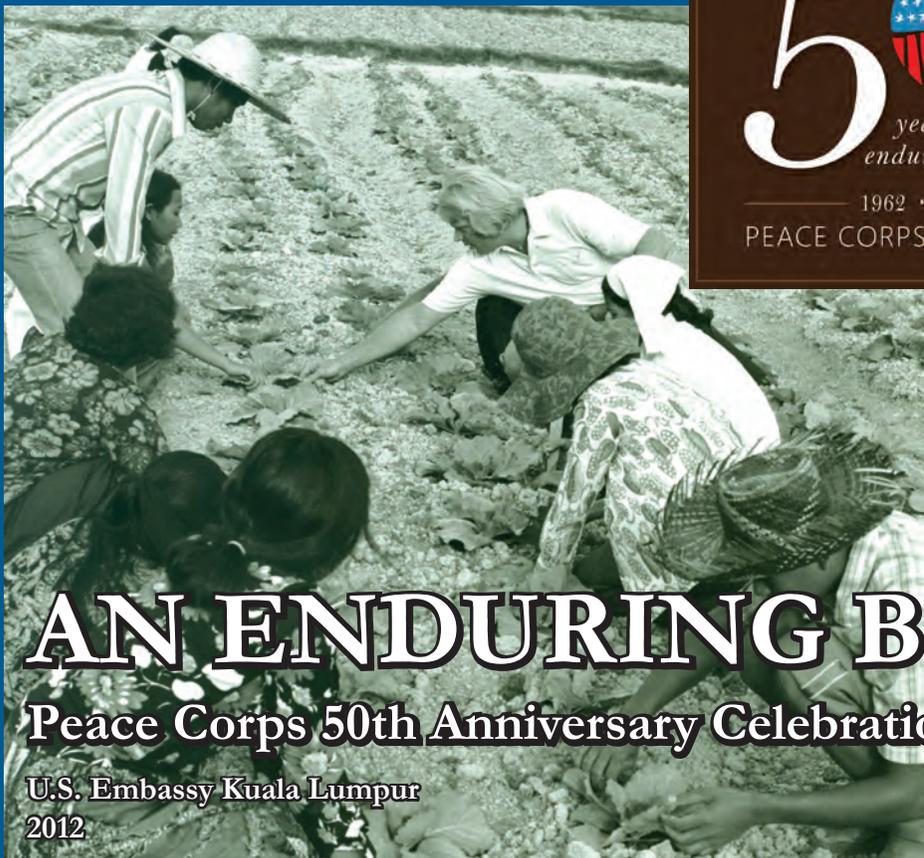




5   
*years of  
enduring friendship*  
1962 · 2012  
PEACE CORPS | MALAYSIA



# AN ENDURING BOND

Peace Corps 50th Anniversary Celebration in Malaysia

U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur  
2012



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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This publication contains a selection of photos and stories pertaining specifically to Peninsular Malaysia. A subsequent publication focused on East Malaysia (Borneo) will be launched later this year.

The U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur has made a few minor editorial changes but has chosen to preserve the original language of the authors. Both American and British versions of English are used in these accounts. The U.S. Embassy is not responsible for the content of the stories.

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# MESSAGE

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**Paul W. Jones**  
**U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia**

## **Peace Corps Malaysia: Celebrating 50 Years of Partnership**



Fifty years ago, a group of 36 young Americans arrived in Kuala Lumpur on a typical warm, humid day to work as Peace Corps Volunteers in villages and towns throughout what was then known as Malaya. Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak personally welcomed the volunteers, thanking them for providing skilled and trained manpower to assist national development in this young nation.

These 36 Americans were just the start. By September 1967, the Peace Corps program in Malaysia was the second largest in the world. During the 21 years that the Peace Corps served here, it brought more than 4,000 American volunteers to live and work in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

American Peace Corps Volunteers worked hand-in-hand with Malaysians to improve lives and promote livelihoods. Some volunteers provided math, science and English education to tens of thousands of Malaysians. Another group helped establish agricultural organizations and public works programs. Yet another group was critical in the fight against tuberculosis and improving public health. These volunteers gave their time, energy and even their lives (six volunteers died during their service in Malaysia) helping the people of Malaysia to develop their nation.

When the Peace Corps program concluded in Malaysia in 1983, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra stated, *“we have been most grateful to [the Peace Corps] for the help they have given us and we feel proud to have met and known them. May this feeling continue for all time... the service they have rendered us will long remain in our memory.”*

The Tunku's comments continue to ring true almost 30 years later. I have been fortunate enough to travel to almost every part of this beautiful country. All across Malaysia, from Kelantan to Johor, Sabah and Sarawak, or here in Kuala Lumpur, I've heard stories from Malaysian friends across all levels of society about their unforgettable experiences with Peace Corps Volunteers.

Happily, the spirit of the Peace Corps continues today. In January 2012, precisely 50 years after the arrival of the first Peace Corps Volunteers, another group of young Americans arrived in Kuala Lumpur on a warm, humid day. These 50 Americans, part of the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) program, have settled into local communities in Terengganu, Pahang and Johor. They represent President Obama's response to Prime Minister Najib's request for U.S. support for English-language education in Malaysia. Following in the footsteps of Peace Corps Volunteers, these Americans will help provide the critical English-language skills necessary to succeed in our globalized world while helping rejuvenate the enduring ties among our peoples.

Peace Corps Volunteers and English Teaching Assistants learn so much from their experiences in Malaysia, becoming lifelong Ambassadors for mutual understanding and respect for each other's culture and way of life. I see a strong foundation for further expanding understanding, prosperity and collaboration that benefit both of our peoples. Thousands of Malaysians have studied in the United States. You can find alumni of U.S. universities and exchange programs in every corner of Malaysia. Likewise, thousands of Americans have come to Malaysia for education and enrichment. These experiences have etched lasting memories and remind us that we are connected beyond the material forces of politics and economics. We are linked by thoughts, ideas and conversations. We share an openness of mind, a curiosity about the world and an appreciation for all that we are as human beings.

As we celebrate the Peace Corps' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary here in Malaysia, we look forward to continuing this heartfelt spirit of friendship and cooperation in the years to come.



**Paul W. Jones**



“Life in the Peace Corps will not be easy ... allowances will be at a level sufficient only to maintain health and meet basic needs ... But if the life will not be easy, it will be rich and satisfying.”

-John F. Kennedy-



“We have been most grateful to [the Peace Corps Volunteers] for the help they have given us and we feel proud to have met and known them. May this feeling continue for all time.”

-Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra-





## RECOLLECTIONS FROM RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS, PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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*These notes were dictated and prepared by Dr. Norman Parmer, the first Peace Corps Director in Malaysia (1961-1963) with assistance from Sam Hanson, friend and retired employee of Ohio University in January, 2012.*

The Peace Corps in Malaysia began with a visit by Sargeant Shriver to Kuala Lumpur. I believe that was in March of 1961. Shriver had been appointed Director by his brother-in-law, President John F. Kennedy. He visited several Asian Countries, and in each met with government officials and explained what the Peace Corps was intended to be.

At the time of his visits, there were no volunteers and few staff members. Nor, in fact, much of anything. The Peace Corps was mostly ideas in Mr. Shriver's head. The meetings in Kuala Lumpur went well and the Malaysian authorities welcomed the Peace Corps.

Soon after returning home, the talent committee of the Peace Corps began searching for a director for Malaysia. They contacted Cornell University which in the 1950s, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, made Southeast Asia an area for research and teaching. Cornell had one of the first inter-disciplinary programs in the United States. This meant that the M.A and PhD degrees continued to be given by the various departments. Southeast Asia became a concentration within these departments. No degrees were offered in Southeast Asian studies. I was one of the earliest students to study Southeast Asia. At Cornell I earned my PhD in history with a specialization in southeast Asia and graduated in 1957.

Because of the reputation of Cornell, the Peace Corps talent committee approached the University for a country director for Malaysia. The basic requirements were that the person must have knowledge of the Malay language, have lived in Malaysia and thus would not suffer culture shock, and have some administrative experience. I was one of the few Cornell graduates who fitted these criteria. In due course, I was appointed country director. My appointment preceded any decision on the nature of the program in Malaysia, the recruitment of volunteers for Malaysia, and the establishment of a training program. Thus, I was sent to Malaysia to discuss Malaysia's wishes and to further orient Malaysian authorities about the Peace Corps. I took with me a memorandum of understanding which was signed by representatives of both governments.



*President Kennedy and Sargent Shriver in the Rose Garden*

My wife accompanied me to Washington for the job interview. My decision to accept the offer was followed by several additional days in which both she and I were mustered into the ongoing work. Thus, I went through several hundred applications from those who appeared to be potential volunteers for Malaysia while my wife did a good deal of secretarial work.

It was necessary to establish a site for training the Malaysia volunteers. It was decided to hold the training program at Northern Illinois University as I was on the faculty there. The University had been very tolerant and supportive of my Peace Corps dealings, but was unwilling to have me take up residence at another university during the training program.

I was very much involved in planning the training program for the first group of volunteers. In addition to local faculty, we invited a number of authorities from other institutions to teach and prepare the volunteers for their service in Malaysia. The success of the program and subsequent programs was in large measure due to a friend, Professor Patrick White. He was a superb administrator.

Accommodation was a problem in that every dormitory bed was filled. Enrollment at Northern Illinois was rising dramatically in the late 1950s and 1960s. It was then decided to house the volunteers at De Kalb, Illinois' one hotel. This was in the center of the small town and was appropriately named the Rice Hotel. The trainees thought that the name of the hotel was appropriate as they were going to Asia.

In the meantime, two additional persons were added to the staff. The first was Lew Butler. Butler had actually been employed by Shriver without any country assignment. Lew became my deputy. He had no knowledge of Malaysia. He was a lawyer in San Francisco and was filled with idealism. The second person was Jay Marianoff. Jay had spent a good deal of time in Indonesia and was fluent in that language. He was friendly and outgoing. In Malaysia he became the staff member who visited the volunteers more often than Lew or myself. Jay was almost always visiting the volunteers. His personality was such that if the volunteer had a problem, they would share it with Jay.



*President Kennedy addresses the first Peace Corps Volunteers.*

Volunteers, on arrival, spent several days in Kuala Lumpur before going to their assignment. There was some curiosity about the volunteers among the general public and a desire on the part of some organizations to welcome the volunteers. For example, the head of the labor unions in the country treated the volunteers, on the evening of the second night, to an Indian curry dinner. Although we had experimented

with Malaysian food at the Rice Hotel in DeKalb, we had not, I believe, had Indian curry. To many of our volunteers, the dinner was something of a shock. However, every volunteer ate all of the curry. In training they had been told that it would be impolite not to eat all the food. On the third or fourth night, the Prime Minister (Tunku) wanted to meet the volunteers and invited all of them plus the staff to a reception at his home in the Lake Gardens. He wanted to meet each volunteer and I stood by him with our forty volunteers and introduced them. He shook each of their hands.

I had, years earlier (1950's), known him when he was a leading political figure. I was invited to the early meetings of UMNO (the United Malay National Organization). In spite of these few early contacts with the Tunku, I doubted that he would remember me, but he did. After all the volunteers had been introduced and went on to the reception, he took me out on the porch of his home and we sat on a large swing, me to his right. Always informal, Tunku slapped my left knee and said, "Now, Norman, tell me all about the Peace Corps". I proceeded to describe the duties of the volunteers. Tunku then said that if I had any problems, I should go directly to the Minister of the ministry involved. He was confident that any problems could be solved by the appropriate minister. Jay, Lew and myself then proceeded to take the volunteers to their assignments.

Some Peace Corps groups had trouble of one kind or another. By comparison, Malaysia was so trouble-free that we were held up briefly as an example of how the Peace Corps was intended to work.

Our success – as compared to the Peace Corps in some countries – was due to having a smaller group of 40. We were able to visit each place of assignment and speak to the Malaysian for whom the volunteer would work. Those visits were used to clear up any misconceptions the Malaysian might have. Those visits also included a look at where the volunteer would live.

Mr. Shriver was, I think, an excellent choice to head the Peace Corps program. Excellent, because he was willing to take advice as well as criticism. He had good judgment and was willing to make changes as needed.



*Sargent Shriver*

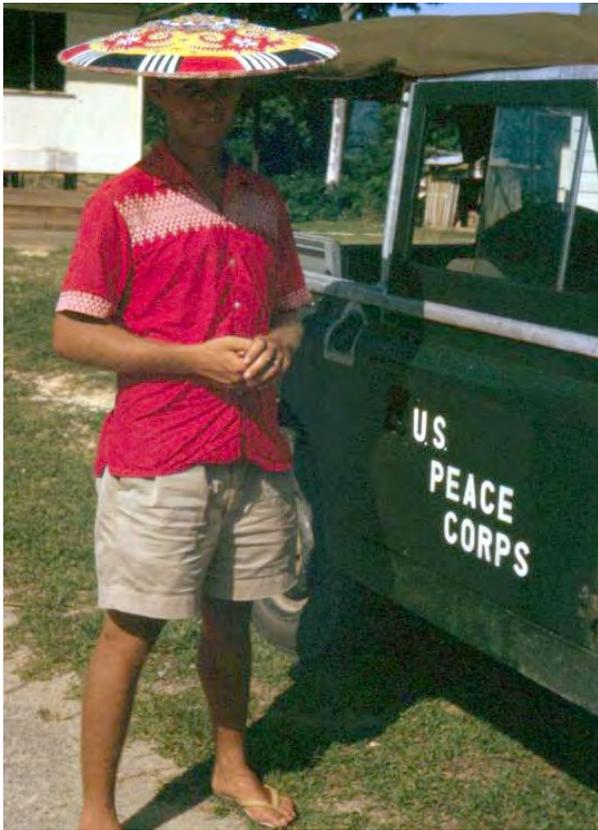


*Tun Abdul Razak with Peace Corps Volunteers in Malaysia.*



*Vice President Hubert Humphrey's arrival at Kuala Lumpur, 1967*

Mr. Shriver initially saw Peace Corps volunteers as living and working in primitive conditions. For example, he wanted included in every training program one or two weeks in Puerto Rico. There they would be dropped individually in the forest with a compass and a two-day food supply. The idea was that they would find their way out, each on their own. My differences with “Sarge”, and the “jungle experience” was one example of his acceptance of criticism. I told him that none of the assignments that had been developed in Malaysia involved fighting their way out of the jungle. Moreover, if Malaysians learned of this jungle experience, they would have a good laugh. I insisted that the volunteers for Malaysia not go through the Puerto Rico experience.



*Peace Corps Volunteer Thaine Allison at  
Tangillan, Kota Belude 1963*

And then, on a Sunday afternoon before the training program had actually begun, I got a call from Mr. Shriver. Among other items of information, he told me that he had managed to acquire 30 reconditioned military jeeps in the Philippines. He had arranged for their shipment to Malaysia. I was very upset with this news and said so. Jeeps were unknown in Malaysia except for war movies. I reminded him that earlier, he had envisioned volunteers riding bicycles and local busses to get around. I told him that Jeeps were totally inappropriate for nearly every job a volunteer would have in Malaysia. In so many words, I told him that his “Jeeps for Malaysia” was a very bad idea, and that it could even defeat the program. I prevailed and he cancelled the Jeeps. Unfortunately, two of them were already en route and were duly delivered to my house in Kuala Lumpur. There is more to the Jeep story, but I shall end it by simply saying that a good Malaysian friend of mine who worked for Cycle & Carriage took them off my hands.

Another reason the Peace Corps in Malaysia was a success was that the Ambassador, the Honorable Charles Baldwin, was the first ambassadorial appointment made by President John Kennedy. When Ambassador Baldwin learned that the Peace Corps was coming to Malaysia, he called his staff together and told them that he was 100% in favor of the Peace Corps. He pointed out that the Peace Corps was an independent organization and that they had no official relationship with them. Nevertheless, if they should have the opportunity to assist a volunteer, they should do their best to provide that assistance. There were several occasions when the embassy was able to provide important help.

## Stories Listed Alphabetically By State

### LANCE LYMAN, Various states, 1964-1971

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**“We were not all educators or health workers in Peace Corps Malaysia, some had different assignments.”**

The full sized king cobra showed its orange hood and wide open mouth at man height, swaying gently and alert waiting for me as I walked directly towards it. At the last second before coming into the cobra's strike range, my Orang Asli guide yanked me backwards to safety. Seared into my memory is still the thought that death was only moments away as I walked from one Orang Asli village to another in the mountain deep jungle of Peninsular Malaysia. I was there because of my Peace Corps assignment as the Signals Officer for the Malaysian Government's Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli. The job was to design and build a radio communications network linking some 125 remote deep jungle villages to the outside world. The job became a significant undertaking to which I gave a part of my life serving as a volunteer doing something for the development of Malaysia. My Peace Corps service began in 1964 as a member of Malaysia VII [*editor's note: the seventh group of Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) to arrive in Peninsular Malaysia*] and ended in 1971, which makes me one of the longest continuously serving PCV in Peace Corps history. I started with nothing but an idea and left behind a fully staffed, equipped, and funded, radio communications network, parts of which are still in operation in 2011 – where cell phone and internet coverage are not practical. The network brought and still brings access to medical, security, and governmental assistance for remote Orang Asli villages deep in the jungle.

What I brought away from my Peace Corps service includes the same deep attachment to Malaysia that many of us volunteers felt as we moved on in life. I formed, and keep until this day, my friendships with Malaysians I first came in contact with during and after my Peace Corps service. Ranging from my then assistant who is now Malaysia's top telecommunications expert and adviser to the Prime Minister's Department, his eldest sister who established and runs the Malaysian program that cares for the unwanted babies and children carrying HIV through no fault of their own, his youngest sister, now a U.S. citizen living in the New York area and creator of a Malaysia America Interest Foundation fostering person-to-person contacts, the daughter of my Malaysian boss who is now a ranking member of the Malaysian Foreign Service and a graduate of the University of Indiana whom I helped get into the University's MA Program, my Head of Department who became the National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, the retired but still active highest elected Malaysian official who took a particular interest in my Peace Corps work with the Orang Asli and was instrumental in helping me overcome the many, many bureaucratic obstacles in establishing the communications network, and lots of ordinary Malaysians with whom I have come into contact with through the years.



*Lance Lyman operating a radio communication set  
located in an orang asli village.*

In my activities and projects after Peace Corps, I ranged globally. When conversations on the subject of Southeast Asia came up, I was able to explain Malaysia to persons and entities in those several countries that circumstances brought me to, countries whose citizens had little or no knowledge of Malaysia. These countries include Malawi, Mali, Niger, Botswana, Iran before the Revolution, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq in the 1970's, Afghanistan before the Russians, Peru, Argentina, Berlin and on and on. I have helped Malaysians who found themselves in difficult situations in faraway places, when I could. None of this would have come about without my Peace Corps Volunteer service in Malaysia.

I visit KL as often as circumstances permit and have done so steadily since 1971. KL is my gateway from which I travel to places dear to my heart, starting with Gombak, Ipoh, Kuala Lipis, Kuala Krai, Grik, Cameron Highlands, and so many others. Therefore I have seen, and continue to see at first hand,

the monumental changes in Malaysia since those days of 1964. It is not at all unusual for me to meet Malaysians here and there in the world whose first contact with America was via a Peace Corps Volunteer: "Did you know Bob or Sally, etc, who was my teacher or nurse or co-worker in Temerloh, Kuala Kangsar, Seremban, Kulim, Kampong Raja Hitam..." A recent example of this was in July 2011 when my wife and I conversed in Bahasa Malaysia with a gentleman who turned out to be a senior member of Malaysia's delegation to the UN. When he found out that I was a Peace Corps Volunteer, the question inevitably turned to whether I knew someone in Peace Corps who was his teacher.

You may wonder how it is that someone from rural Ohio is fluent in Bahasa Malaysia. The answer is, my Malay language skills owe to the excellent Peace Corps training and my subsequent long service in an environment demanding a very good command of spoken and written governmental Bahasa, coupled with a knack for languages, a good memory, interest, constant reading of Malaysian newspapers plus listening to Malaysian media, and plenty of opportunities to use Bahasa in the years following my Peace Corps service. My story may be a bit different by nature of my assignment, but I share the same pride being a Peace Corps Volunteer helping in the development of Malaysia.

## BARBARA SALLETES, Johor, 1964-1966

**“The experiences I had in Malaysia have been with me all my life.”**

The volunteers of Malaysia VII entered training in July of 1964. The first two months of training were at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and the second two months were in Hilo, Hawaii. One thing I remember about training is that it was relentless. We started with breakfast at 7:15 in the morning and ended at 9:30 at night, Monday through Friday. Of that time, five hours a day were Malay language instruction. The Saturday training was from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm and Sundays were usually free.

We received endless shots. I think they must have tried to protect us against everything. A lot of the academic information was given in Illinois. Once we arrived in Hawaii, it was more hands on, practical experiences. One day we all went out into the fields to pick something. I guess they wanted us to have the experience of doing farm work. I can't even remember what we picked, but I do remember that the constant bending over gave me an unbelievable backache at the end of the day. Then there was the day when we got the chance to plow a field using a water buffalo. The water buffalo did the pulling, but it took enormous effort keeping the plow in the ground. I went around the field only once and I was exhausted.

Of the 104 persons who entered training, 90 actually went to Malaysia. Fourteen either left voluntarily or were selected out. Of that 90, there were nine nurses, nine radiomen, one secretary (for the Peace Corps office in Kuala Lumpur) and the rest teachers. The radio engineers were all sent to Sabah in Northern Borneo. They helped build and maintain AM and FM transmitting stations. Some of the teachers were sent to Sarawak. The nurses and the rest of the teachers were stationed in West Malaysia. The nurses and radiomen stayed for two years. Teachers stayed for two and a half years. To leave in July would have pulled us out right in the middle of the Malaysian school year, so all teachers were asked to stay until December.



*Barbara Sallettes with students in her classroom at Laksamana School in Kota Tinggi.*

My assignment in Malaysia was teaching standard three at Laksamana School in Kota Tinggi, Johor. I have very fond memories of the people, the food, and the cultures. I lived in government housing in a house with other single female teachers. People were very kind. Other teachers and families in the community brought me everywhere with them. I was invited to homes to eat and sometimes people sent food to my house. The children were wonderful and I enjoyed my two years teaching them.

During school holidays, Peace Corps encouraged us to be involved in “projects.” Otherwise, we would have several months off in the two years that we were there. One project was in kampongs in northern Malaysia. Two volunteers were assigned to each kampong. Our main goal was installing a water seal toilet behind the home of the ketua kampong. It was hoped that if he had one, others might want one also. Another project was working in a recreation program in an Indian orphanage in Kuala Lumpur.

Some holidays were spent travelling. Once I went to Sarawak and another time I went to Thailand and Cambodia.

The experiences I had in Malaysia have been with me all my life. They are the lens through which I view the world. Serving in the Peace Corps in Malaysia was a priceless experience and a privilege for me. I am very grateful to have been given that opportunity.

## **PAUL MURPHY**, Johor (1971-1973)

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**“Malaysia has a very warm place in my heart.”**

Many people join the Peace Corps for similar reasons: to make a difference, to travel, to learn about and help people in another part of the world. Paul Murphy joined the Peace Corps for much of the same reasons. He talked candidly about his experience as a business volunteer in the southern-most towns in Malaysia: Johor Baru and how it affected his life. We met Paul at Malaysia Kopitiam on M Street in Northwest DC where more than 25 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) met up for a RPCV/W 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner.

Originally hailing from Boston, Paul never traveled farther than New Jersey prior to Peace Corps. Like many Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV), Paul was hesitant to join because of his seemingly poor language skills. Little did he know that English is the official language of many of the countries where Peace Corps serves. Paul ended up in Malaysia, a country where many people speak English and, therefore, he mainly spoke English; but he also surprised himself at his ability to pick up the local language. Peace Corps is full of surprises, and sometimes the biggest surprises are our ability to do things we didn't think we could!

The application process, like many things in Peace Corps, is an ever evolving process. Paul submitted his application in January

and by May had found out that he had been selected for a weekend interview. There were about 50 people coming from New York, DC and other areas of the northeast to interview in Estes Park, Colorado (a great location for Paul as he is a climber). A month later he found himself meeting fellow to-be PCV in San Jose and flying off to Malaysia. About 35 people flew out together and went through three months of language and cultural training, including a week-long homestay to improve his language ability.

Paul served from 1971-1973 and mainly worked with business staff at local co-ops to help farmers improve their ability to manage and sell their products. He spoke about the things he remembers: the sensory overload caused by an array of tastes, smells, colors and sounds. His most distinctive memory is the parallels he draws in his mind between U.S. and Malaysian culture. Malaysia is an unusual country in that most countries only have one race.

During Paul's service, about 60% of the population was Malay, 25% Chinese, 10% Indian, and the remainder aboriginal peoples. They all speak their own separate languages, practice separate religions and eat different foods. Paul recalls the difficulty in eating out and trying to observe the various needs of such a diverse populace: For example, your Indian friend may have been Hindu, so he doesn't eat beef, and your Chinese co-worker's favorite is pork, but your Malay friend does not eat pork. Going out for a meal could take some serious planning in Malaysia! Paul also distinctly remembers that no matter what race, religion, or ethnic group the people of Malaysia were, they were all as friendly and welcoming as could be.

"Malaysia has a very warm place in my heart. When I returned to the U.S., I was a member of the Malaysia - America Club at Cornell University. In 1986, I became a founding member of Friends of Malaysia, a group of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers throughout the U.S. who contribute to charities in Malaysia. I am the Treasurer and Membership Director. You can learn more about our group by going to [www.friendsofmalaysia.org](http://www.friendsofmalaysia.org). I have been on the board of the Malaysia - America Society in Washington, DC since 1990."

(written by Jennifer Meffert of the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington)



*A volunteer who is a business advisor to the farmers' co-op in Kuala Nerang.*



*A volunteer watching her English class perform a skit.*

## **GERALD BECKER**, Kelantan/Kuala Lumpur/Terengganu (1971-1974)

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**“I am forever grateful to the Peace Corps Organization for the extraordinary fulfilling and life-influencing experience.”**

In 1971, I applied for a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) job almost on a whim, and it ended up being a major life and career changer. For one thing, I was offered a position in Malaysia, a very interesting multi-cultural country which I loved and felt comfortable in right from the start. Secondly, I was blessed with a good organization to work with in Malaysia and was given a very interesting, responsible job with the newly-formed, quasi-government Agriculture Bank of Malaysia. I soon realized that I thoroughly enjoyed “development work,” which later became my life-long career. Thirdly, it provided a wonderful life partner, a Johor lass named Mariam Asha’ari-we have been married for 36 years.

But a little more detail about my experience is certainly in order:

Kota Bahru, Kelantan (1971-1973)-I came to Malaysia with Peace Corps (PC) Malaysia Group 35, which mainly comprised recent BBA’s, [Bachelor of Business Administration] destined to advise the Farmers’ Associations throughout Malaysia. We had extensive language and cultural training in Cameron Highlands for six weeks, shortly thereafter receiving our individual postings. Because my academic major was in Finance, I was posted to one of the three openings in the newly-formed Agriculture Bank of Malaysia, at the relatively new branch office in Kota Bahru, Kelantan. I was immediately given agricultural loan applications to analyze as a Loan Officer, and also got in on the ground floor of establishing and implementing a major tobacco credit scheme. I had done quite well in Malay language training, but initially had a difficult time understanding the Kelantanese people, as their dialect is unique.

So for two years I worked with the other bank loan officers, processing and administering loans for various projects, consisting of: bananas, pineapple, rice, groundnuts, animal husbandry, chickens, ducks, fisheries, etc. I also managed the nascent tobacco credit scheme, which was an important short-term cash crop for farmers. The tobacco scheme loan was very successful, with a loan repayment rate of over 95%. We also covered the neighboring State of Terengganu, and I made many field trips there. I thoroughly loved my job, because it entailed 50% of fieldwork visiting interesting places throughout the two states, and 50% analysis work and report writing in the office.

The ambiance in Kelantan was also very enjoyable and always interesting. It is the most rural of the Malaysian states, with the Malay culture being the most intact and overt. We enjoyed such things as cultural dances, shadow play, “main gasing” (top spinning), “main wau” (kite flying) and the unique game of “sepak takraw”. Additionally, there were two wonderful beaches near

*Gerald Becker in  
Kelantan 1972  
for the Fisheries  
Loan Project.*



*Gerald Becker's  
wedding with  
Mariam.*

Kota Bahru—“the Beach of Passionate Love” and Bachok beach. The proximity of Kota Bahru to Thailand provided opportunities for even more cultural experiences.

After two years in Kota Bahru, I decided that I wanted to re-up *[editor's note: to extend one's service]* as a PCV, but on the condition that I be transferred to the headquarters of the Bank in Kuala Lumpur. Both the Bank and Peace Corps readily agreed.

Kuala Lumpur (1973-74) — After one month's home leave, I returned to Malaysia and set up residence in the bustling capital city of Kuala Lumpur. The Bank treated me as their employee, and gave me the responsibility of managing the tobacco credit scheme operations for all of Malaysia and to provide the necessary training for new bank officers. Again, my job entailed an enjoyable mix of both field work and in-office analysis.

The job satisfaction and enjoyment of Malaysia was still very high after my three years as a Peace Corps Volunteer, but I decided that three years of volunteerism was enough. However, the Bank did not want me to leave, so they offered me a one-year consultancy contract to continue working with them, which I gladly accepted. It was during this fourth year that I met and married my Malay wife.

The influence of my PCV experience on my career—After my fourth year working with the Agriculture Bank of Malaysia, my newly-married wife and I decided to move to the U.S. We settled in the West Coast, but significant, meaningful employment was hard to find for me. So when an opportunity arose for a consultancy position in development (a USAID intensive-labor project in Central Java) I jumped at the chance, as I knew that I would be much happier in that type of role, a la my Peace Corps days. Thus my development consultancy career, spanning 18 years in Indonesia, a half year in East Timor, over two years in Afghanistan and over three years in Iraq was launched, all due to my Peace Corps Volunteer experience. I am forever grateful to the Peace Corps Organization for the extraordinarily fulfilling and life-influencing experience that they afforded me during the prime of my life.

## JAMARI SALLEH, Malacca, 1973-1975

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### “Peace Corps Lives in our hearts.”

Long before emails and social networks, we had “pen pals.” My first introduction to the Peace Corps (PC) was when I was in high school and had a pen pal who was a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) teaching in Sarawak, Malaysia. We corresponded via aerograms. When she finished her PC assignment, she returned home to Connecticut. My family and I visited her there and we continued our friendship. Not only did I want her PC experience but I also wanted the beautiful crafts she brought back from Malaysia.

After graduate school and teaching in a New York City high school, I joined the Peace Corps. My PC TESL group trained in Batu Muang, Penang. I was assigned to Malacca Schools and I trained teachers in English. For fun and in addition to my assigned job at the Ministry of Education, I volunteered at a home for delinquent teenage girls. Two afternoons every week, I taught them how to play American baseball. I still remember the laughter of those girls and the trust we established just having fun together.

Once back home, I couldn't get PC out of my system. I became a PC recruiter and subsequently launched the PC Recruitment Office in Puerto Rico. The most famous PCV, Lillian Carter, was the guest of honor at the opening ceremony. I still yearned to travel and to return to Malaysia -- except I had a family this time around. I was accepted into the Foreign Service and it only took me 20 years to return to Malaysia as the U.S. Embassy's Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO). Of course, I reconnected with many of my old host country friends. Often times, attending official events as CAO, someone in the audience would say, “What happened to the Peace Corps? Bring them back. They were our friends.” I wanted to raise my hand and identify myself as “a friend.”

My husband, Bob Blohm, is a former PCV (Liberia) and PC trainer. Our oldest daughter did two PC tours, Bangladesh and Togo. Peace Corps lives in our hearts. We are proud and grateful to have been Peace Corps Volunteers. It is not the toughest job but certainly the one we will always love and treasure.



*Jamari Salleh at the Chinese Girls School, Malacca in 1974.*

## KAREN (GEAR) ALIYUDDIN, Perak, 1966-1967

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**“By now, in my mind, I think I look more or less like any other Malaysian, I imagine I can get lost in the crowd.”**

By now, in my mind, I think I look more or less like any other Malaysian, I imagine I can get lost in the crowd. But, oh no, I guess I’m still outstanding or is it that I stand out, fair skin, white hair, curious accent, etc. “Where are you from,” I’m always asked; never annoyed because I can understand the curiosity, I try to explain in the fewest words possible that I’m from Ipoh, yes, for the past 42 years it’s been my home, with my husband Ali and yes, three kids and yes, I do like it here, but it gets too hot sometimes... Often that’s enough, but sometimes I end up telling my life story, as briefly as possible...

So, as briefly as possible I will tell you – I was born in Brooklyn, New York, educated in NY State for my BSc [Bachelor of Science degree], I was a Home Economics (Domestic Science) teacher for three years, received my MSc [Master of Science degree] and joined Peace Corps Malaysia for two years in Kuala Kangsar teaching Domestic Science.

My first knowledge of Malaysia was that it was between Thailand and Singapore (and still is) and two of its cities were Penang and Malacca. Now I know quite a bit more. I definitely got more out of my Peace Corps experience than I gave, I got an education that no money can buy. A mind-boggling perspective of people and nations! Sorely needed as the world gets smaller.

Kuala Kangsar was laid-back to say the least, relaxed. We taught in English, the classrooms were well-equipped for the subject and it was fun and easy. Students were well behaved, and the best treat of the week was to indulge in a *fried kuay teow* or get a *pau* or two from the still famous coffee shop on the main road. Went on bicycle picnics with students out to Ulu Kenas, attended Sultan’s birthday celebrations on the palace grounds, enjoyed birthdays with fellow teachers at that same coffee shop (upstairs) and celebrated Chinese New Year at the home of our headmistress Miss Partridge. That’s where I first saw a pomelo and learned that long noodles were for long life. Nothing fazed me, I just soaked it all up and went with the flow...

My biggest contribution to Malaysia is that I have added to its already colorful gene pool, and have given it three wonderful well-educated, critical-thinking citizens – my children (ta da!) – and five multi-cultural grandchildren who are all proud of their heritage. And last but not least I’ve made one Malaysian male relatively happy for the past almost 43 years. Three cheers!

## DANIEL CLAFFEY, Penang, 1970 - 1972

**“Rounding out his participation in “Kampung” life, Daniel conducted tutorial classes for the children of Police officers who lived in the area.”**

Daniel participated as Peace Corps Volunteer in the pilot program for the Primary Math and Science Program conducted by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to improve the teaching skills of teachers in the Sekolah Kebangsaan Rendah system. This small group of volunteers were put into a Bahasa Malaysia training program held at Pulau Pangkor and at the teacher’s college in Johor Baru. Volunteers were required to achieve a level of proficiency in the language that would enable them to conduct, together with two Malaysian counterparts, in-service courses for teachers at training centers located in both East and West Malaysia. Trainees who could not achieve the minimum language test score were dropped from the program and returned to the United States. The in-service courses, developed by the Education Ministry with assistance from U.S. university professors, trained teachers in the use of materials from the Malaysian environment to impart math and science material to their students. The pilot program, from 1970 to 1972, was highly successful and resulted in a continuation of the program until all six grades in the primary schools had benefited from the new teaching methods for teachers.



*Dan Claffey with his students.*

Assigned to Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Penanti in Seberang Perai in Penang, Daniel worked at the Math /Science Centre and conducted courses with his counterparts until October 1972. To help volunteers develop their language skills, headmasters at the schools included volunteers in the regular teaching workload, focusing on the math and science classes that used the new Ministry syllabus for those subjects. In addition, with a university background in animal biology, particularly entomology (insects and other arthropods), Daniel conducted additional courses throughout Penang to train teachers in animals preservation techniques to provide hands-on teaching materials. A strong emphasis was placed on the rearing, preserving and presentation of insects, other arthropods, reptiles, amphibians and reviewed techniques for mammal preservation for use as museum-like collections and teaching aids. At the request of the regional education coordinator, Daniel also developed the annual state examination for science students.

Rounding out his participation in “*kampung*” life, Daniel conducted tutorial classes for the children of police officers who lived in the area. With his Malay language skills, Daniel also served as an interpreter for Americans coming to the area to marry Malaysians they met in American universities. As a result of this activity, he was fortunate to take part in many marriage ceremonies at surrounding villages. His leisure time was spent playing basketball with the local Chinese team and in 1972 the team won the annual championship conducted for Seberang Perai town teams at the Chinese New Year celebrations held at the temple complex in Bukit Mertajam. Participating teams included one from the Royal Australian Air Force in Butterworth. One of the team members from Penanti was highly skilled and reportedly joined the Malaysian national basketball team later.

## **TOM LINNELL,** Penang, 1965-1972

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### **“Growing Up in Malaysia.”**

I graduated from Harvard in 1965, twenty-one years old and eager for adventure. Some of my class went off to graduate school, others to the military. The rest of us headed for places unknown. Literally. I had no idea where Malaysia was when I headed to Hawaii for training. Our 220 trainees in Hilo quickly found out, however, as we were plunged into its language and culture--so intensely that guys woke up in the middle of the night yelling out phrases in Bahasa Malaysia. When we landed in Kuala Lumpur in December, we were certain that we were on our way to making a difference in this country. And we were so unaware of how Malaysia and her people were about to make an even bigger difference in our lives.

I taught English at the Sekolah Abdullah Munshi (SAM) in Penang from January, 1966 to December, 1967. There were a handful of other volunteers scattered around the island, but we seldom saw each other. SAM school was in its second year of existence, what its present day teachers call “the pioneer days.” Nearly everything about the school was new--the buildings, the curriculum, the staff,

the library, the sports and cultural traditions, the new graduates from the University of Malaysia, and myself, for whom absolutely everything was new. Every day was an adventure. We were making it all up as we went along, conscious of Malaysia working her way out of the shadows of the colonial period that had ended less than a decade before. My life took on a rhythm of intense semesters of over-full classrooms, punctuated by side trips on a shoe-string budget to see the rest of the country.

And then, in one sudden moment, I realized something had changed. It came at the one year mark, when we welcomed the next wave of volunteers, hosted them for a few days to help them settle in. Could we possibly have been as naive as they seemed, as uncouth, as pathetic in the language and insensitive in cultural manners, as self-centered, just one year before? We must have been, but how dramatically we seemed to have been transformed. Without our knowing, the days and nights of living/working/serving/struggling/speaking Bahasa/learning new foods and coping with it all had worked deeply into our hearts and minds.

So, I stayed on a bit. After the regular two-year assignment, I stayed six more months as a staff assistant in Kuantan, orienting new volunteers and supporting an elementary English language program. A year later, I was back, now married to a former volunteer from Peace Corps Korea, Sheri Lynne Moore. Together we ran the first round of in-country training in West Malaysia, and then moved to Kuching where I took a job as the Associate Director in the East Malaysia office. By the time we left in the summer of 1972, it was clear that we would always be part Malaysian in our hearts.



*Many years later, Tom Linnell with Malaysian friends.*

When you hear a returned volunteer say that he or she got more from serving than they ever gave, believe it. Sheri and I have been back twice, in 1998 and in 2011. We have become friends with Malaysian students at Colorado State University over the years and visited them at home, and we have renewed friendships dating back to the 70's. We have followed Malaysian news online and relished seeing the changes in the country as it has assumed leadership in Southeast Asia.

We will always be glad that we answered President Kennedy's call 50 years ago. It took us down an unknown road that made all the difference.



## MALAYSIAN RECOLLECTIONS OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

*Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr. Yahaya Ibrahim*  
*Pro-Chancellor at the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malacca*

The recent article from the New Straits Times entitled: “Peace Corps celebrates 50 years” certainly brings back nostalgic chapters in my early working life as Malacca state organizer of schools and subsequently as a federal inspector of schools, Ministry of Education, Malaysia until I retired from government service in February, 1984, almost one year after the American Peace Corps program in Malaysia ended.

After a stint of teaching at Bandar Hilir and Malacca High School, a memorable episode was when I was attached to the Education Department Malacca and later the Ministry of Education as a Federal Inspector of Schools (1959-84). I was involved with the work of the American Peace Corps Volunteers based in Malaysia which ran from 1962 to 1983.

These Peace Corps Volunteers were a great lot to work with and I have many fond reminiscences of them. In 1962 they came to Malaysia with almost no idea of the culture and background of the country. The only orientation they had was an intensive three-month stint at the East-West Center in Hawaii which gave them a basic knowledge of Bahasa Malaysia and understanding of what to expect in the Malaysian landscape then. Mind you, some parts of Malaysia then were still gazetted as black areas.

I was there in Hawaii on a working visit to witness their program. When these volunteers arrived in Malaysia they had picked up working skills in Bahasa Malaysia and were deployed to various schools to teach Mathematics and Science in the Malay language. Mathematics and Science subjects happened to be my area of concentration in the Federal Inspectorate of Schools then.



*Training Program in Hawaii.*

For the information of the general public, prior to 1965 the subject of primary science was not offered in our schools. The subject of nature study was taught instead. The English medium schools ceased to function with effect from 1970. Hence the contributions made in this regard by the Peace Corps Volunteers then were very timely and significant.

The two-year stint by them involved teaching thousands of local students in primary and secondary national schools then was desirable, purposeful and productive. Initially, I regularly visited those who were posted to schools in Malacca and later those who were scattered from the south in Mersing (on the border with Johor) to cover the east coast region which include Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan.

Immersed in the system, these young Americans became splendid teachers who picked up the Malay language with consummate ease and even the local Malay accent and way of life of the local populace. They were positioned for two years mostly in rural schools, and despite the cultural shock, adopted and adapted well with the food, customs and ways of Malaysia back in the early 60s and 70s. They normally travelled to work on bicycles or motor-scooters. No motorcars. Most of them lived in small towns and villages. Some married local people. They did not confine their daily activities only to teaching in school but devoted a great deal to promoting school co-curricular activities and community development. Many of our boys and girls, their parents and local community benefited immensely from the American Peace Corps Volunteers who used their two-year stint teaching in Malaysia to gain among others, credits for their various courses of graduate study upon their return to the United States.

For many of these volunteers I urged and encouraged them to extend their two year stay by a year as they were doing an excellent job indeed. It was wonderful to see that not only the students profited but the volunteers themselves gaining so much insight and understanding of the Malaysian way of life, sharing and exchanging ideas and experiences with Malaysians. This is particularly true when at that time, very few, if any at all of our national primary school teachers were with high school qualifications.

I look forward to welcoming new batches of the American Peace Corps Volunteers [Editor's note: currently English Teaching Assistants] (ETAs) to Malaysia to help promote the teaching and learning of English Language and Literature to our people through a joint bilateral educational program initiated by both the government of Malaysia and the U.S.A. The great efforts initiated and promoted by the government leaders of our two countries should be supported by our two peoples systematically and developmentally. In the



*Vice President Humphrey visits Peace Corps programs in Malaysia, Oct 1967.*

process, it is hoped that these cooperative efforts will spearhead the growth and development of education, technology and enterprise needed by our young country to attain developed country status by the year 2020.

Ever since the late U.S. President, John F. Kennedy, challenged a group of University of Michigan students in the early 60s to volunteer their service to bring America to others around the world, the United States Peace Corps Volunteers have been established to realize his vision, much to the gain of many others, including Malaysia.

I salute the work of the early batches of the United States Peace Corps Volunteers in celebrating their 50 years anniversary of their service in Malaysia and wish them greater success for many more years ahead. I gladly welcome the new batches of volunteers (ETAs) to Malaysia to contribute towards the development of teaching and learning of English language and literature to our people. I wish them all the success in their great mission to Malaysia.



*Mohamed Taib bin Osman and Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wabid shortly after arrival at Northern Illinois University in 1962, assigned to teach Peace Corps Volunteers.*



*Vice President, Hubert Humphrey's visit to Maktab Pertanian Serdang, 1967.*

## Stories Listed Alphabetically By State

# ULAGANATHAN A/L SHANMUGAM, Kelantan

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**“It has taken nearly 45 years to realise the great influence and impact that these Peace Corps friends had on my life.”**

My first contact with the Peace Corps movement was through Chester Bolay. We taught in Hamzah Secondary School in 1966/67. We rented a one room house and shared the rental and miscellaneous expenditure. Although we were roommates for less than a year, I found his company very stimulating and hilarious. He was a very jovial personality and hence was able to get along with most of the staff.

About six months later, Robinson joined our staff as a Science teacher in 1968. He was looking for a place to stay and I too wanted to shift out of the one room house I had stayed earlier with Chester. So Robinson, Chee Yeow Seng (art teacher) and myself (a teacher trainee then) got together and found a much larger Malay type wooden house along Pasir Mas Road in Machang, Kelantan.

It was a wonderful experience living together. On a routine basis, we went to school together, we prepared and drank coffee together, Robinson would rather take the coffee without sugar or milk, and talk about school and back home. He told me that his dad worked in a TV station in Minnesota and many more things about his life. He brought a box of books and he would encourage me to read them and that led me to be interested in reading.

Robinson had a great influence in my life. I was 22 years old then. I had completed my teacher training course. But I didn't have the Higher School Certificate, a qualification that would have enabled me to enter University. I had decided to sign up for the examination but there were no institutions in the district offering instruction. Moreover, there were no bookshops in the district or in the capital, Kota Bharu, selling the books I required. Robinson offered to help. He asked his father to send me the Cole guide books for my English literature text books. He would insist that I complete reading the text books and at night, after our Principal had left, would ask me to narrate the story.

It was this kind of concern and motivation that kept me away from TV programs (which was still new in our country) and kept me in touch with all my books. As a way of contrast, another housemate of mine, let's just call him Ng, told me that it would be impossible for me to pass the examination as he too had taken the exam while he was given excellent coaching in a prestigious school in Penang he had not done too well although he had passed. Robinson, on the other hand, was adamant that I would pass if I put in my fair share of work. For this, I am eternally grateful.

I can still remember the day the results were announced. Those were the days when the public examination results were published in the national newspapers. All my colleagues who had taken the examination had gone to the state capital Kota Bharu, 26 miles away, to buy the newspaper and check the results early. Robinson, Chee and myself had decided to spend time with our Muslim friends and have lunch with them as it was an auspicious day in the Islamic calendar. It was while having lunch that the news vendor brought the paper. My name was there. I had passed. Robinson was the first to congratulate me.

Later I applied to study in University Malaya. When I entered university, he had left. At that time, I never thought much about him. He was just my colleague, my housemate and my friend.

It has taken nearly 45 years to realise the great influence and impact that these Peace Corps friends, especially Robinson, had on my life. If their influence on one individual could be that great, can anyone imagine the effect they would have had on the hundreds of students they came into contact with in their short stay as volunteers.

## **DR. CHIA KENG BOON,** Malacca

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**“I didn’t get a change to use his Leicas but once in a while he would let me take home his flash.”**

Howard Koons was my Peace Corps science teacher posted to Sek. Men. Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Gemas. I am glad to say that he is part of our school alumni even to this day. Meeting him in person two years ago in a meeting organized by Yee Goon Lai made me really happy for he was one of the teachers who had a profound impact on me then.

In our first class he told us that he was surprised how developed Malaysia was. He was given a diagram for a homemade toilet and a kerosene operated fridge. The diagram he did not have any use for but the fridge became an airtight container for his photography stuffs. The fridge also led me to research on how it worked. A flame that leads to cooling. Intriguing.



*Dr. Chia Keng Boon: Picnic time with Peace Corps Volunteer, Howard Koon.*

Howard started a photography club where I learnt about silver halide, developer, fixer and focal lengths. The knowledge was enough for me to be a college photographer in University Malaya and to run my own darkroom. I didn't get a chance to use his Leicas but once in a while he would let me take home his flash, blinding many dogs in the neighborhood those nights. But I learnt about guide numbers and apertures.

Howard also brought with him the wonderful world of Science experiments and practical science. My interest in Physics and Chemistry bloomed. He started a genetics club breeding fruit flies and bombarding them with x-rays to see the mutations. Unfortunately it was for the form four and five classes.

Part of the Peace Corps pack was two cupboards of novels. My world knowledge exploded and thanks to the books I read Literature in the university.

Despite the notes I wrote to Howard last year and this year thanking him and reliving some of my experience in his classroom and photography classes I don't think I can express exactly his influence on my career and personal attitude towards education.

## **MICHAEL ONG**, Malacca

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**“I didn't know that Tom, Jeff and Joseph were an important part of my life till now.”**

Here are my memories about three American Peace Corp Volunteers.

- a) Jeff McLaughin – My Biology teacher, Jasin Secondary English School, Jasin, Malacca
- b) Joseph Hamlin – My Physics teacher, Jasin Secondary English School, Malacca
- c) Tom Harry – Worked at the Health Department Jasin, Malacca (my father's colleague)

I was born in Jasin, a small town in the state of Malacca, 152 km from Kuala Lumpur- the capital city of Malaysia. I stayed at the Jasin Hospital quarters with my parents. The year 1973 brings me very happy memories. Life for me was very good then. I studied at Jasin Secondary English School, Jasin, Malacca (JSES) where two American Peace Corps Volunteers teachers taught me. They were Jeff McLaughin and Joseph Hamlin.

Jeff McLaughin was my Biology teacher. He was tall and he always dressed smartly. I always looked forward to his class. He was very knowledgeable. When he first started teaching us, some teaching techniques (at that time strange) became apparent. After every class he would just go out without giving us any notes to copy in our exercise books as was the norm with the local teachers at that time. He just asked us to make our own notes. Nevertheless we did quite well in his subject. He made the learning of Biology very interesting and fun. There were no sleepy eyes in his class. I still remembered writing an essay about Jeff McLaughin in my English class titled “My Favourite Teacher”.

Joseph Hamlin was my Physics teacher in Form 5. He was always smiling. Somehow his looks and style reminded me of the late singer, John Denver. He was not very tall. Joseph Hamlin was very kind and gentle in the class.

In the 1970’s teachers were allowed to cane students for wrongdoings. At that time the “normal” teaching style by the local teachers was to ‘spoon feed’ the students with lots of notes. These two American teachers taught us with a very refreshing method: lecture style. We wrote our own notes. How’s that for an American-style teaching experience in the classroom way back in 1973? We all loved it.

Tom Harry worked in the Health Department at Jasin Hospital. My father worked in the same hospital. My family and I became very close to him. He enjoyed my mother’s home cooking. He came for dinner daily at my home at the hospital quarters. He also stayed near the hospital quarters. Being the eldest in my family (eighteen years old then) I took my dinner with Tom Harry every evening at 7.30 p.m. He loved the Malaysian-Portuguese food that my mother cooked. His favourite was ‘*curry devil*’ and ‘*ikan masak asam Melaka*’. I always looked forward to having dinner with him. He would talking about America, about its culture and way of life.

I still remember the time when Tom Harry brought me to Malacca Hospital to visit my sick father. He brought me on his Honda motorbike. At that time we didn’t need to wear helmets. I could feel the wind brushing my hair during the 18 km ride. At that time not many people owned motorbikes in Jasin, let alone rode on one. It was a privilege for me to be able to ride the pillion with him on his motorbike.

He also gave me a pair of Californian rabbits. The rabbits bred so quickly and after a few months I had about twenty lively and cute rabbits in my enclosed garden. The rabbits dug burrows underground and never stopped reproducing. Taking care of the rabbits was my favourite hobby then. I sold and gave away all the rabbits when I started my career in Seremban in 1975.



*Tom Harry (U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer)  
with John Ong's family, 1973.*

As I write this article goose bumps appear on my body. I didn't know that Tom, Jeff and Joseph were an important part of my life till now when I reminisce about my wonderful years back then: That moment in time when the three American gentlemen were my friends. These three gentlemen were like mini Ambassadors from the USA. They made a difference in my life. Not many young people here know that the American Peace Corps Volunteers were once in Malaysia and played an important role in our lives. I wish them the best & THANK YOU for being a part of my life.

## LT. COL. MOHD IDRIS HASSAN, Pahang

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**“I would say that Rudy was an excellent ‘Ambassador’ of your great country.”**

Yes I was indeed more than a friend with a Peace Corps Volunteer, we were buddies. His name was Mr Rudy Ramp. He was then 24 years old and was from California and he arrived at our school in early 1963. He was posted as an instructor at the trade school in a remote place called Chenor, Pahang where he taught various skills such as brick laying, modern chicken farming (Broiler Chickens). He even made his own chicken hatchery, which successfully hatched all the chicks needed. Every month he and I would take our produce to the market to sell the adult chickens to add to the school funds.

In fact he once organized an agriculture exhibition and invited many leading companies from as far as Kuala Lumpur to exhibit their agricultural machinery in the school. It was a very grand affair where the late Sultan of Pahang, His Royal Highness, Sir Abu Bakar, was invited to perform the opening ceremony. It was a highly successful affair which was never done before and Rudy was a major player in its success.

I was a teacher in a neighboring Malay school but we shared a common accommodation and when I had the time I would help him with some of his chores. We the Malaysian staff used to take turns to cook and we shared our meals with Rudy. Rudy was a very likable person and within days of his arrival he had gone native and was just like one of us and we all became very close friends. His tour of duty ended after 2 years and we had a grand



*Mr Rudy Ramp with Malaysian friends.*

barbecue party to send him off. During his stay in Malaysia, Rudy always gave an excellent account of himself. I would say that Rudy was an excellent 'Ambassador' of your great country. Soon after I left the school to join the army. Later Rudy wrote to me that he had joined CARE and was posted to Indonesia.

A couple of years later, I played host to his parents who visited Malaysia and took them to all the tourist spots. After that we lost contact with each other as I had moved around while in the army. He is retired now, in fact he has just e-mailed me that he and his wife will be visiting Malaysia to look up his old friends and his first call will be my home in Kuala Lumpur. I am looking forward to meeting my buddy whom I have not seen for about 40 years now.

Thank you Sir for helping my country.



*Howard Koons, Siva and the kampung children.*



*Jillian Beuschel Marohnic climbs a coconut tree.*

## A. BADRI MUHAMAD, Perak

**“My Experience with US Peace Corp Volunteers - we thought Americans loved city life. Those guys seemed contented and excited being stuck in a rural area.”**

Back in 1965 or 1966, we high school students at Sekolah Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Ipoh, Perak had our first exposure to an American Peace Corps Volunteer, by the name of Barbara. She was a very nice, sweet and charming person, and was most popular with everyone at school, students, teachers and staff alike. She entered a Malay language speech national competition for Non-Malay speakers, and became the national Champion. We were very proud of her. She left us a lasting impression of a typical American person.

My next experience with US Peace Corps Volunteers were with those teaching at the School of Agriculture at Bumbong Lima, Kepala Batas, Penang, 1970-1971. They were young boys in early twenties, all unmarried, and seemed to be very happy at the school, which was millions of miles from the big town of Penang. It was a place surrounded by vast rice fields, with bus services that came once every two hours. I had just graduated with Diploma from the College of Agriculture, Serdang, Selangor, and with a few others also teaching at the school. We thought Americans loved city life. Those guys seemed contented and excited being stuck in a rural area.

I remember two of them very well, Ted Schmidt, who came from California and Bob Tartakoff, who came from Illinois some place, or was it Michigan? I can't remember. Bob said he had some Russian blood in him. He had a thick dark moustache that would make him look like an Indian bandit if he turned his moustache upwards, or a Mexican bandit if he turned his dark moustache downwards. Ted was also a real pleasant guy, who received love letters from his girlfriend back home almost daily. Those days there were no emails; even the computers and electronic calculators were not invented yet. And those guys could survive without burgers and pizzas, just plain rice with fish and vegetables. Sometimes they would join us with nasi lemak, roti canai and laksa. They did not grumble or complain, even when bitten by mosquitoes. One even saw a monitor lizard and said, “Wow, a baby dinosaur!!” not knowing most of us hate the animal. They would tell us stories about America at a time when our only source of information was from Hollywood movies.



*A volunteer teaches a fourth form biology class at the MARA Junior Science College, Kota Bharu.*



*A volunteer teaches math in Bahasa Malaysia at a government secondary school in Kota Bharu.*

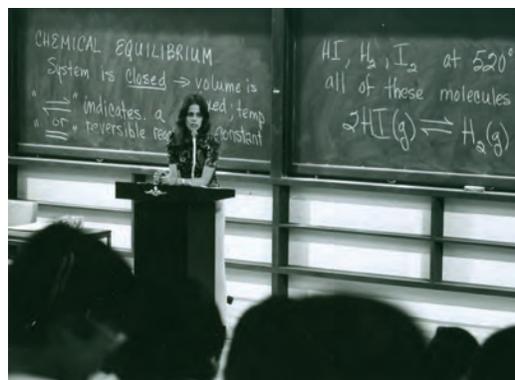
When I was an undergraduate at University of California (UC) Davis, California (1971-1973), Bob dropped by, and so did Ted with his wife. He, by then, had gotten married. When I got accepted at UC Davis, Ted gave me his home address, and I went to visit his family in California. He had a very nice family; everyone was there, his mom, dad, brothers and sisters. Apparently they wanted to see what a Malaysian looked like. (At that time I still looked like a typical Malaysian boy, no long hair or hippy dress). The impression we got from them was that these Peace Corps guys aren't so much different from us Malaysians, except they seem to enjoy their life much more than we do. They were well educated and were knowledgeable and carried themselves well.

During my student days at UC Davis, California and Washington State University (1973-1976) I kept bumping into ex-Peace Corps Volunteers who had been to Africa, India, and other parts of Asia. There's something quite different about them. Their knowledge about different cultures and lifestyles was notable. One person even removed his shoes when entering my apartment at Davis. Another one I met at Davis preferred to speak in Malay to me, with a Kelantan accent. When I was working as a lecturer at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 1976, there was a Peace Corps husband and wife couple who spoke to each other and even argued with each other, in Malay.

Yes, I think President Kennedy did something good for the U.S. and much of the world with the Peace Corps. The ex-volunteers did a great job for America, and fine-tuned the meaning of friendship, trust and co-operation. These guys become more "cultured" in terms of international relations, than say, a typical American guy who had never been anywhere. I realized this after living in U.S. for over six years, including about a year at Harvard as a Fulbright Scholar. The ex-volunteers I believe make good Ambassadors, and embassy staff, among others. We can sense that in their degree of tolerance to different cultures, beliefs, religions, customs and other peoples' ways of doing things. I would like to tell President Obama that all Ambassadors and Congressmen should have worked as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in their younger days. Of course that's a tall order. Better still, bring back the Peace Corps Volunteers.



*A volunteer conducting a class in English.*



*A volunteer lectures Chemistry at the University Pertanian in Serdang.*



*A volunteer conducts a special education class for special needs children at a school in Ipoh.*

## HOON LIANG GOH, Terengganu

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**“To me it has always been “Au Revoir” and not Goodbye.”**

Fifty years seem so long ago and memories are dimmed with the passage of time. But to me, I will always treasure the farewell letter written by a young American teacher to her Form 5 class of students. This letter had travelled with me to many parts of the world during my journey through life. Although yellowing with age, this attached letter describes the warm relationship that was developed by this pioneering Peace Corps Volunteer, Miss Elizabeth Kunst with her Malayan students.

She came into our midst as our Chemistry teacher in Form 4 at the Sultan Sulaiman Secondary School, more affectionately called SSSS, Kuala Trengganu, in 1962. She was quick to immerse herself in the then Malayan way of life and culture. As we were students of British English, she evoked laughter with her American slang and spelling. But she was quick to adapt and as the months passed by, her American slang and spelling became less pronounced.

Kuala Trengganu being a small town then, she would be found cycling about during the weekends doing her errands. It was quite a distance to pedal as the school where she was accommodated was a good few kilometers from town. As the months rolled on, she upgraded to a Vespa scooter which I believe gave her more mobility and her visits to town were more frequent.

From being just our Chemistry teacher in Form 4, she became also our Form Mistress in Form 5. One morning in class in February, we found on each of our desks an envelope containing a card and heart-shaped sweets. Thus, we were introduced to Valentine’s Day, an American celebration. It did not make much sense and impact on us then. But the sweets were nice to eat.

Time flew and when we the students finished our School Certificate examination, it was time to leave the school and pursue our further studies elsewhere or to join the employment scene. Miss Kunst as our Form Mistress, Chemistry teacher, and friend, left us with her parting message that summed up her perspective of her relationship with her Malayan students and her keen sense of observation of our strengths.

If she could read this, she would be glad to learn that she had left her mark and touched my life in many ways. And I am sure of others too.

To me it has always been “Au Revoir” and not “Good Bye.”

December 1, 1933

Dear Form Five Science,

It is a difficult thing to write a short message when there is so much to say, but I could not let you leave S.S.S.S. without saying my own farewell.

Your moments at S.S.S.S. are drawing to a close and soon your days here will be only memories. I consider myself privileged to have spent much of your last two years with you, to have witnessed your achievements and shared your disappointments. Without a doubt, you will always occupy a special place in my memories of Malaya since you are the only Malayan pupils I knew well. There is much I shall remember about you. I shall not forget your personalities as individuals, out of which was fashioned a class spirit remarkable for its unity and whole-hearted participation in school activities. I shall also remember your varied talents and qualities of leadership, attested to by your successes in athletic events, in elocution contests and debates, in the Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan and Malaysia competitions, in Hostel and Dramatic Society concerts. On the lighter side, never again shall I be able to say water without a smile and never again shall I so frequently be addressed as "sir". Granted there were times when you disappointed yourselves and me, times when we misunderstood each other, times when you failed to make good use of your good qualities. But those are not the moments I shall recall long after I have left S.S.S.S. and your country since there is always the tendency to forget the bad and hold hungrily to the good. So too, I hope you will remember only the good.

As my farewell gift to you, I am enclosing two flags: one, your country's; the other, mine. May they serve as a reminder of the days we shared and as a symbol of the exchange between Malaya and the United States which has been the result of my sojourn here. Certainly my years in Malaya have increased my knowledge and understanding of your country and your way of life. I hope also that my months at S.S.S.S. have somehow contributed to your understanding of my country and my people. Yet, somehow I feel that I have received far more than I have given. It is my wish, also, that the flags may in future years remind you of the friendship between an American teacher and her Malayan pupils; for my part, a genuine friendship that may never be renewed but will always be cherished.

As you leave S.S.S.S., try to realize that the first thing your education here should have taught you was not how to pass examinations, but how to walk alone. You are now young men and young women; you have been prepared to face life in the world. As such, you should be strong to live as well as to think. You should be conscious of your abilities and ever strive to make good use of them. You should be aware, now if never before, that the shaping of your own life is to be your own work. Your life will be a thing of beauty or a thing of shame as you yourself make it. You will lay the corner and add point by point, you will give the proportion, you will set the finish. You cannot dream yourself into a happy and successful life, you must hammer and build one for yourself. You must create a better world for yourself and for your children --- no one else will do it for you. If I were to give you one formula for a fruitful life it would be simply this:

"Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can."

It is my fondest wish to return to Malaya at some time in the future, but in this beautiful, ugly world one's wishes seldom come true. In the interim, I hope that we can keep in touch through letters. Though we may be worlds apart, I will always be interested in you and the shaping of your lives, in your aspirations and successes. Since I do not know where I shall be living on my return, you may write to me in care of my parents. Their address is:

520 Storrs Street, S.E.  
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan  
U.S.A.

I am sorry that we cannot enjoy more months together, but I console myself by saying that "it was fun while it lasted." Thankful I am that you were my class, for to know you was much more to my benefit than could ever be true the other way around. I would like, at this moment, to know of you all of my life.

With my very best wishes for your success and happiness always -----

"Au revoir" but not "good-bye"

*Elizabeth A. Kunt*

Form Mistress Five Science 1963

*Noon Liang,  
Often the greatest  
Talents die unseen.*





## SPECIAL FEATURE: MY PEACE CORPS STORY

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*The following story is by Raneve West-Singh, a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served in Armenia from June 2009 – August 2011. Her mother was a Peace Corps Volunteer posted to Johor Baru, and her father is Malaysian.*

As part of the application process for Peace Corps, you must write a motivation statement about why it is you want to serve in the Peace Corps and how you would overcome the challenges of serving in a foreign country. This was the easiest and hardest question to answer because I always knew I would go in to the Peace Corps.

My story of Peace Corps began a few years before I was even born. My mother was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Malaysia from 1979-1981, serving in Johor Baru. She was a teacher at a school for students with disabilities. In Johor Baru, helped by an Australian Aid volunteer, she met my future father. She fell in love with a local Malaysian, got married and moved back to the U.S. with him. That was their love story. Twenty something years later, I graduated from the University of Florida with an offer to serve in Armenia for the Peace Corps. I served from June 2009 until August 2011 and it was a life changing, amazing adventure that I would do over in a heartbeat.

All of my life I have heard of the Peace Corps. My Aunt Nancy served in Kenya, from 1971 until 1973, teaching Biology in a high school. My aunt was my mom's inspiration to serve and they would both say that their parent's love of traveling was their inspiration. My grandparents said they would have served in the Peace Corps if it was around when they were growing up.

My mom and aunt would always talk about their experience and how much it impacted their life and their life philosophy. Even though they had very different experiences, one in an African nation and the other in an Asian, there are very similar threads to everything they talk about: the different culture but finding similarities within their own, the difficulty of the language but the success of when you master it, the homesickness but the fun ways they made it through.

I always was envious of their experience and the way they would talk about their countries with a twinkle in their eye. If you have ever met a Peace Corps Volunteer and hear the way they talk about their experience, you would understand. With my family's support, I applied to the Peace Corps on Halloween (October 31<sup>st</sup>) of 2008. I flew away from home, where I was born and raised,

on May 31 of 2009. And now, I have been fortunate enough to have that experience. It isn't something that is easily explained in words. It is a connection to a country other than your own that is strong enough that you feel a part of the culture; you make it your own. I have two homes now, America and Armenia.

You do not always see your impact as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Sometimes that impact isn't felt until five years after you left, but we do have an impact. I was in a neighboring town one day, early in my service. A stranger came up to me and asked if I was a Peace Corps Volunteer. She then told me how she had a teacher 13 years ago who was a Peace Corps Volunteer and she was the motivation for her to learn English and go to university. That was 13 years later and she remembered everything about this volunteer!

Similarly, my father's family interacted with Peace Corps Volunteers thirty plus years ago and they still remember their full names and what they did during their service. One uncle had a volunteer in Ipoh that taught Biology. Another uncle had after school clubs with a volunteer near Malacca. They both talked fondly of their volunteers. Peace Corps has an impact in Malaysia, and my father's family can attest to that. I have also been impacted by Peace Corps in multiple ways, from my parents and their families to my own Peace Corps story.



*Larry Nieves with his students.*



*Howard Koons with his Scouts.*



## PEACE CORPS: BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

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In February of 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps with the first Executive Order of his administration. The birth of Peace Corps corresponded to a rapidly changing world where new nations were born as they shook off the last vestiges of colonial bonds. At the same time, advances in technology and globalization saw an increasingly connected and interdependent world. Geopolitical realities meant that the security and prosperity of the post-colonial world would depend on the ability of all nations to assist one another in the pursuit of peaceful development.

That early call for volunteers to work in human and economic development would generate a tremendous enthusiasm and response both at home and abroad. The ideal of voluntary service was historically a powerful force that transcended cultural and political barriers; it appealed to the better instincts of mankind and offered hope for a better world. To a large extent the Peace Corps represented that ideal translated into fact.

The initial volunteers, affectionately dubbed “Kennedy’s children” by the press, traveled to Ghana, Nigeria and the Philippines that very same year. In the spring of 1961, Sargent Shriver, the brother-in-law of President Kennedy and the first Peace Corps Director, traveled to a number of countries to both gauge and generate local government support for the new program. In Malaya, he met with Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister, who expressed an interest in having volunteers serve in the development projects of this new country.

As a result of their discussions, an agreement for a Peace Corps program in Malaya fell into place on September 4,



*Vice President Humphrey attending a dinner organized by  
Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj.*

1961. A formal exchange of letters between the Honorable Mohd. Ghazalie Shafie, at that time Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs and Charles F. Baldwin, the U.S. Ambassador to Malaya cemented the agreement. Four months later, on January 12, 1962, the first group of volunteers, 36 in all, arrived in Kuala Lumpur to begin their two-year service to Malaya. They were welcomed by Tun Abdul Razak, then Deputy Prime Minister, in the National Operations room in Kuala Lumpur. There he stated:

*“We are grateful to the Government and people of the United States for assisting us in this great and important task of national development. This gigantic task needs not only capital resources but also skilled and trained manpower to implement our national plan.”*

And so it began. That first group of volunteers included nurses, medical laboratory technicians, architects, road and soil surveyors, secondary science teachers and industrial arts instructors. Of the 36 volunteers, 20 were medical workers assigned to town hospitals and rural health clinics throughout Peninsular Malaya.

The separate governments of North Borneo and Sarawak, which were under British colonial rule at that time, also requested Peace Corps assistance and Borneo I, comprised 60 volunteers, began their service on August 23, 1962. With the arrival of Malaya II in June and Malaya III before the end of the year, the total number of volunteers increased to 179 by January of 1963. During that year an additional 92 volunteers arrived as part of Borneo II and Malaya IV. The federation of Malaysia was formally constituted on September 16, 1963, but for a variety of technical reasons, the Peace Corps did not have a common administration until July of 1964.

Up to and including Malaya VI, the primary focus of the Peace Corps program was in health, particularly in training nurses and establishing medical laboratories in various town and district hospitals. But the emphasis dramatically changed to education when the Government of Malaysia issued a directive on March 7, 1964, which discontinued the Secondary School Entrance Examination and guaranteed every child the right to a basic education through Form 3 (grade 9). This entrance exam had previously denied nearly 70% of



*Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein briefing the Peace Corps Volunteers, 1964*

the students from continuing their education beyond the primary level. With the examination eliminated, enrollment at the secondary level (Form I) nearly doubled to 120,000 students as schools opened in January of 1965. The huge influx of students required an immediate addition of 3,900 teachers and the Ministry of Education, among other efforts, requested that Peace Corps also help in overcoming the teacher shortage.

During 1965, Peace Corps Groups IX through XIII, comprising a total of 436 new volunteers, arrived in Malaysia. Two-thirds of the volunteers were assigned to various levels and subjects in the educational sector. Malaysia XII was one of the largest groups in the long history of the program here. Originally comprising 212 volunteers when they entered training in Hilo, Hawaii, they came to Malaysia 181 strong to serve in schools as teachers of Math, Science, English and the Industrial Arts. Although the average age was 25, the overwhelming majority (159 Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV) or 88% of the group) were recent college graduates between the ages of 22 and 25; over 50% of the group were women.

The volunteers in education established a reputation for dedication and competence. More than that, their willingness to serve in rural schools encouraged the then Minister of Education, Encik Mohd. Khir Johari, to urge Malaysian teachers to emulate the sterling example of the volunteers who came so far to serve in the remote areas of Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Sabah and Sarawak. He stated:

*“Shouldn’t this be a challenge to our own men and women? This challenge is all the greater when they are asked to teach not foreign children, but our own children, who will grow up to be citizens of Malaysia.”*

Although there were many volunteers in urban settings, the willingness to serve in remote areas was true of all the volunteers; and many of those working in health and rural development, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak, were in isolated locations. One volunteer in Sabah, Colleen Gillmouthe, was the district health nurse at a government dispensary at Tongud on the upper Kinabatangan River, 300 miles from the nearest government hospital and doctor in Sandakan. For only a few hours a day, she



*Mr. Thong Yaw Hong, Assistant Secretary, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, briefing Peace Corps Volunteers, 1965*



*Loading supplies for distribution to farmers 1963 Bandau river*

could communicate with the hospital in Sandakan by radio-telephone. Supplies were transported once a month and the only means of travel was by small, outboard motorboat. The trip required 3 ½ to 6 days of vigorous effort dependent on river conditions. The Peace Corps program had rapidly expanded over those first four years, and 1966 proved to be a year of program consolidation. In order to augment the personal and professional support for the volunteers in the field, the Peace Corps office and staff were increased. The main headquarters remained at Jalan Broadrick<sup>1</sup> in Kuala Lumpur. But regional offices were opened in Kuantan, Malacca and Penang to both assist the volunteers as well as to maintain closer relationships with the state governments. In addition, there were regional offices in Kota Kinabalu (then Jesselton) and Kuching for the volunteers serving in Sabah and Sarawak, respectively.

Only one group was requested for 1966 and they arrived in December of that year. By March 1, 1967, the Peace Corps program in Malaysia was one of the largest in the world. The 558 volunteers were distributed throughout the country in the following programs:

	<b>Peninsular Malaysia</b>	<b>Sabah</b>	<b>Sarawak</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Education	241	89	135	465	83
Health	33	3	7	43	8
Rural Development	28	3	19	50	9
	302	95	161	558	

<sup>1</sup> The original Peace Corps office in 1961 was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Lee Wah Bank Building. In 1962 they moved to former Ministry of Education offices located at Jalan Dato Onn, on the present site of Bank Negara. Not until early 1964 did they move to Jalan Broadrick where they remained for 11 years, until November of 1975 when they moved to their last address at 177 Jalan Raja Muda, Kuala Lumpur.

The breakdown for educational programs, which had the highest number of volunteers by far, was as follows:

	Peninsular Malaysia	Sabah	Sarawak	Total
Primary	13	24	28	65
Secondary Arts	21	59	63	143
Secondary Math/Science	80	5	5	90
Teacher Training	43	1	39	83
Industrial Arts	60	-	-	60
Home Science	13	-	-	13
Voc. Trade Schools	8	-	-	8
TV Technical College Teachers	3	-	-	3
	<b>241</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>465</b>

The volunteers who served in the agricultural and health sectors were involved in a multiplicity of efforts. In health the largest segment included 31 volunteers working under the Tuberculosis Control Program. Tuberculosis was recognized as the country's leading communicable disease and the Government of Malaya created a comprehensive program in 1961 to bring it under control. Given the government's concern and tremendous support, the volunteers, acting as catalysts at both town and kampong levels, provided an important contribution to this program. Other health projects included nurses in Sabah and Sarawak working in rural health clinics and a few volunteers assisting as therapists with spastic and handicapped children.

The earlier agricultural programs consisted of volunteers working as road surveyors, heavy equipment operators and engineers who assisted in opening up roads to the rural areas. However, Malaysia quickly achieved manpower sufficiency for these programs and no further Peace Corps assistance was requested after 1965. Later, the emphasis would change to agricultural production, where volunteers worked with poultry and crop diversification on the Federal Land Development Authority. A more organizational role began in May of 1967, when a large group of business management volunteers would come to assist as accountants with pilot project Farm Associations. This would commence a long involvement of volunteers with the farm cooperative movement in Malaysia. In Sabah, volunteers taught agricultural education at Farms Schools, while in Sarawak they worked with rural youth clubs patterned after the 4-H clubs of America.



*A volunteer conducts a special education class for special needs children outside a school in Ipoh.*

Although most Peace Corps rural development projects were in Sabah and Sarawak, Peace Corps Volunteers William and Carol Cull, the request of the northern Malaysian state of Kedah, were amongst the first volunteers to serve as community development workers in rural Malay villages. Their primary task was to encourage local initiative, train village leaders, and improve communications between various state or district agencies with the leadership in the kampongs. Based on their efforts, both Kedah and the bordering state of Perlis requested more volunteers; thus, in May of 1965, Group IX expanded the pilot program and in February of 1967, twenty additional volunteers from Group XV were assigned to kampongs in both states.

In addition to these programs, there were some smaller projects where volunteer assistance was requested. Thus, two people were working with a university computer program; another was organizing forestry in Sabah; and another person was working as a full time warden of rare wild oxen.

The years 1968 through 1970 were a watershed of sorts for the Peace Corps program in Malaysia, primarily in terms of quantity but also in terms of programmatic priorities. Ministry officials stressed at a Peace Corps evaluation that their primary need was in motivation and commitment to public service on the part of its personnel and stated that “further physical development depends on the development of Malaysia’s human resources.” Further Peace Corps assistance would be needed to both train specific personnel as well as to occupy a few positions while other Malaysians secured training abroad. Of the latter, volunteers would primarily be requested to fill institutional positions as middle level technicians to both stimulate and sustain certain development efforts.



*This volunteer operates an applied food and nutrition program under the State Department Office in Kangar, Perlis.*



*A volunteer teaches heavy construction at Politeknik Ungku Omar, Ipoh, Perak.*

Thus a number of factors merged together at the same time and would mold the Peace Corps program for most of the next decade. First and foremost, was the rapid development of Malaysia itself. Under the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970), the country made giant strides in many areas of socio-economic development, particularly in the consolidation of its educational system. Over the plan period, nearly 15,000 primary and secondary school teachers graduated from local teacher training programs.

Under the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75) the primary emphasis was to develop and diversify the country's industrial base in compliance with the New Economic Policy. It stressed that "economic expansion would have to proceed vigorously to provide productive employment for school leavers" while "the education and training systems will have to be geared more effectively to enhancing such absorption and to producing adequate numbers of those skilled personnel necessary for the implementation of the NEP." The large and continuing increase of students at the secondary level in the mid-sixties was now requiring an expansion of facilities and courses at higher levels of learning.

In addition to the existing University of Malaya, the University of Sciences Malaysia was established in Penang in 1969, the University Kebangsaan in 1970, and the University Pertanian in 1973. Simultaneously, facilities were increased in the area of vocational education to provide skills for those who left school early. Thus the Industrial Training Institute augmented its apprenticeship training program and the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) established four new vocational institutes, in addition to expanding their Institute of Technology.



*A volunteer works with computers at the Division of Irrigation and Drainage in the Department of Agriculture.*



*A Peace Corps Volunteer examining turtle specimens.*



*Training Program in Hawaii: Trainees get some practice at caribou plowing.*



*Training Program in Hawaii: Trainees learn to plant.*

In line with the changes in Malaysia, the Peace Corps also underwent a metamorphosis. The most enormous change involved the aspect of pre-service training. For the first eight years of the program, all volunteers were trained in the United States (initially at Northern Illinois University and mostly thereafter at the University of Hawaii in Hilo) before their arrival in Malaysia. But in 1968, Country Director John Pincetich insisted that training was an integral part of both the programming process and the volunteers experience; if it was to be relevant, it should be done in the host country. With the consent of the Government of Malaysia, Group XXI received part of the training at the Tarat Agricultural Centre in Sarawak in May of 1969; and three months later Group XXIV was the first training program completely organized and conducted in the country.

This geographic transfer of training was more than a symbolic gesture for it reflected and enhanced the inherent joint venture of the Peace Corps program. Malaysian Government agencies actively participated in the planning and implementation of the program; in addition, they allowed their own personnel to be seconded as language tutors and provided sites to be utilized as training centers. The further experience of living with Malaysian families encouraged not only understanding but created friendship which many volunteers still cherish. Once begun, the in-country training would remain until the end of the program in Malaysia.

Alongside the transformation of training was a coincident change in programming philosophy. A new Peace Corps administration stressed a policy of “New Directions” which simply meant providing more experienced volunteers for the development challenges of the 1970’s. As the requests for volunteers in Malaysia were increasingly among the higher skill categories, the new policy insured a trend of volunteer placements to more institutionalized and urbanized locations where their skills could be better utilized.

As the decade unfolded, Peace Corps Malaysia would undergo the many changes. From nearly 600 volunteers in 1968, the number decreased to 350 in February of 1972 and further to 284 in July of 1975. The composition of the program at that time reflected both the priorities of the Second Malaya Plan and also the stress on more experienced volunteers. Although 202 volunteers were in education, 79 of them served either at the university or with vocational educational institutes. Another 36 were in Specialist In-Service training courses for Malaysian teachers.

Many of the non-education volunteers were in highly visible positions; people like Gary Barranco, who as a project analyst for the Farmers' Organization Authority assisted in writing the North Kelantan Development proposal, a \$16 million dollar project; or Francis Putz, a biologist with the Forestry Department, who wrote a book, *Review of the Virgin Jungle Reserves*, and contributed a chapter on "Styracaceae" for the book, *Tree Flora of Malaya*; or John Turnow and Bobby Graves who developed a 5-year plan for watershed research for the Forestry Department and conducted one of the first studies in Malaysia on the effects of roads and logging on soil erosion and water quality; or Penny Phillips, who established the first speech therapy clinic in Malaysia at the General Hospital in Kuala Lumpur; or Jeanine Renaud who collaborated with the medical faculty of the University Kebangsaan in establishing a medical laboratory technician training program.

As Peace Corps Malaysia reached its 15th anniversary in 1977, it could look with pride at some individual accomplishments. Furthermore, it could share in Malaysia's pride as having been a small part in the country's tremendous growth over such a short period of time. Speaking at the anniversary ceremonies, the Honorable Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan, then Minister without Portfolio in the Prime Minister's Department, reviewed the history of the program:

*"I can say that one of the better features of your Peace Corps system is your flexibility and your readiness in responding to requests for assistance with the least possible delay. Such flexibility has helped us to expedite the implementation of some of our projects and programmes. Your type of response has also kept pace with our own changes. As we develop, so do we become more sophisticated in our management and in our technological requirements."*

*"The composition of the Peace Corps volunteers who have served with us from time to time represents these changes. Your initial groups of volunteers consisted mainly of generalists with educational backgrounds in the liberal arts and the*



*A volunteer working on termite control for the Malaysian Forest Research Institute in Kepong.*

*humanities. Apart from these we now require skills in rather more specific disciplines and your present day volunteers fulfill those requirements. I am not certain if the Peace Corps chronicle these changes for themselves- it would be an interesting economic and social commentary if this were done as it would mirror our own changes in development.”*

*“I believe in this joint effort. Your volunteers can say, when they have completed their assignments here, that they themselves have grown in experience and in maturity, and can feel that they have contributed towards our development. We also trust that they can then return to their own homes with a more sympathetic understanding of the universal precept, so often proclaimed but largely ignored in practice, that this is truly an interdependent world not only in economic terms but in human relationships.”*

If adolescence is associated with daydreams, it is also concerned with the painful process of growth. As the Peace Corps entered its sixteenth year of service it underwent another period of introspection. As the Malaysian government requested more and more highly skilled volunteers, it became difficult for the Peace Corps to match its volunteers to the specific demands. Whereas the Second Malaysia Plan stressed industrial growth as well as general socio-economic improvements, the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) stressed development projects which would reduce and eliminate poverty, particularly in the rural areas. At this time the Peace Corps also established a worldwide priority for its program to concentrate on “Basic Human Needs”, primarily in agricultural and health projects that would improve and increase sanitation, water quality, food production and nutrition.



*Volunteer works as a counselor at the Draq Rehabilitation center.*

The Third Malaysia Plan commended the Peace Corps, along with other volunteer agencies, for their technical assistance which had “contributed significantly towards programme and project implementation capacity through the assignment of trained, skilled and dedicated manpower.” These agencies were “expected to maintain their contributions at present levels for the duration of the plan.”

After extended discussions, the Government of Malaysia requested Peace Corps to continue seeking specialists with recruitable skills (for example, physical and speech therapists, teacher trainers, psychiatric social workers, drug counselors and deaf educators). In addition, volunteers asked to serve in youth extension and applied food nutrition programs had to have specific degrees or requisite experience. Skill trained volunteers were also permitted to fill certain positions if they meet the pre-conditions. “Skill training” meant that

volunteers with basic degrees or experiences would now be given additional technical skills in training that would allow them to do specific jobs in the host country. Thus, volunteers with a biology or chemistry degree were trained in malaria control at the Center for Disease Control at Atlanta, Georgia; others with a college degree in business would receive with their Malaysian counterparts a month's training in cooperative management from the University of Wisconsin.

All of these programs would take Peace Corps to the end of the decade. But the series of discussions and project reviews with the government in 1976 and 1977 also initiated an irreversible trend towards the dissolution of the program.



*A volunteer teaching mechanical drafting.*

Ironically, it was a non-causative factor in 1981 which would trigger a consensus that the program should be phased out. Faced with a potential decrease in the budget, the Peace Corps considered several options on how to best utilize appropriated funds. One option was to concentrate the limited resources on the countries that needed assistance most; conversely, programs would be phased out in more developed nations. By any yardstick, Malaysia would stand out as a sophisticated nation with ample natural resources and years of consistent economic growth. Given budgetary considerations, it was decided that no further requests for volunteers could be accepted for that year.

As things turned out, the Peace Corps budget was approved virtually intact and all overseas programs were maintained. However, the brief interruption of the process in the Malaysian program resulted in a more substantive analysis of the program itself. Through continued consultations with the Economic Planning Unit (E.P.U.) and various Ministries, it was jointly agreed that the program should gradually be reduced. In 1982 Country Director Gary Brenneman wrote to the Director General of the Economic Planning Unit and confirmed the decision to phase out the program. Citing the state and rate of development in Malaysia, the difficulty in recruiting highly specialized personnel, as well as the problems related to single input programs, Mr. Brenneman stated:

“There is always some regret when old friends say goodbye but the phase-out of the Peace Corps Malaysia program should not be viewed as a negative event. The Peace Corps was never meant to go on forever and the fact that Malaysia has progressed beyond our ability to supply requested volunteers is a success story. The nearly 3,500 volunteers who have served in Malaysia over the past 20 years and their accomplishments should be the focus of our thoughts. The United States as well as Malaysia has benefited from the Peace Corps program. It is a program which will have an everlasting positive effect on the relationship between the people of Malaysia and the people of America.”

Although the program was winding down, there were 49 volunteers still in the field. The majority of them would complete their assignments in November of 1983, when the program was scheduled to close. Those remaining volunteers were slightly

older (average age of 31), better educated, and with more experience than those who served in the early days, but they shared with their predecessors a sense of adventure and a commitment to service. Of the last 49 volunteers, 20 were in education, 22 in agriculture, and 7 in health related programs. Nineteen of them were in Sabah, while the remainder worked in various states of Peninsular Malaysia.

The Peace Corps would serve for a total of 21 years in Malaysia from 1962 to 1983. Although Peace Corps has ended, the bonds of affection formed over the years between Malaysians and Americans have remained and withstood the test of time. This year, on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Peace Corps program in Malaysia, a new generation of young Americans arrived in Malaysia to continue the tradition of service and friendship the Peace Corps began in the early 60s. These adventurous, committed youth, also known as Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs), will make Malaysia their second home in the states of Pahang, Johor, and Terengganu. In this sense, this account of Peace Corps history is a history of beginnings, and there is a long way ahead in the story of enduring friendship between Malaysians and Americans.



*Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Mohammad Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak greeting an ETA with U.S. Ambassador Paul W. Jones*



*A new generation of Americans continue the spirit of Peace Corps*

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Kristen Fernekes and her colleagues at the Peace Corps Director's Office

Photos courtesy of the Peace Corps and National Archives of Malaysia

All Malaysians and Americans who contributed in myriad ways to the project

## Web Edition

Visit [malaysia.usembassy.gov](http://malaysia.usembassy.gov) for more Peace Corps photos and stories. Send your stories and photos to the Peace Corps Malaysia 50th Anniversary Planning Team at [pcvmalaysia@yahoo.com](mailto:pcvmalaysia@yahoo.com), and visit [facebook.com/usembassykl](https://facebook.com/usembassykl) for Peace Corps updates.



*The Spirit of Peace Corps Lives On...*