



Peace Corps Nepal Today

BY DUANE KARLEN

Editor's Note: In June I sat down with Josie Mahlie-Scheller, the Country Desk Officer for Nepal, the Philippines and Timor-Leste, at Peace Corps Headquarters in Washington. She had just returned from a trip to Nepal where she spent time with PC/Nepal staff and Volunteers in order to get a first-hand look at the program. This article is based on her comments, as well as on online information about PC Nepal.

First of all, some historical perspective. As most of you know, Nepal was one of the first Peace Corps countries, with the program and offices opening in 1962. From then until 2004, almost 4,000 Volunteers served in Nepal, working in education, health, community development, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food production, water supply, rural construction, environment and other project areas, plus many individual assignments.

Then in September of 2004, the program was suspended in the wake of the civil unrest and violence that was affecting almost every district of Nepal. The office was closed and all operations ceased. The program was re-opened in 2012 after Peace Corps determined the peace process had resulted in enough stability to resume operations. Twenty Volunteers working in agriculture and nutrition began their training late that year.

Ms. Mahlie-Schaller explains that there has been one group per year since then, each with the same programming focus. The most recent group is N-206, which completed training and swore in on April 15, comprised of 25 Volun-

teers working in food security related assignments and 30 in English education.

The Agriculture/Food Security Project PCVs try to improve food and nutrition for rural families, particularly women and children. Key activities include soil conservation, bio-intensive gardening, fruit tree cultivation, produce marketing and nutrition education. Many Volunteers work with local counterparts. USAID and Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) contribute technical training expertise.

The Education Project is aimed at improving English communication skills, thereby helping students access academic and/or professional opportunities. Education Volunteers work in rural government schools, mostly in district centers and larger towns. They teach English to students in classes 5-8, help build the capacity of Nepali English teachers to teach English more effectively, and work to strengthen community support for English language learning.

Volunteers are currently posted in the greater Kathmandu area and hill sites in the western half of the country (none in the Terai.) They all live with host families. Most, if not all, have smart phones, email, computer access and internet connectivity. This allows communication with each other, friends, family, the Peace Corps Office and numerous opportunities for online training and skill building. Volunteer secondary projects are still encouraged, just as they have been for decades.

(For example, one Volunteer Ms. Mahlie-
NEPAL TODAY CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Mushroom spores germinating in substrate bags.
Photo by Josie Mahlie-Sheller



Avocado seedlings. Photo by Josie Mahlie-Sheller



Selfie shot of Josie (center) and friends during volunteer visit

Note from the Editor

BY DUANE KARLEN, N/21

Sabailai Namaste!

Who are “Friends of Nepal” anyway? Well, you may notice a slight change in the footer on the front page of this issue, indicating that Friends of Nepal is for anyone with an interest in Peace Corps and/or Nepal. While the organization and newsletter were initially started by and for Nepal RPCVs, the audience has expanded over the years. In addition, FoN has received many generous donations in recent years from individuals who are not members but who want to contribute to relief and reconstruction efforts or who want to support the projects that FoN funds in Nepal.

With that in mind, and as indicated on our website, www.friendsofnepal.com, FoN is expanding membership to include academics, students, travelers, PC staff and family members, and others of any nationality, including Nepalis, who have an interest in Peace Corps Nepal and/or who love the country of Nepal in general. With that in mind, the footer on the first page now reads that this newsletter, like the organization itself, is “for RPCVs and other Friends of Nepal.”

There are some interesting articles in this issue. The lead story describes current Peace Corps operations in Nepal, with special thanks to the Nepal Country Desk Officer at

PC Headquarters, Josie Mahle-Sheller, for providing information after her recent field trip to Nepal. FoN’s Grant Committee Chair, Val Stori, gives us an update on those funded projects that were not covered in the last issue. Tom Bassarear strolled with the heifers, and other RPCV’s, in Vermont in June, and he writes about that adventure. We also have a delicious chicken curry recipe, a great book review, an article about the Fallen Volunteers Project, and sadly a farewell to some Nepal RPCV’s who have passed on in recent months.

As usual, your comments, ideas, photos and story submissions are welcome. Send to newsletter@friendsofnepal.com.

Duane Karlen
Editor

NEPAL TODAY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Schaller visited is helping local families grow mushrooms and develop a market for them.)

The current PC staff in Nepal is listed at 29 people, including three Americans and 26 Nepalis. Under the Country Director are staff and offices dedicated to safety and security, medical support, programing and training, management and operations, and general services support. A current initiative of PC/Nepal is for each Volunteer to receive four site visits during their two-year tour of service. This is important for Volunteer support, staff-PCV communication and program improvement.



Looking ahead, the next Volunteer group, N-207, is scheduled to arrive in February 2020. Similar to this year’s group, it will consist of approximately 55 Education and Food Security Project PCVs. There is hope that the program will grow in the future. For more information about current Peace Corps/Nepal, see their great website at <https://www.peacecorps.gov/nepal/>.

Another Editor’s Note: I did the best I could to accurately describe past and current PC/Nepal operations. If anyone reading this, especially current PC staff and Volunteers, has a comment, correction or additional perspective, please send it to me and I will make amends in the next issue. Send to newsletter@friendsofnepal.com

Greenhouse construction. Photo by Josie Mahlie-Sheller

Strolling of the Heifers



BY TOM BASSAREAR, N-81

RPCV contingent in the parade. Photo by Dana Harris, Stroll Staff

Brattleboro, Vermont has a Strolling of the Heifers parade every year in June. The highlight is farmer families strolling their heifers through downtown, many with name tags! Great fun for the young and the old.

There are quite a few returned PCVs in the Brattleboro area, and three years ago Judith Stout (South Africa 2008-09) and Wendy Redlinger (Nepal 1966-69) organized a Peace Corp contingent. This year about 40 RPCVs walked in the parade, some wearing clothing from our host countries and some waving their

country's flag. Someone had created a big banner that said Peace Corps. As we walked by the center area of the parade, the announcer asked for a hand for the Peace Corps Volunteers who had served their country. I was quite touched.

I walked with my friend Terry Hinckley (also N-81) whose village was close to mine in Salyan District. Terry now lives a few miles north of Brattleboro and I live a few miles east. Getting together at the Stroll was great fun.

I had wonderful conversations with RPCVs from India, Bahrain, and Kiribati (in the South Pacific) and brief exchanges with people from other countries as we walked through the town. I talked for some time with Gordon and Jeanne Korstange, who served in India in the 1960s.

Jeanne told me that after Hurricane Katrina, FEMA put out a call to RPCVs and trained them at a hotel in Orlando. She and others then worked on the Gulf Coast, listening to people tell their stories and helping them fill out FEMA forms. She had a great time and there was a mix of young and old volunteers. I had not even heard of this until she described the experience.

Ed: There are many more events that take place during the Strolling weekend, including entertainment, a Women's Expo, coffee cake baking competition, vendors, gardening, Tour de Heifer bike events, and on and on. See the Strolling of the Heifers website for more info: www.strollingoftheheifers.com)



A heifer and her proud escort. Photo by Dana Harris, Stroll Staff



Tom Bassarear and Terry Hinckley, N-81

Project Committee Update

BY VAL STORI, PROJECT COMMITTEE CHAIR

Editor's Note: In the April newsletter, we provided interim updates for three of the five projects FoN funded in 2018. Here are interim reports for the other two—one for the Helambu Education and Livelihood Partnership (HELP) and another for the Little Sisters Fund (LSF).

HELAMBU EDUCATION AND LIVELIHOOD PARTNERSHIP (\$850)

Friends of Nepal began its relationship with HELP in 2017 when it provided funding for a hostel manager at the Shree Golma Devi Secondary School in the remote village of Timbu. This school, reconstructed after the devastating earthquake with the help of the Government of Nepal and other foundations, eliminates a two-hour walk for its students. The purpose-built girls' dormitory not only takes away the long walk to school, but protects vulnerable girls from walking alone for long stretches. The hostel manager provides a full-time female presence in the girls' dormitory and has proven to be a successful addition to the school.

Based on the success of the Shree Golma Devi School, HELP also constructed a girls' hostel at the Shree Nurbuling Manichaur Secondary School in Kharkadanda village after the earthquake. This new hostel can accommodate up to 60 girls. FoN provided a modest amount of funding to support the purchase of dormitory furniture and a common room television. The school management committee identified the purchase of solar panels as a high priority use for the funds, with the solar panels providing

electricity for the hostel.

THE LITTLE SISTERS FUND (\$6,141)

FoN was pleased to be able to continue funding support to the LSF, a non-profit organization that has been supporting girls' education in Nepal for over 20 years, to launch a pilot comprehensive early-age reading curriculum and training package at three schools in the Makwanpur District. To date, the LSF has made good progress implementing the project at the three schools and has learned some valuable lessons for improving their program and the long-term sustainability of their project interventions at the schools.

While implementing its project, LSF learned that the teachers at the three schools have different levels of experience, different pedagogical skill levels and different degrees of enthusiasm for professional motivation. LSF has found that providing early-age literacy training takes time and requires a more nuanced approach. One of the key lessons learned in the mid-term evaluation-

carried out by an early grade reading expert is that, overall, teachers had not fully absorbed the various technical approaches, nor the ways to utilize the Early Grade Reading learning materials, that were provided in the original training last fall. LSF organized a refresher training to address the issue.

In addition to the technical training provided to teachers, LSF hired a former LSF student (Hima Tamang) who pursued a degree in higher education to assist LSF with school monitoring visits. LSF has also invested in Hima's professional capacity through an internship with World Education, where she is working to implement two similar early grade reading projects in other parts of Nepal. This will provide Hima with knowledge and expertise for monitoring and assisting the training programs carried out by LSF in Makwanpur.

Stay tuned for our late fall newsletter in which we'll reveal the 2019 grantees and announce the theme for the 2020 grant solicitation. As always, thank you for your



Right: Narbuling School Hostel

Flavors of Nepal: Chicken Curry

SUBMITTED BY NANCY CHETRI, N-33 (IP)

Ingredients:

- 4 chicken breasts, quartered and cut into 1½" pieces, skin removed
- 2 large onions
- ½" fresh ginger, chopped fine or grated
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped fine
- ½ c. diced fresh tomatoes or 1 (6 oz.) can diced tomatoes
- 2 T. olive oil
- ¼ c. fresh chopped coriander leaves

Spices:

- 1 stick, or ½ tsp. ground, cinnamon
- ½ tsp. ground cardamom
- 2-3 whole cloves
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ tsp. turmeric
- 1 T. ground cumin
- 1 T. ground coriander
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper, or to taste
- salt to taste

Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven until hot. Add onions, garlic and ginger and fry until golden. Add chicken pieces, turning occasionally until they brown. Add the spices, stirring them into the onion-chicken mixture. Add the fresh or canned (drained) diced tomatoes. Simmer for 30 minutes. Add the fresh cilantro and cover until wilted. Serve with your choice of jasmine, basmati, or brown rice.

Editor's note: Flavors of Nepal features food, beverages and snacks. If you have a favorite Nepali recipe or story about food in Nepal, please send it to me, newsletter@friendsofnepal.com. In the event of multiple submissions, I'll publish the ones that get me the most nostalgic....or make me the most hungry!

Support Friends of Nepal

VOLUNTEER

Friends of Nepal needs help! We have a big need for a Webmaster who can update and maintain our website. (You can even choose your own title!) Contact info@friendsofnepal.com for more information.

NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

An electronic version of this newsletter, as well as an archive of all the issues for recent years, can be found on our website at www.friendsofnepal.com under the "Stay Updated" tab.

DONATIONS

FoN funds several Nepal grass-roots projects each year. (See the Project Committee Update article in this issue.) The funding for these grants comes entirely from donations. Please consider contributing. 100% of your donation is used to help support these wonderful projects. If you want to donate, go to our website www.friendsofnepal.com and **click on Donate**, or print this page, fill out the Membership form on the right and send it to the address listed. For additional information or related questions, contact Suzie Schneider, treasurer@friendsofnepal.com.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter welcomes news, photos, stories, recipes, memories, anecdotes, video links, etc. from current and former PCV's, PC staff, Nepali colleagues, and anyone else interested. Send questions or submissions to newsletter@friendsofnepal.com

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MEMBERSHIP ONLY: ☐ \$15

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VOLUNTEER:

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Book Review: Nepal in Color

BY DANIEL W. EDWARDS

*Editor's Note: Dan Edwards was a Nepal PCV in Group N-8. I spoke with him by phone in June of this year about his book, *Nepal in Color*, published in 2017.*

Dan, when did you first go to Nepal?

Dan Edwards: I was an Education PCV from 1966-68, teaching English first in Dhading, then in Banepa. After finishing my Volunteer service, I stayed on in Kathmandu and taught at St. Xavier's for a year. Then in the early 1970's I did my PhD research on the Rana Administration, and that resulted in more time in Nepal. After that I worked for MCI and the US Department of Commerce in Washington, DC until I retired in 2009. In retirement I make one or two trips to Nepal every year, and I've visited almost every district in the country. Currently I am writing a book on the railways in Nepal that ran from 1927 to 2014.



Dan in Taplejung, 2018

So, tell us about your photo book.

Dan Edwards: I published it in Kathmandu in 2017. I had many old slides that I took 45 to 50 years ago. They were interesting to me, and I decided to publish those photos as a way to capture visually my Nepal experience of that time. There are many available books on Nepal, both photo essays and text, by both Nepali and non-Nepali authors, but few show what the country looked like in the early days of the Peace Corps.

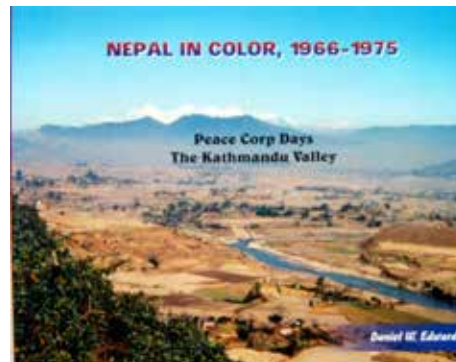


Porters in Lamjung District, 1974. Photo by Dan Edwards.

The book consists of a short introduction, 200 photos from 1966 to 1975 and a general bibliography of more recent books about Nepal. The photos are arranged roughly in this order: my PC training in Hawaii in 1966, Kathmandu in 1966, photos taken in Dhading District and Banepa during my PC service, and more scenes of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur in the early 1970s.

You mentioned the bibliography. I understand you own quite a few books about Nepal.

Dan Edwards: Yes, I have been interested in books about Nepal ever since I first arrived there in 1966 and have been collecting them ever since, including books about Tibet and the Himalayan region. Some were published in Nepal, India and other countries. Many are long since out of



print and very hard to find today.

How many do you own personally?

Dan Edwards: I have more than 4,000 books on Nepal in my collection.

4,000 different books!

Dan Edwards: Yes. And I run a side business through Amazon and other outlets called "Yak and Yeti Books" where I list about 6,500 different books specializing in the Himalayan region, on all kinds of topics and interests. I don't personally own all those books, but I can get them if someone wants to order one.

I suppose someone can order *Nepal in Color* through Amazon?

Dan Edwards: Yes, you can buy it on Amazon, and it is available in some book



Bhaktapur, 1975. Photo by Dan Edwards.

BOOK REVIEW CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

In Remembrance

Bill Salisbury, N-171

BY JOE KRUEGER, JONATHAN MURRAY
AND DARLENE FOOTE

On March 9, 2019, RPCV William Salisbury passed away after a short battle with cancer. Bill was an urban planner during his time in PC Nepal from 1991-1993. He was the heart of his 171 group and was well known for his laugh and loving smile, as well as for providing us all with a reminder to love and respect one another no matter our differences.

At his post in Janakpur, "Chilly Bill's" infectious and outgoing personality resulted in him getting widespread support for his work with the city to clean up its holy ponds. And his friends will carry fond memories of him dancing the night away at Phora Durbar with our Peace Corps peers, as well as watching him ride around town in a pink Land's End dress that a fellow female PCV had placed in the PC recycle bin.



Bill with Training Officer George Monagan and PCV Jonathan Murray

Bill lived his life in the most honest and gregarious way: loving the adventure and sharing his spirit deeply and freely. After Peace Corps, he went on to a shining professional career as a Foreign Service Officer with the US State Department, working in Poland, Burkina Faso, Tajikistan, Georgia, Pakistan and, most recently in Hungary. No matter where he was in the world, Bill always shared his true self with

those lucky enough to know him. His professional competence and intellect were perfectly balanced with his warmth and playfulness. To all who knew him, he was inspirational on so many levels. He is sorely missed by his brother, Brian, and his family of friends all over the world.



Bill (front row, left) with several Peace Corps friends

David Scheinman

David Clark Scheinman (1948-2019) passed away in March of this year. He led the NPCA affiliate group, the Gulf Coast Council of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, based in Houston, for many years after moving to Texas in 2004. Born in New York City, he attended York Suburban High School and Storm King boarding school, before attending American University and earning a graduate degree from Cornell. Dave joined the Peace Corps and served approximately four years in Nepal. His experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal was transformational and led him to Tanzania and a career in international development consulting.

Upon his return to the US, David served as Director of Operations for the Asili Research Alliance whose mission is to bring health care equity to East Africa by testing plant-based treatments for safety and efficacy, then distributing the most effective treatments to the people. In 1992, he helped develop the first working partnership between traditional healers (herbalists) and

the modern medical sector in Africa, with HIV/AIDS being the catalyst. He co-founded the Tanga AIDS Working Group (TAWG) and also carried out ethnobotanical research for Shaman Pharmaceuticals in Tanzania.

David lectured at NIH, The World Bank, The University of Texas School of Public Health, and various conferences. He spoke fluent Swahili "and very rusty French, Tibetan, and Nepali".

The above is taken from his obituary, published at the Storm King School site at <https://sks.org/in-memoriam/> Look for him several names down on the In Memoriam list.

See also this article about him in the Houston Chronicle: <https://bit.ly/2yYt5DK>

And especially see this NPCA link, with a wonderful collection of photos throughout his life: <https://bit.ly/2ySNzOo>

Beverly Claire (Fogg) Heegaard

Beverly was a member of the Nepal 1 Group (1962-64.) The following was published in the Newport Daily News April 29, 2019.

Heegaard, Beverly, 78, painfully practical, fearless, unapologetic to a fault. Chain link fence gardener, anti-establishment embroiderer, Peace Corps Volunteer (Nepal I), mother to the universe of the dispossessed, probably read 10,000 books, completed the NYT crossword daily, in ink, often before sunup. Endearingly intolerant of nonsense. Will be buried in a box marked 'Return to Sender', postage due. Memorial service this summer, to be announced. Original write up at <https://legacy.co/307xwZ5>

See <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/newportri/obituary.aspx?n=beverly-heegaard&pid=192737031>. The article contains a link to the funeral home.

In Remembrance-Honoring All Fallen Volunteers

BY DUANE KARLEN

On May 10, 2019 Peace Corps and the National Peace Corps Association jointly held a memorial ceremony to honor all the Volunteers who have died during service since 1962. The two organizations, along with the RPCV/Washington DC area group, deserve our gratitude for initiating this as an annual event in 2018 and holding it again this year. I felt honored to be invited to attend as a representative of the Northern Virginia RPCV community.

In her comments, PC Director Jodi Olsen stated that we know our work abroad is not without risk and that PC will always remember and honor those who lost their lives while serving. Glenn Blumhorst, NPCA President, added that this ceremony honors all of them and hopefully provides support and recognition of their service to family and friends.

As part of the ceremony, a bell was rung 58 times, once for each year of PC's existence. This ritual echoes the tradition in some PC countries where COS'ing Volunteers ring a bell at their local office one last time as they leave, signifying that they are "going home." The solemn sound of 58 rings during the ceremony was a poignant reminder that each year of PC's existence has seen PCV's departing in a larger and more heartrending sense.

Special guests of honor attending the ceremony included Donna Mack and her daughter Chelsea, who founded and lead the Fallen Peace Corps Volunteers Project. The Project began as a very personal endeavor inspired by the death of Jeremiah Mack (Donna's son, Chelsea's brother) who died in Niger in 1997. They maintain a website and a Facebook page, write and respond to letters and emails, attend events and memorial services, and generally do what they can to support others who have also lost a loved one while serving in the Peace Corps and are seeking community. In their words, "this



work has helped us to heal and introduced us to so many wonderful people along the way."

In listening to them speak at the event, I was surprised and saddened to learn that more than 300 Volunteers have died during service since PC began in 1962. The full list of names is available at the Fallen PCV Project website www.fpcv.org and includes 10 Nepal PCV's. Friends of Nepal wishes to honor all of them, those who served in Nepal, as well as those who have lost their lives in other countries of service.

Right: On the Godavari Road, 1973.
Photo by Dan Edwards.

BOOK REVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

stores in Nepal as well. In America I'll sell it at a discount price of \$20 plus postage to anyone associated with Peace Corps Nepal, including any readers of this newsletter.

For inquiries or to purchase the book, send me an email: danedwardswe@aol.com. I can ship within the US and overseas. Domestic shipping cost is \$4.00; foreign postage is much higher.

For a great article about the book and more of Dan's photos, go to Nepali Times: <https://bit.ly/2OXRDI4> The "now and then" photo comparison of Tinkune, Kathmandu in 1972 and again in 2016 is particularly striking.

