

Oct 26 1982

Just got back from the clinic. Funny how its been what I have dreaded and hoped for for these last 5 months. But it wasn't bad at all. Typhoid, Diptheria, Tenanus, polio and (last, but certainly not the least) yellow fever inoculations this morning given to use by Barbara the Health rep from Washington, D.C. She's a good lady who firmly told us that if we did not show up oon time, the useful life of the Yellow Fever inoculation would expire and someone (who did not make it on time) would also expire as a volunteer. She only had this one batch and after it was mixed she had one hour to inoculate all 77 of us. Deb and I were 3rd and 4th in line. We wanted to get it over with so we could get to the bank and cash our checks. I want to go on, but this journal should have been started 5 months ago. So I am going to back up and highlight some of the reasons and steps it took to join the Peace Corps.

Peace Corps was just another another option is a whole list of where do we go from here? Possibilities. Debbie and I were soon to graduate from the University of Utah and being newlyweds (6 mos) and childless we were anxious to explore those possibilities before getting tied down in the usual 9-5 workday life that most people expect and accept as 'proper'. However, Deb & I felt most blessed by God in having those diplomas, good health, a house, two cars, etc. etc. We realized that there much more to the world than the Salt Lake Area could contribute and, that if we were ever to do something slightly adventurous in our need to share our blessings we'd darn well better do it now.

So, out of the other possibilities of Lutheran World Mission, traditional employment or just following Debbies Physical Therapy skills to wherever they would take us, the Peace Corps called us back. They were interested and they wanted to interview use as soon as possible. Problem was that Deb was in Indiana on a PT affiliation for 5 weeks. So I called the recruitment Rep (Dick Arent) and told him to give us a call the Monday after Deb got home.

He did call and after two hours of trying to generate sincere and well-thought-out answers, Deb and I were nominated to the Peace Corps Eastern Caribbean program. Whew! Step one was complete. Except one thing. We weren't sure what we'd be doing. First I was considered the primary person in our placement. "Well, no we don't really need personnel types but your background is technical so you can teach math". Then Debbie's Physical Therapy prevailed, as I knew it would, and I became the "non-matrixed spouse". (They knew I was part of the package but didn't know what to do with me.) But they'd have something for me by the time we got to the islands.

Step two was a bit more complex and about twenty times more frustrating than being nominated for a program. But, knowing that the U.S. Government thrives on paper and given the seemingly endless forms that needed to be filled outto just apply for the Peace Corps, I shouldn't have been surprized at the paperwork which followed our nomination.

It began with our “medical kit” which followed the letter stating “you should have received your medical kit in the mail, if you have not...” A few phone calls and the kits were there within a week. We were “under the gun” though. Close of invitation (the date by which we had to have all of our information in) was Aug. We needed to get all the Medical and Dental exams completed by that date and if you’ve ever tried to get in to see a doctor for a non-emergency, routine physical exam in less than three weeks, you can imagine our apprehension. The dental exam was easier but much more expensive. Peace Corps pays for the exam and x-rays but will not pay for treatments. So \$250 later we had our Dental clearance. The Physical was a bit more tricky to schedule, was cheaper but almost lost the invitation for us. Peace Corps pays for the exam and x-rays or you can go to a Gov’t military installation for free. We opted for the latter and anyone who has experienced the assembly line, de-humanizing physicals the army performs will identify with our Sunday morning ordeal. The biggest disappointment they we had was that, upon inspecting the form, we found several important items could not be handled there. Most notably, urinalysis and pelvic exams (for Deb). With a vacation a day away and the deadline falling on a day on which we would be in Minnesota, Deb’s results were still somewhere in California and my “sample” was dropped off at a friend’s house (who happened to be a Med. Tech) My friend, Kay, would drop off my results to my pastor, who would pick up Debbie’s results at Planned Parenthood and put it all in the mail (in a \$9.50 express package) which would immediately whisk it to Washington. With that done, Deb and I took off on our “tour” to see relatives we would not see for two years while in the P.C. and just to relax and wait to hear the “Big News”.

I called Pastor Paul on Tuesday. “Yes” he said “it’s all in the mail. I mailed it last night at 5pm. Should be in Washington this morning if the guarantee is true”. “Great!” I said. I’ll call them tomorrow (just to be on the safe side) that would be Wednesday and give them ‘til Sunday which would be plenty of time to evaluate us and clear us for an invitation. So Wednesday morning I called Washington. “No” the voice tolled “we don’t have it. Could be it’s stuck in the mail room” I explained to him that it was sent to the office direct by express mail and that it should circumvent the mail room. Besides, it was guaranteed. “Well” he replied “nothing was guaranteed”. He went on to explain that the mail, even if sent direct, usually got sent back to the mail room. So even if it did arrive on Tuesday, it wouldn’t escape the mail room until Thursday earliest. “Wonderful” I said and hung up. My \$9.50 had bought me no time. I’d call ‘em on Thursday.

Thursday produced similar results but Friday the tardy package arrived. “Great” I yelled into the phone. “So we made it on time?” “Well,” the voice disinterestedly drolled “we’ve got it but we’re so backlogged that I really doubt we’ll get to see it. Maybe Monday” “But my close of invitation is on Sunday” I nearly screamed into the phone. “Sorry, it’s the best I can do”. The phone went dead and so did my dreams of becoming a volunteer.

By Tuesday of the next week they still hadn’t looked at it. We called them from a phone booth near Bismark, North Dakota. My recruiting rep couldn’t be reached. It was a long drive back to Salt Lake City.

Thursday I got a hold of Rick, my recruiter. He was sorry to put me through it all but he had made a mistake when he had told me the close of invitation date. We still had three weeks before our paperwork was due in. “The bright side of all of this” he explained “is that your stuff is in early so you’ll have an advantage over other nominees”. I didn’t know whether to kiss him or punch him in

the face. Step two was done.

The day after close of invitation I called Washington. Yes they said they were happy to tell me that my wife and I were nominated to the Eastern Caribbean program and were to report for staging in Miami on Oct 25th. And so step three began.

We closed on the sale of our house (a risky two months before we even heard about our invitation. We had sold the house to close on Oct 1st) and moved the non-necessities into storage. Notices of our termination went to our employers and we moved in with my parents for the interim. Suddenly this Peace Corps thing was becoming real. We had a thousand things to complete in the three weeks before we left. Power of Attorney to grant, bills to pay, a car to sell, things to pack and store, mailing lists to update. It was nearly endless. The final two days were spent just packing & organizing and trying to be with my family as much as possible. An early Christmas was held and we were given more things to pack and after a very very tearful parting, we were on the plane for Chicago to spend an evening with more of my relatives before flying to Miami the next day.

When we arrived in Miami we began to notice those around us who had that “volunteer look”. Tired confused but happy and looking positive. Several busloads departed for the hotel where we were staying and we met several volunteers on our own very slow bus to hotel. The 20 min trip took an hour and a half and we arrived 15 minutes before the first meeting at 3pm. Barely enough time to check in and drop off our large volume of baggage.

The meeting was a revelation that I’m still trying to assimilate. I was surprized not only at the diversity of backgrounds (which I expected) but also the the ages of the volunteers. It ran from 22 to 78. With a larger number of couples (like Deb and I) than I imagined. Even a couple that had been married a week! But it was an interesting afternoon & evening. It calmed some fears & answered some questions. Exhausted, we went to be at 9pm.

Which brings us back to date. My arm is sore from the shots and writing. More later.

Revision #2

Created 26 May 2023 21:46:42 by Admin

Updated 19 December 2025 21:28:02 by Admin