FROM THE PRESIDENT

First off, thank you Henry and Barb for hosting the November pot luck meeting and thank you everyone who attended. It was great seeing old friends who don't come out of the woodwork that often anymore and great meeting new friends who are strangers in the group but once. The good vibes were tremendous!

Now, on to business. As you will see elsewhere in this issue, we have a tempest brewing over whether to affiliate with the National Council. As President, our Constitution requires me "to maintain an impartial attitude towards all sides of an issue", so I cannot and will not state my opinion on this issue. I will, however, state the facts.

The purpose of the National Council is to provide a network for all affiliated regional and friends of countries groups to help us accomplish our common goals of 1) promoting public awareness of development issues; 2) working to ensure the continued success of the Peace Corps; and 3) extending the Peace Corps ethic of idealism and volunteerism into local, national and international activities. The National Council has sought to accomplish these goals through publications such as the World View magazine; by providing a clearinghouse for sharing ideas and information among groups through such activities as the National Conference; and by providing global education grants, workshops and training packets.

It has not always been easy to accomplish these lofty goals. By their own admission, the National Council is overcommitted and in the red, but, to their credit, they have implemented austerity measures such as cutting staff, moving to lower-rent quarters and cutting back on publications and activities. Similarly, to address members' complaints of poor service, they have hired a director for group liaison and membership who is responsible for keeping an accurate and up to date membership directory and for seeing that we receive our mailings regularly and timely.

The services that we have been promised if we affiliate include receiving the names of prospective members in our area and newsletters from other groups, eligibility for global education grants and training and for the Ruppe Award for outstanding projects and access to the National Council resource center. If, however, we do not affiliate, we can expect nothing. The National Council has made it quite clear that only affiliated groups will receive services.

In sum, affiliation will cost us $1 per paid member, or about $130, and the 60-day grace period for continued services expires on November 30. So, let's discuss it and make a decision one way or the other at our meeting on December 3. See you there!
NATIONAL COUNCIL - Last month I described two changes in policy instituted by the NC - a dues increase for individuals to $20 and a new affiliation fee of $1 per member for group affiliation. I had no problem with the dues increase, but the affiliation fee bothered me. Based on the information I had then, I stated that I'd vote NO to adopt a fee, citing several reasons for doing this - the staff and promised to expand on my arguments this month. Now that the dust is settling, it's time for that discussion. [WARNING: This will take some time. Be patient if you're interested.]

First, I've changed my mind and I'll support payment of the affiliation fee to the NC. To understand why I changed my mind, you need to understand the main reason for my original decision not to add another fee to our budget. It was my belief that the NC was being asked to pay for services that were not being used to their full capacity. I've had this feeling for some time, but the issue of affiliation fees finally made me act. However, the affiliation fee was a secondary consideration - my primary concern was with the following statement in the May 1980 issue of "RPCV": a useful NC publication which has only come out once. The last item on the back page reads: "The [21] members of the Board of the NC have pledged to raise $2,000 each in support of the NC's Founder's Day Dinner."

I read this and blew my stack. Our last Board member (Meredith Green) would have needed $2,000 out of her pocket or from our group to meet this pledge. Most of us don't have that kind of money available. Our group could provide $2,000 (roughly our income from dues), but it would come from calendar sales and leave little for charitable contributions, a major concern for our Board's doing the calendar. It seemed to me that the Board was placing financial pressure on the groups for the sake of membership, whether or not that was their intention. Since (to my best knowledge) we could not meet those requirements, either as a group or individually, I stated that I didn't expect any of our members to pay for the NC Board at all. We were being asked to affiliate with an organization, while being excluded from potential involvement in the governance of that organization.

Thus, my main concern was the apparent imposition of financial requirements on Board membership - requirements beyond paying travel expenses to attend Board meetings. My reason for suggesting that we not affiliate was not to have the affiliation fee withdrawn but rather to send a strong message to the NC that we were concerned about certain policies of the NC Board. While I did not think that I had enough clout as an individual to get the NC Board to consider my concerns, I felt that action by our group would certainly be noticed. I had told my board, "#1. I listened to my own mind. #2. I instituted the affiliation fee at the urging of our group. That in itself changed my mind. I used the term "growing arrogance" in connection with the Board of the NC last month. However, it is a lot more clout anyway for us to recommend a course of action to the NC, which they take, and then turn around a year later and tell them that their action was wrong. I also have probably misinterpreted the reasons for their actions. #2. I received a phone call from Linda Gray, who has been the Executive Director of the NC. She has been the Executive Director of the NC. We discussed our individual concerns, and I think each of us appreciated the points made by the other one. I was assured that copies of my Editor's Corner from last month were circulating and that this month's column would be read very closely. (I hope I'm stating my points clearly enough to avoid misinterpretation.) Thus, my reason for not affiliating - to get the attention of the Board - is irrelevant now. I have the Board's attention, they have read my column, and they can act on the issue as they desire. That was my goal in this matter, and I have achieved it.

However, things aren't that simple. I've raised the issue of not affiliating. Even though I've changed my mind, you have to decide for yourself if you're satisfied by the raised issues, and whether your approval is not the only consideration. (1) This fee is imposed on all our members, I think, whether or not they want to join the NC. On balance, I'll accept the fee because we have non-members in the NC, receive and use several services from the NC. (2) The rationale for imposing this fee is to cover the cost of services to which the NC provides to affiliated groups. Anyone who has read my column for the last two years has read about problems we've had with membership services the NC should provide us. Most problems come when our members pay the NC but never receive anything. It's a strange way to run a national organization, and it's cost the NC several potential members from our group. (Besides, I'm tired of apologizing to members of our group for NC screw-ups.)

SUMMARY: I've learned some things over the last month that have caused me to change my recommendation on the affiliation fee issue. Let's affiliate and get on with making ourselves and the NC the best organizations possible.

During our conversation, Linda mentioned a couple of things which require some comment and apologies from me. One thing she said was that I am in a very powerful position as Editor of this newsletter. I am well within our group and if I tried to account for it in handling this issue. To that end, I have written a column in which I described 3 reasons for not affiliating (all 3 were mentioned above but the emphasis has been changed). Rose Ann, Gordon and Buck (I believe) have responded to this earlier column. Their responses are in this newsletter. (I have written this column without having read their responses so that I could make my points in my own way. When you read their opinions, please remember that they were answering a column that I have not read. I apologize for this problem, but it is caused by severe time constraints.)

My first apology to Linda and the NC Board is for not realizing that my power in this position extended far beyond our local group, although the lack of response to my written concerns about membership problems contributed to that misunderstanding. If I had understood my position better, I would have addressed my concerns about financial requirements for Board membership much earlier than this and never written last month's column. (Linda, it was not a mistake to print that short note in "RPCV". It's much better to address the issue now than to have it reappear later in a worse form. Personally, I would like to hear more about the internal deliberations of the NC. My second apology is for stating last month that I was not satisfied with the quality of services provided by the NC. I should have stated specifically that my concern was with services related to memberships. Rose Ann and Gordon have detailed the other services we receive (help with the calendar, Dev. Ed. grant, etc.). I am not aware of any problems with these other services.

The deadline for submission of material for the next newsletter is Thursday, Dec. 13.

Other RPCV organizations have our permission to use any material of interest in this newsletter.
Dear Editor,

So, you are going to vote against affiliating with the National Council. Intermittently, anti National Council opinion is heard in our group, and some of it has good reason. But voting against affiliation is not an appropriate solution.

We need to remember we were established before the National Council, we were part of trying to get a national group organized, and continuing to get the group organized is an ongoing process. To get out now would be like throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Our group probably has the lowest percentage of any group in the nation that are members of the National Council. During my presidency I attempted to get people to join the National Council. I remember sending in a list of 48 names, three times. They never got entered on the computer. This was very frustrating. A National Council board member did do an investigation into our particular problem, and a reason— from staff to computer conversion— was found for each incident. Hopefully a problem has been fixed.

But this is what we have to do. We have to be a strong group that gives them direction, lets them know when they are not operating effectively. They need to run like a business, know that their membership is their biggest asset. They need to count us, and understand why so few of our 150 members belong. The last issue of World View talks about finding lost members, maybe our group is a lesson in retention. It does little good to find us, if we do not renew! What are we looking for? What is it we want or need? The product needs to be defined and sold. Advertising and promotion are needed so we remember what our membership has bought. (Maybe we should survey us, get a feel for what is happening, and then act positively to improve the situation.)

Unicorns, magic, stars or mirrors won’t do it. We need to remember the national Council has a small staff, they are us, and we need to pitch in. We need to paraphrase the words of John Kennedy, ‘Ask not what you National Council can do for you, but ask what you can do for your National Council’.


Primo Deadwood,


NEXT MEETING:

Next month’s meeting will be Monday, Dec. 3 in Union South on the UW campus at 7 PM. Check the "Today in the Union" sheet on various bulletin boards in Union South for the room.

Future meetings are scheduled for:

Tuesday, Jan. 8
Wednesday, Feb. 6
Thursday, Mar. 7

NEWSLETTER POLICY:

Since we’re always trying to get new members, I’ll send three copies of our newsletter to anyone we think will be interested. After that, you have to pay to stay on our mailing list. Details can be found on the back page. ONE EXCEPTION: contacts in other RPCV organizations can continue to receive our newsletter if they will send us theirs.
Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

of Wisconsin (meaning Madison)

with all their family and friends

come in costume; some should have been

Halloween, Friday 2 Nov. 90

The Real Truth

The real truth is that billions of people came to the Friday potluck meeting at the home of Henry and Barbara Nehls-Lowe. It’s in Oregon, and is guarded by a drawbridge. It was impossible to conduct an accurate census, but observers estimated attendance at 60-70. The kitchen was filled with food, and we had enough beer. (At the end of the evening we had to draw on Henry’s reserve cash in the kitchen, though.) Many were in costume. All talked very loud. Luke terrified Buck with a freak-in-the-box.

Gordon, wearing a khaki field uniform and smoking a Cuban cigar, called us sternly to semi-order at 7:30 by blowing several blasts on a whistle. This got one room sorts attentive, but a lot of people lingered in the other room, telling raucous jokes, throughout the meeting. Knowing attention was limited, and unable even to organize a few exemplary executions, Gordon resigned himself to hustling us through our business.

Jerry Maynard has written for the Detroit group, thanking us for our contribution to the FO Partnership project in Nepal. Building a school. Marriage seems to agree with him, and he and his wife hope eventually to live in the same city, even the same apartment.

Gordon spoke about affiliation with the National Council. They are asking all the local groups to affiliate with them, and pay a fee of $1 per member. Huffy, who was our rep several years ago, pointed out that this was originally our idea! This matter of affiliation will undoubtedly stir up a deliciously spirited debate on the NC generally, and what we think of it. Walt has already written, and surely others will. We shall draw this out for several meetings, savoring it, you bet. (Ed. Note: I hope so.)

The Board of Directors met, as reported in last month’s Newsletter. It needs an additional Board member, and Gordon suggested Deb Stapleton, since she had agreed to accept, and is noble. We all approved her. (Buck stressed that the Board is mainly a figment, to satisfy the IRS; all real decisions are made in our general meetings.) Deb, in her acceptance speech, vowed to resist all sex-changes: “I’ll remain a woman.” The men on the Board are planning to wear skirts to meetings, though. (Lungis and sarongs.)

Jan 26 (Sat) is the Freeze For Food Run. All are invited to help, in small ways. Call Deb 261-4162. There will be a Chili Corge afterwards, at Kevin Nies’. We voted $300 to Deb for start-up expenses.

Parties to attend:

Dec 1 (Sat): World AIDS Day. 6:30 at the State Capitol, Rotunda. Party after 7:30 on 1326 E. Dayton... 265-1338

Dec 15 (Sat): Christmas Party. Potluck. 6:00 on. Everyone bring a gift, wrapped. The resulting zoo will amuse you, and be a lesson for your kids. At Sophia Jermevich’s, 317 Bordes... 233-7886

We’re going to invite some East European journalists to come visit one of our meetings, and talk to us.

The Thorn Tree will start up again: Nancy will do it.

Buck gave a speech on the Rogation Days, known to all amateurs of the liturgical year. These are three days in early May, with 3 others in early November, when the moon is very red, and there is a high probability of night frosts. This is due to the earth’s passing through a region of much cosmic dust. His source is a channelled book on Egyptian pyramids, and is thus impeccable.

Money: Kevin reports that we have $5348 in our general account:

$900 in checking, $5 in savings, and 4364 Global Ed money.

: Roseann reports that the 91 Calendars stand thusly:

Income: 10,047

Expenses: 354

Net loss: $3,151

cash on hand: $4101

Calendars sold: 2040 of 5000

We then adjourned, in good time, to applause for the President, benign dictator that he is, the Grandfather of his People, fondly called “Old Pamprnickel”.

Then Wade showed a slide program he’s developed for his HS classes, on the 50s. It was excellent, a fast-flowing carousel.

Next, Henry showed his slides from Kenya, and gave a running commentary. He’d done this before, we could tell; the slides told stories and clustered around themes.

Then everyone relapsed into clumps of talk, and more eating. It was a lovely night, balmy enough to sit outside. The kids played on a rigger’s adventure course, and the adults were indolent.

- Buck

On affiliating with the National Council

Walt is mostly right, but I disagree with his conclusions. I think the National Council is a good idea and a good organization, and its failings are structural, but not inherent. It can be made better, and it deserves our support and participation.

The purpose of the National Council of RPCVs is to: 1) form a web of mutual assistance and association among all of the local and country-specific RPCV groups; 2) act as an effective and unified influence on Peace Corps, the US Gov’t, and the country at large; 3) serve as a conduit for grant monies for good purposes.

The NC has done all these things more or less well, and it gets better. It is partly due to the NC that we have such splendid Annual General Meetings each year; regional meetings of RPCV groups; various publications; much better address lists of old and new RPCVs, and some of our new members; various grants to various groups; and some influence on Peace Corps and the Federal Gov’t generally.
We have been active in the NC from very early on. Bob Cowell, Dean Mahan, Don Sauer and Meredith Green have all been active Board Members. No one is presently on the Board. For reasons, Meredith can speak; one factor is the difficulty of travelling to the semi-annual meetings, even with the subsidy our group has paid to NC Board members. All of our representatives, though, have been instrumental in making the Board much more reflective of the wishes and concerns of the various local groups. The NC has become a fairly accurate servant of the local groups’ concerns, which is all to the good.

The National Council has helped us in many ways. When we hosted the Annual General Meeting in 1987, they contributed a large amount of money, and gave us much assistance. It was the profits from the AGM, and a large up-front order, which enabled us to undertake our first Calendar. They paid for the creation of our Slide Library. We have received a $5000 Global Ed grant from them. They are assisting us in marketing the Calendar. A number of our new members have come to us through the NC. Their publications ("WorldView" and others) are enjoyable to read.

Our only major dissatisfaction with the National Council is that it’s gotten itself into a bad financial bind. This is, I think, due to three reasons: 1) its staff and most of the Board members active in its day-to-day operations live in DC. DC is the money sink of the country, and engenders a most misleading expectation of high cash-flow and large operating expenses. Nowhere else would an organization so blithely take on a huge monthly expense in payroll, rent, etc. and regard it as natural, and sure to be covered by a vastly-increased membership, all promptly paying their dues.

2) The NC undertook to greatly increase its membership, and its weight in national affairs, and it concluded that to do so, it must pay people to recruit these members, and it must become a more impressive organization. All this was expensive. This change from one level to another was a stochastic change, and it is very vulnerable period for any organization. It is the point where previously-successful businesses go belly-up. This has happened with the NC, and might have done, even were it not centered in DC. But DC made the magnitude of the problem worse.

3) Finance competence is the last skill acquired by any organization that’s doing good work.

I argue, then, that we should continue to support the National Council, and be active in it. I think we should even have a representative on the Board. I do not think we should beggar ourselves to bail it out of its current distress, but we should help. I think Board members should not be expected to undertake massive fund-raising on their own account for the NC. I think if NC dues go up, membership will decline. I think the NC should strictlyrench in its expenditures, act with sanity and prudence. I think they should do better in marketing the Calendar. I think we should actively assist them in becoming a better organization. And I definitely think we should vote to send them an affiliation fee of $1 per member. This is several hundred dollars, and we certainly can afford it.

Buck

Dear Madison RPC’is, on behalf of the Magaragadi community and myself, I sincerely thank you for your generous contribution to the school construction. I am very happy to relay that the school has been completed and following the monsoon break, EP Nepal’s version of Summer Vacation will begin. The children will begin a tradition of education in rural western Nepal. Since returning to the States I have received letters from a teacher who was instrumental in the school construction, Shanta Sharma. Shanta has written that not only has the school been completed but also that this project has inspired a new sense of cooperation and village pride. You have shared in making this possible; I once again speak thankyou.

In love and peace,

Hope to meet some of you at the National Conference in Washington D.C. next summer.
Volunteers Needed!
For the 10th Annual FREEZE FOR FOOD
10 km. Run/2 mi. Walk
Contact: Deb Stapleton
244-8609

Two East German journalists will discuss the reunification of Germany at our January 8, 1991, regular meeting. Don't miss this special internal education opportunity!

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225 Jackson St.
Madison, WI 53704
241-5332

Needed: BICYCLES
The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy needs bicycles for their projects (Bikes Not Bombs in Nicaragua, Mobility Haiti, etc.). If you are interested in donating a bicycle (it doesn't have to be in working condition) contact the Institute at:
P.O. Box 56538
Washington, D.C. 20017
(301) 589-1810

"Several People" have asked that the Thorn Tree be revived - et voila! - But I need your help to keep it growing. Do you have something to buy, sell, trade, or throw away? Please send submissions to me by the 12th of each month:
Nancy Westbrook
225 Jackson St.
Madison, WI 53704
241-5332
DATES TO NOTE

DECEMBER
1 Sat  AFRICAN POTLUCK/PARTY—Nancy Westbrook and Tim Egan’s, 225 Jackson St., 241-5332, 7:00 p.m.
2 Sun  SAYANORA PARTY—Mark Brand and Jo Thompson’s, 1326 E. Dayton St., 235-1339, 2:00 to 7:00 p.m. Not a potluck. Beer provided. Bring something if you like.
3 Mon  GENERAL MEETING—Union South, 227 N. Randall—7:00 p.m.
13 Thu  NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—Submit material to Walt Zeltner, 6187 Sun Valley Parkway, Oregon, WI 53575
15 Sat  HOLIDAY PARTY AND GIFT EXCHANGE—Sophie Zermuehlen’s, 317 Bordner Drive, 233-7886, 6:00 p.m. Bring an inexpensive gift and a dish to pass.
31 Mon  NEW YEAR’S EVE PARTY—Your place???

JANUARY
8 Tue  GENERAL MEETING—Union South, 227 N. Randall—7:00 p.m.
17 Thu  NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—Submit material to Walt Zeltner, 6187 Sun Valley Parkway, Oregon, WI 53575
26 Sat  FREEZE FOR FOOD 10 K RUN—Vilas Park Shelter, 11:00 a.m. Contact Deb Stapleton at 244-8609. Our big event for Oxfam. Everyone comes. Chili pigout afterwards at Kevin Neis’, 619 S. Orchard St.

BRUNCH every Sunday 10:00 a.m. to noon. Lakefront Cafeteria, Memorial Union.

WHEN: Saturday, Dec. 1
7:00 PM-ish
WHERE: Nancy Westbrook/Tim Egan’s da
225 Jackson Street
(3 blocks East of the Barrymore Theatre)
Phone: 241-5332

Bring something to eat or drink—not necessarily African, but if you would like to try your African culinary skills and need a recipe, call Nancy.

African dress and Sangho, Kiswahili, Chichewa, Lingala, etc. optional.
Bring music, photos, musical instruments, songs, etc.

IN HONOR OF:
Independence Day —Tanzania (UK, Dec. 9, 1962)
Kenya (UK, Dec. 12, 1963)
Niger (France, Dec. 18, 1960)

And, of course, the most important of them all:
Central African Republic (France, Dec. 1, 1958)
And: Swaziland’s Incwala and Malawi’s Tree Planting Day (both Dec. 21)

And: RPCV’s who served in Africa, African nationals, people who have been to Africa, people who wish they’d been to Africa and everyone who wants to be there!
RPCVs of WISCONSIN MEMBERSHIP UPDATE:

NEW MEMBERS:

1/92 BIRD, Leslie  321 N. Brearly St., Madison, WI 53703.
   Home:  256-8187       Work:  Togo 1984-88

10/91 PAZYNSKI, Jim  505 S. Gammon Rd., Madison, WI 53719.
   Home:  251-9573       Work:  Colombia 1963-65

1/92 SMITH, Jim  637 E. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53703.

ADDRESS CHANGES

1/91 CONSTANS, Patricia  6317 Ford St. #2, Monona, WI 53716.

1/91 LA FLEUR, Dawn  330 N. Carroll St. #10, Madison, WI 53705.
   Home:  257-7156       Work:  Burkina Faso 1985-87

HOLIDAY PARTY
WITH ELABORATE GIFT EXCHANGE
SATURDAY DECEMBER 15, 1984
AT SOPHIE ZERMUEHLEN
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BRING GIFT OF LITTLE OR GREAT VALUE
OR OF DUBIOUS INTEREST

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good food - really good food.
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Name

Address

Please send check and order form to: Rose Ann Scott, RPCVs of WI 2714 Oakridge, Madison, Wisconsin 53704. Tel. (608) 241-0845.
All RPCVW, Inc. members receive the newsletter on payment of annual dues shown below. To avoid record-keeping hassles, we would prefer that our members pay through December of the year of joining ($1 a month for each month to December), then pay for a full year membership at that time. Reduced rates are available for those in extreme financial circumstances.

You can also join the National Council of RPCVs through us by paying a further $20. We strongly encourage all members to join the National Council, which provides us a way to affect national issues.

[ ] I want to join RPCVW, Inc. and am enclosing $ .
    ___ Individual - $12 for one year (or $1 per month to next January)
    ___ Joint - $17 (Two people receiving one newsletter)
    ___ Overseas Individual - $20
    ___ Overseas Joint - $25

[ ] I am also enclosing $20 for National Council membership ($27.50 for joint membership).

[ ] I do not want to join, but I would like to receive the newsletter and am enclosing $ (15 for overseas) to cover the costs.

[ ] I'M MOVING! Please change my mailing address on your records.

NAME: _______________________________ COUNTRY OF SERVICE: ______________
ADDRESS: _______________________________ SERVICE DATES: ______________
PRESENT JOB: ___________________________ TELEPHONE: ______________
PC JOB: ________________________________

Please make checks payable to RPCVs of Wisconsin, Inc. and send to:

RPCVs OF WISCONSIN, INC. - Madison Chapter
P.O. Box 1012
Madison, WI 53703

marked ATT’N: MEMBERSHIP!

QUESTIONS? PROBLEMS? Call me at 608/835-3083 most evenings and weekends. Or try 608/262-2470 weekdays and ask for me – Walt.

RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS OF WISCONSIN
MADISON CHAPTER

Walt Zeltner, Editor
P.O. Box 1012
Madison, WI 53701

Rose Ann Scott
2714 Oakridge
Madison, WI 53704

Exp. Date 1/91