

Oct 29, 1982

Things have been moving rather rapidly around here. The two additional days of comprehensive staging here have come and gone. Wednesday was filled with last minute paperwork. Legal hassels, even the most minor traffic violation or unpaid parking ticket, must be taken care of or you can't go. Your NAC (National Agency Check) must be complete or you can't go. If you use drugs you're terminated. If you ride a motorcycle without a helmet, you're terminated. Seems like either you can't go or you will be terminated are the two most often used threats against a volunteer. Seems to work. All of us have been OK'd for Jamaica, save one. Mary.

Mary was a true, strong-willed, stubborn, chain smoking Californian. She must have be about 60 plus years old (although certainly not the eldest). Apparently she was an art major and potter. She had been brought on board because she was to teach pottery skills to locals on the islands. We were having a discussion on culture and, in particular, on local dress when Mary brought up a question on wearing pants. "Well, yes, pants were permissable on women in certain situations" but she could be required to wear a skirt or dress n other circumstances. Apparently Mary's sense of personal freedom was offended and she was agast at the possibility of wearing a dress, for the next day she was no longer attending our meetings. Mary was gone back to California. Flexibility and willingness to adapt to local custom being key traits of a successful volunteer.

Mary's reluctance to give up some of her freedom really pointed up our eager pursuit of bondage. We would give up some of our 1st Amendment rights. Rights to talk politics and religion, with the intent of conversion at least. We always had to provide a disclaimer that it was our opinion and not that of the U.S. Government. We could not involve ourselves in local politics for fear of being interpreted as U.S. foreign policy. We were all required to give up something. Mary was an extreme in inflexibility but a valuable lesson to us all...

With paranoia at going the 'way of Mary', we boarded the plane to Jamaica with as open and flexible attitude as we could muster.

