugu has a new phone number: Call 2371.

The Kaduna office, too, sports a new number: Call 2031.
Who's Who . . . ?

The heavy man in the picture, the one with the strangle-
tating collar and the shifty protruding eyes, he's the Direc-
tor.

Chester Bevo Biddle

Department of Spectacles and Pageants: This office
assumes responsibility for the near absolute effectiveness
of the vacation "projects", those little bureaucratic activity
spheres descending from the W.P.A., and closely re-
ssembling their ancestry in intensity and purpose.

It was the evening of March 1, 1961. Chet Biddle had been nervous all day, hop-
ing against hope that he too might receive a telegram from the New Frontier. What
more could he have done? He had a mule in his garage, he liked money and power,
he read daily from The Secret Life of Walter Mitty . . . he belonged to the gang. The bell!
Aaah, at last . . . a telegram! He fled down the stairs, rushed to the car, returned for the keys, and was off like
Quaker Oats for Washington!

Several hours later, a mysterious call was placed from the
pay phone in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel:
"Honey, tell this busy bodied bouncer that I did too
get a telegram."

"You certainly did. But what are you doing in Wash-
ington? Aunt Dora's hospital is in Baltimore."

It was a quickly juiced Bevo who gushed his sad tale to
the sympathetic bartender, who happened to mention it to
the busboy, who knew the bellhop, who was a good friend
of the cleaning lady. Soon the name Chet Biddle was swept
into the Shriver suite where the cleaning lady himself
recommended him. Such a testimonial could not be dis-
missed; the Peace Corps got Biddle.

Chester was always a little wheeler and dealer, even in his
boyhood days when he was known as the "Cool Aid Kid", a
title prompted by his chain of corner stands which he
cleverly managed in the fashion of his idol, Uriah Heep.
But he soon grew tired of the small time stuff, and with a
pocket full of pennies and a Peepsodent possible smile, he
made his way to Mecca of the prep-school set, Yale. In the
aristocratic atmosphere of New Haven, he was rather
embarrassed by the rustic ring to his name, and was forever
trying to change it, usually adopting that of an absent
friend. Finally, in his junior year, he resigned himself to his
fate, accepted his name, and began to use it on checks.

It was 1941, the war was on, and Biddle was off, scurrying
through Canada a phone call ahead of his local "See
Europe" agent. After two weeks as a 200 pound paper-
weight in Ottawa, he hired on as a "finder of lost persons
in Big Bear, Saskatchewan, a "grisley" job, he confides.
Not choosing to stay at any one place too long, he kept on
the move; a paycheck, a meal, and off again, doing anything
for a buck. In 1945, after a cautious return to the States
and a daredevil summer of hitchhiking throughout Rhode
Island, he informed his draft board that he was 18 and went
back to school. The following spring, after graduating
with a B.S. in Conversational Studies, he entered the broke-
rage firm of Phister, Fisele, Sisele, and Ogbu.

Ultimately rejecting the idea of work, he became in-
terested in politics. Foundations, committees, agencies . . .
anything would do. He could squabble, equivocate, revoke,
and run a mimeograph machine; he was a natural. His
unique work heading a committee on Planning and Replan-
ning was ultimately responsible for their selection of a new
chairman. A political philosophy? Biddle bashfully admits,
"I like to do nutty things."

The father of two girls, Biddle has been anticipating his
marriage for some time. (The former Hazel Wilson, Ingham,
Turner, Clauson, and Harriman) An avid cyclist who can
always be found riding around his block in Georgetown,
Bevo has prompted this suggestion from Shriver: "I wish
he'd come down to the office more often."

—Don Samuelson—

Cosmopolis . . . from page 2

In response to many inquiries, as they say, we would like
our readers to submit suggested interpretations of the
following extracts which appeared in the handbook that
came with each new Honda motor-bike. We realize there
can be no definitive commentary.

"After starting the engine, if the opening of the choke
shutter should not prevent the engine from running,
then the choke shutter should not be opened entirely."

"This should be done by setting the change in second
and shoving the vehicle in running. However, it is most
important to return the throttle grip as soon as the
engine has started, otherwise the vehicle should start
off suddenly and became dangerous."

Al Bielefeld in the North and Dick Hughes in the East,
have agreed to become Regional Editors—we don't know
what this means, but it swells our staff and we are pleased
to have them with us.

We were in Lagos a few weeks back, again, and ran
across a troup of Togo PCVs again. They said they were
lost again, but we commented later that they were as fine a
group of young Americans as we have met.