

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Trotting around the globe

Aggies share their experiences as Peace Corps volunteers

By Daniel Chapman
THE BATTALION

Sarah Sampson, Class of 2002, departed on June 1 for Suriname to work as a health extension volunteer.

"I decided to join the Peace Corps because of both the organization's service to humanity and for the adventure involved with being a volunteer," she said. "The idea of going to another country and learning a new culture while having the opportunity to be inspired by people intrigues me. I am looking forward to the challenge."

In 1961, former President John F. Kennedy signed into existence of the now well-known and respected Peace Corps. The organization spawned from an idea that Americans would travel throughout the world as volunteers to promote world peace and friendship. Four decades later, 436 Aggies have joined to give their time, energy and love to all parts of the world, and more continue to do so every year.

Sampson will be working with a team to identify the most pressing health issues and will try to solve them.

"Texas A&M University has been a great producer of volunteers in the Southwest. The school often makes

Peace Corps' annual Top 25 list of Top Volunteer-Producing Schools," said Jesus Garcia, public affairs specialist from the Peace Corps' southwest regional recruitment office. "We visit the campus twice a semester, and the school is a great resource of agriculture volunteers, which is one of our biggest needs."

A&M sends an average of 16 volunteers to various areas of the world each year. Although not everyone who applies receives assignments, an encouraging number of students apply every year; however, not all applicants receive assignments.

Since Sept. 11, the Peace Corps has seen a 17 percent increase in applicants for service. This trend has also been reflected in A&M statistics. In the year before Sept. 11, A&M had 207 applicants for the Peace Corps. The following year 389 applications were submitted.

Alumni of the Peace Corps often cite their experiences as life-changing events that helped them choose a career path. Dr. Bruce Herbert, a geology professor, said he would not have chosen to come to A&M if it had not been for the Peace Corps.

"The experience defined my life's purpose, which directly led me to TAMU," he said. "I decided that I should

use science to solve problems affecting human society and the environment."

For some, the choice to join the Peace Corps is not a difficult one. Many choose to go because of some ideal they wish to pursue or simply to get out of the country for some time.

"I wanted to see the world and have a bit of an adventure," Herbert said. "But I had no money and I don't look good in a crew cut so the Navy was out. I also thought the PC mission was a good one."

Stationed in Taveuni on the Fiji Islands, where parts of the island received 27 feet of rain a year, Herbert witnessed the needs of the people and learned that he could have an impact on their lives.

"I was a secondary school science teacher," he said. "I also worked in community development. For instance, we were able to install a small hydroelectric turbine in my village so we had electricity for lights and radio."

Herbert added that not all those who left with him were able to continue for the duration of the assignment. Many left because of homesickness. Personally, he said he experienced everything from serene sunsets that he will never forget to a shark attack while



GRAPHIC BY GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION

spear fishing.

In 1963, Kennedy spoke of the vision of the Peace Corps that had come to fruition. He believed in actions to help the world's problems that went beyond financial help. The Peace Corps has become a vital part to the United States as well as to the 136 countries that its volunteers have served in. As he signed the executive order establishing the Peace Corps, Kennedy commented on

what was to become of the thousands that would volunteer.

"But if the life will not be easy, it will be rich and satisfying," he said. For every young American who participates in the Peace Corps — who works in a foreign land — will know that he or she is sharing in the great common task of bringing to man that decent way of life which is the foundation of freedom and a condition of peace."



ON THE BIG SCREEN

Finding Nemo Disney Pixar

"Finding Nemo," the new computer animated pet film from Disney Pixar, is a stressful underwater version of "Homeward Bound" meets the fish chase scene in "The Sword in the Stone." Before the title scene, there is already an emotional Bambi-like death, and this tension is repeated

throughout the film, potentially scarring every child in the theater.

"Finding Nemo" is exactly what the title projects. A fish named Nemo is taken from his ocean home by evil humans, and his father Marlin goes on a Holy Grail-type quest to bring him back.

The computer animation is top notch and the elaborate underwater coral scenes look

distinctly real. Overall, writer and director Andrew Stanton gave an adequate follow-up to previous Pixar hits "Toy Story" and "Monsters, Inc." But if it was attempting to appeal to older fans, Pixar may have inadvertently overlooked its main audience — kids.

-by Ashley Marshall

The Italian Job Paramount Pictures

"The Italian Job" is a fast-paced action film that follows a group of handsome gold thieves in a spy vs. spy, thief vs. thief game of wits, making speeding and thievery look as effortless and enjoyable as watching the movie itself.

Unfortunately, the marketing team put all the best parts of the

movie in its previews, so by the time the movie is over, you feel like you have already seen it.

"I trust everyone. I just don't trust the devil in them," said John Bridger (Donald Sutherland) during the opening gold heist in Venice. Found to be brutally true after a violent double-crossing by Steve (Edward Norton), the gang, led by Charlie Croker (Mark Wahlberg), vows to reclaim its gold and pay back Judas, a friend

from the first Italian job, now living in California.

The characters were well-cast and believable. Seth Green delivers an explosive performance as computer prodigy Lyle, who claims he created Napster. Also starring are Charlize Theron and Mos Def.

-by Ashley Marshall

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