

State and Local

Volunteer discusses challenges, opportunities of Peace Corps life

By Ashley A. Bailey
Reporter

The Peace Corps offers a wide range of personal and social opportunities that test a volunteer's ability to take his knowledge and adapt it to foreign situations in developing countries, a Peace Corps volunteer said at Texas A&M last week.

Steve Long, a graduate student in the soil and crop sciences department and a returned Peace Corps volunteer from Niger, West Africa, spoke to the International Development Forum in Rudder Thursday.

Long spoke in the place of Coleen McGarrity, Texas A&M's Peace Corps representative, who was absent because of a personal emergency.

Long said social and personal challenges of the Peace Corps test a person's innate ability to adapt and function in a different society.

However, Long said, volunteers from the United States should be open-minded about Peace Corps travels.

"When in a developing country, it's important to remember that things are done differently there, and they are done for very good reasons," he said.

"It's the Peace Corps volunteer's duty to know and accept those reasons," he said.

As a volunteer, a person has the chance of making a beneficial impact on a society as well as gaining many important experiences himself, Long said.

While in a foreign country, a volunteer has the chance to learn one or more foreign languages and cultures. He also can meet many interesting people and develop many strong friendships, he said.

"Volunteers must realize that the degree to which they will adapt will depend on their own preconceived views and their willingness to change," he said.



Photo by David Elmer

Steve Long, a returned Peace Corps volunteer and a graduate student at A&M, discusses the rewards and trials of being an American volunteer

in a developing country with Abdov Hane, a junior entomology major, and Allison Case, a junior animal science major.

"I recommend that volunteers be very careful of the 'cultural baggage' that they take with them into a foreign country," he said. "Don't ever assume that our way of life is superior to theirs because we are worlds apart — literally."

Comparing foreign cultures to that of the United States is like comparing apples to oranges, he said. A volunteer must be open-minded enough to view a new culture as dif-

ferent, not wrong, and he must be willing to learn from it, he said.

"Peace Corps is an important group and the people that represent it in foreign countries must be willing to uphold its standards," he said.

"Public drunkenness and drug use are strictly prohibited, and as U.S. citizens the volunteers are expected to abide by U.S. laws while abroad," he said.

The pay is not great and the hours are long, he said, but the knowledge gained and the friendships that can be made outweigh the disadvantages of Peace Corps.

"Being a Peace Corps volunteer can give you a whole different perspective on the United States and how it relates to the world, and it can be a great prerequisite for students that want to travel or work overseas," he said.

Local residents view light show of 'space trash'

From Staff and Wire Reports
Residents across the Brazos Valley and Texas who saw a burning object streak across the sky Friday night weren't quite sure what they were seeing — but they knew it was spectacular.

The blazing trail that lighted up the Texas sky would have been the highlight of any July 4th fireworks event, but it was no more than Soviet space garbage, military officials say.

A cargo rocket used to resupply a manned Soviet space station disintegrated shortly before 11 p.m. Friday as it re-entered the atmosphere over San Antonio, said Lt. Col. Ivan Pinnell, a spokesman for the North American Air Defense Command in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Ramona Warren, a staff assistant in A&M's Department of Business Analysis who was fishing at Lake Summerville when she spotted the object, said there was no doubt in her mind that it was a rocket. She said she and the people around her all thought it was an airplane at first, but were able to make out fins and a tail on the object from the moon's reflection.

"It went across the sky very quickly and it started breaking up like fireworks," Warren said, "and the fire fanned out wide across the sky and lighted up the sky."

"It was descending at a pretty good rate. But we all agreed that it was a rocket... It was huge."

Pinnell said the rocket — flaming debris from which was seen across Texas and in Oklahoma and Arkansas — was the second stage of the Progress 35 satellite, launched Thursday from the Soviet Union. NORAD had tracked the rocket since its launch and expected re-entry, but didn't know

when or where, Pinnell said. John Waller, a pilot at Evergreen International and a former resident of College Station, was flying a DC-9at an altitude of 30,000 feet when he saw the rocket.

"It was really something to see," Waller said. "It started as a streak, then as it got closer to earth it separated into two balls of fire and then after that it broke up. It was like fireworks going off."

Waller, who was about 75 miles northwest of San Antonio when he saw the light show, said his radio immediately was buzzing with concerned pilots trading stories about the object. He said pilots as far away as Florida reported sightings.

Most of the pilots thought it was a big meteor, Waller said, and they were told from ground sources at first that it was remnants of Halley's comet.

Friday night's comet was visible for 75 seconds as it blazed across the sky in a southwest-to-northeast trajectory.

Within minutes, curious callers lighted up the switchboards at the National Weather Service and police, fire and radio stations across Texas. Someone in Houston called in to report an apparent explosion.

For safety and security reasons, the North American Air Defense Command tracks about 7,000 pieces of "space trash," Pinnell said. Throw-aways from space fall all over the world three to four times a month, and most burn on re-entry, he said.

Although the rocket was bigger than a railroad boxcar, it is unlikely that it caused any damage on the ground or left any souvenirs, Pinnell said.

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